

Great Reasons for You (Yes, You!) To Bring Your Entire Family to Bible Class

Our congregation will be starting a new quarter Sunday, October 2.

This marks one full year since the big changes we made to our teaching program. Our classroom efforts have been running smoothly. We owe a debt of appreciation to our deacons who put together the system, and all the dedicated teachers who volunteered to take a quarter (or, in many cases, a lot more). Thank you for making this a huge priority in your lives!

All of our teachers soon should be assigned for the entire 2016-2017 year. The curriculum materials already are purchased and ready to hand out. Our children are our future, and deserve our very best efforts. It's all very exciting!

The adult class will be studying 2 Peter on Sunday mornings, and Major Themes in the Major Prophets on Wednesday nights.

But there's one thing that can derail these wonderful efforts—a lack of attendance. Like a sports car with a powerful engine but no tires, the greatest efforts on the part of pastors and teachers do little good if few people are there to participate in them.

I would like to take a few moments to encourage us all to dedicate ourselves to attending Bible class, every Bible class, every week.

1.) The **most plentiful** teaching happens during the Bible class.

We have a limited number of slots available to present needful teaching to the congregation. Not counting the Lord's Supper talk (which is vital, but fairly narrow and inflexible topic-wise) we have only 52 sermon slots available per year. This seems like a lot, but life is complicated, and the Bible is a big book. These 52 lessons barely scratch the surface of the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). These 52 lessons barely arm a Christian with the skill he needs to wield the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

The Bible class times offer an additional 92 slots per year to explore the Scripture. Our teachers make an effort to systematically cover the entire Bible—in the youngest classes about once every two years, in the teen class about once every four years, in the adult class about once every 15 years.

If you want to understand the message of the whole Bible, you'll need to come to Bible class as well. (Reading the bulletin provides another 52 opportunities, too). Of course, if you really want to master the whole Bible, consider an at-home reading plan,

as well as small group Bible studies with fellow Christians.

2.) The **deepest** teaching happens during the Bible class.

It is true that we have time set aside in the worship service for public reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13) and sermons (Acts 20:7). Hopefully people learn something during those times.

But, it is unavoidable that the sermons during the worship service will be more basic. These sermons have to be understandable to a broad audience—young and old, seekers and skeptics, Christian and non-Christian, college bound and non-college bound, spiritual infants and spiritual adults, marrieds and unmarrieds.

If you want the meat of the word (and you do, don't you!) then Bible class is the place. Tuck a napkin in your collar, and bring out your steak knife. A few weeks ago, we spent 50 minutes on just three verses of Scripture—and we weren't beating any dead horses or getting bogged down in meaningless controversy. It took that long to truly appreciate the message of that paragraph. It was interesting, eye-opening, and encouraging. It was the kind of study that doesn't happen in the context of a worship service. I wish every member of the congregation had been able to participate in that discussion.

“Everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:14).

3.) The **most personalized** teaching happens during the Bible class.

During worship services, everyone must basically sit still and pay attention. But during Bible class, everyone is invited to raise a hand, ask questions, make comments, interact with the text, and participate in the discussion.

Part of our purpose in “not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some,” (Heb. 10:24) is to be “encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” No doubt about it, the questions people in class are some of the best ways to be encouraged, and to learn how the message of the Bible applies to real life in all its stages and circumstances. As we study together, we discover meaning that we would have missed alone. As we study together, we see how the same passage helps young and old, married and widowed, male and female, parents and grandparents.

4.) The most **kid-centered** teaching happens during the Bible class.

Above, I mostly have been talking about the adult Bible classes. But one of the very best things we do as a church is provide instruction