

Is Sunday School Scriptural?

1. This question should concern us because the practice of Sunday school classes has caused a major division among God's people.
 - a. If something severs Christian fellowship, it is a serious matter.
 - b. The practice of Sunday school, not only caused division, but it also maintains division.
 - c. 1 Co.1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
2. For some people it is difficult to understand why anyone would oppose Sunday School or as some now call "Bible classes."
 - a. But remember, many people do not understand why we would oppose women preaching in public, why we oppose using mechanical instruments in worship or why we are against using many loaves in the Lord's Supper.
 - b. However, we must lay our emotions aside and turn to God's word.
 - (1) 1 Thes.5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.
 - (2) 1 Jn. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
3. Today, new doctrines are sprouting up like Johnson grass, so we must hold fast to the truth of God's word. Eph 4:14-15— "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ"
4. If we desire to please God, we must be lovers of the truth.
5. In this study, I would like to show some of the biblical precepts the Sunday School class arrangement violates.

I. The Sunday School class arrangement violates the N.T. command for the church to come together in one place for public teaching.

- A. The church of the N.T. always "assembled together" for public teaching.
 1. Sunday school, on the other hand, divides God's people (Christ's Church) into groups for public teaching.
 2. God has given specific instructions on how His people should assemble for public teaching.
 - a. First, God commands us to assemble together: Hebrews 10:25
 - b. We can see that the first century church obeyed this commandment.
 - (1) Acts 4:31 "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."
 - (2) In Acts 11:26, when Barnabas found Paul ". . . he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

- (3) Acts 14:27— Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
- (4) Acts 15:30 “So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.”
- (5) Acts 20:7— Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread
- (6) 1 Co.11:18— For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.
- (7) 1 Co. 11:20— Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.
- (8) 1 Co. 14:23— Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place...
- (9) 1 Co.14:26— How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.
- (10) James 2:2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,
- (11) S.S. is segregated church gatherings for public teachings, which violates God's pattern for the church assembly.
- (a) This is a work of the church...overseen by elders.
- (b) This is not a private Bible study done by individuals.
- (12) All of these verses show that the church, which was under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, came together in one assembly to hear God's word.
- B. Next, since S.S. consists of a divided public assembly of God's people in groups, it is a violation of God's specific command to assemble together (Heb.10:25).
1. If God gives us specific way on how we are to do something, then this eliminates everything else.
 - a. For example, God commanded Noah to use gopher wood in building the ark (Gn.6:14).
 - What if Noah had decided to trim it in pine, would God have been pleased?
 - Ge 6:22 “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.”
 - b. Christians are commanded to sing (Ep.5:19; Col.3:16), would God be happy if we added musical instruments?
 - c. Jesus used fruit of the vine in the Lord Supper (Mt.26:29), would apple juice or orange juice be acceptable?
 - d. Nadab and Abihu (Lv. 10:1-3).
 - e. In the same way, God command His people to gather together (in one place) to receive public teaching. Therefore, other arrangements, no matter how wonderful or profitable they may seem, are excluded.
 - f. We cannot improve on God's pattern!
- C. Next, the N.T. should be read when the church comes together in one place.
1. Col. 4:16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church [assembly or congregation] of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea [in the assembly of the church at Colosse].
 2. Acts 15:30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.
 3. These N.T. letters were to be read in the general assembly of the church, not in divided classes.

- a. Here, the apostle commanded the NT letters to be read in the church.
 - b. Then we have an example, when a letter was written by the oversight of the apostles and was read in the general assembly of the church.
4. Another example would be our gathering to partake of the Lord's Supper.
- a. First, we are commanded to assemble together: Hebrews 10:25
 - b. Next, we find an example of the disciples following this command to partake of the Lord's Supper: Acts 20:7

D. Since S.S. is a public gathering of the church, it must follow God's rules for teaching the church in public.

1. Does it follow God's rules?
 - a. In the NT, all age groups were taught in one assembly.
 - (1) In S.S. the church is divided and classified according to physical age or gender. But by what authority do they categorize God's people?
 - (2) In S.S. classes, a babe in Christ may be sitting beside a Christian of 30 years. Is this any classifying correctly? Is this not the same as in one assembly!
 - b. In the NT church, the teaching was done by one teacher at a time (1 Co.14:31).
 - (1) In S.S., however, the teaching is done simultaneously by several teachers.
 - (2) It consists of one teacher in each class.
2. The NT gives rules for governing the one assembly of the church.
 - a. Do we have instructions to govern Sunday School assemblies?
 - b. Do not those who practice S.S. have to invent laws to govern their assemblies?

II. Next, Sunday School is unscriptural because women teach publicly in these Bible classes 1Co.14:33-37; 1 Ti.2:11, 12.

- A. There are only two areas in the NT where teaching God's word may be accomplished—publicly or privately.**
1. Paul declared to the elders of Ephesus: Acts 20:20 "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,
 - a. All NT teaching was either done in public or private.
 - b. The gatherings of the church in the New Testament for worship were public.
 - (1) 1Co.14:23— "Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?".
 - (2) The general public had access and was invited.
 2. Promoters of S.S. tell us that assemblies are different and separate from the one assembly gathered for worship.
 - a. It is clear that S.S. is not the whole church gathered in one room or auditorium.
 - b. Nevertheless, S.S. is a public gathering of the church into different rooms—producing a divided assembly.
 - c. All the public is invited to attend S.S.—through announcement in the general assembly of the church, church signs, papers and bulletins, local newspaper, radio & TV.
- B. Some tell us that 1 Timothy 2:11, 12 only apply to the public gathering of the church for worship.**
1. Please consider these questions about 1 Timothy 2:

- Is the church assembly mentioned anywhere in the whole chapter of I Timothy 2?
- Does praying for all men and those in authority (vss.1-3) occur "only in the assembly"?
- Are we supposed to lead "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (vs.2) only in the assembly?
- Are men saved (vs.4) only in the assembly?
- Can men come to "knowledge of the truth" (vs.4) only in the assembly?
- Do men "lead" prayer "every where" (vs.8) only in the assembly?
- Are women to dress modestly (vs.9) only in the assembly?
- Are women supposed to profess "godliness with good works" (vs.10) only in the assembly?
- Are women to be in "subjection" to men (vs.11) only in the assembly?
- Does "childbearing" (vs.15) occur only in the assembly?
- Are "faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (vs.15) to be practiced only in the assembly?
- Are women forbidden from teaching or usurping authority over the man (vs.12) only in the assembly?
- If the answers to questions 1-11 are "no," then why would the answer to question 12 be "yes"?

*****Points not to forget:**

- The church assembly is not mentioned anywhere in the whole chapter of I Timothy 2.
 - The instructions in I Timothy 2:9-10 for women to dress modestly apply to secular activities, so why wouldn't the very next two verses apply just as broadly?
 - Since vs.8 specifically names the sphere of application for the context as "every — where," shouldn't that settle the matter?
- C. The New Testament forbids women to speak or teach in the public gatherings of the church, or teach the Bible in any public fashion.
1. Those who practice S.S. say that it is not a gathering to worship.
 2. What constitutes worship? The church comes together on Wednesday night; we sing, pray and teach, is this worship?
 3. In Sunday school, people pray and teach God's word, sometimes sing. Is this not worship? (This is not private worship, but a called public assembly)
 4. What is the difference between regular services and Sunday school services?
 - a. Sunday School is a divided assembly— divided worship.
 - b. In Sunday school, women are allowed to teach.
 5. Now, if the church can divide into classes for prayer and teaching, why can we not divide into classes to sing praises and partake of the Lord's Supper?
 6. The difference between these two types of worship is that one is scriptural and the other is not.
- D. In Sunday school classes or public assemblies, women become authoritative public speakers.
1. Christ placed public teachers in the church Eph.4:11, 12
 2. When a woman takes the position of public speaker, she becomes the center of attention, and takes the position God assigned to men.
 - a. The audience is focused on her

- b. The demeanor of our sisters should be modest, with shamefacedness (which means extremely modest or shy; bashful).
- 3. He said that women are not to be public teachers (1 Ti.2:11, 12).
 - a. Women should not be placed in the position of a man
 - b. She should not teach in public orally or by writing biblical articles.
 - c. She should not lead public prayers (1 Ti.2:8).
 - d. The sisters are always to manifest a spirit of subjection (1P.3:1).
 - e. They should also have a gentle and quiet spirit (1P.3:4).
- 4. Why may a sister publish a religious song and not publish a religious article?
 - a. Although singing includes teaching (Col.3:16), this is not equivalent to public teaching. If it is, then women would not be permitted to sing in public (1 Ti.2:11, 12; 1 Co.14:34,35).
 - b. Therefore, if this is true, then, writing songs or poetry is not equivalent to writing a sermon for public teaching.
- E. Now, are sisters allowed to teach?
 - 1. Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him (2 Ti.1:5) — (Teach children).
 - a. Who has the responsibility to teach children? Ep.6:4
 - b. Timothy's father was a Gentile, so his mother taught him.
 - 2. Older women should teach the younger women (Tit.2:3, 4).
 - 3. Women may teach a man (Acts 18:26) "They took him aside"
 - 4. Is it scriptural for a sister to teach a child, another woman or a man?
 - a. She may teach all three in private.
 - b. However, she cannot teach anyone in public.
 - 5. Acts 2:17 says that "your daughters would prophesy."
 - 6. 1 Co.11:5 — "But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head"
 - 7. Philip the evangelist had four daughters that prophesied (Acts 21:9).
 - a. Did they prophesy from the pulpit or in public?
 - b. If they did, then they violated the Lord's prohibition for women to speak in the church (1 Co.14:34,35) in public (1 Ti.2:11,12).
 - c. Where did they prophesy? In the church? No, in private

III. Finally, some say that children need Sunday School, because they cannot learn in the assembly of the church.

- A. Apparently, God did not include S.S. in the New Testament because He did not think it was a proper way to teach His people.
 - 1. If S.S. were a part of God's plan, it would be recorded in the NT.
 - 2. 2 Ti.3:16, 17
 - a. Is S.S. a good work? If so, why is it not mentioned once in the Scriptures?
 - b. The Scriptures give no information about forming or regulating S.S. classes.
 - 3. We know God approves of men preaching one at a time in the general assembly of the church.
 - 4. Classifying people for public teaching was authorized by man, whereas one assembly public preaching was authorized by God.

B. How did children learn before S.S. was invented?

1. S.S. was created or founded by Roberto Raikes in England in 1780.
2. Then it was adopted by denominational churches.
3. 70 years later—1850, it was bought into some congregations of the churches of Christ.

C. Children can learn in the assembly of the church.

1. Dt.31:12— "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13 "and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."
2. Josh.8:35— "There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them."
3. Isa.55:8-11— 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Conclusion:

1. In this lesson, we have noticed that S.S. has disrupted the unity in Christ's church.
 - The practice of S.S. today maintains that division.
2. We have noticed the divine pattern for teaching God's people in public is in one-assembly.
 - The church always "came together in one place."
 - "The whole church came together."
3. S.S. is a violation of God's specific command to assemble together (He.10:25).
4. S.S. constitutes a public gathering of the church, so it must follow God's rules for public teaching.
 - Do those who practice S.S. follow these rules?
 - No, because they categorize the church into small groups according to age.
 - Women are allowed to teach publicly.
5. S.S. was never introduced in the church until the 19th century.
 - There is no NT example of S.S.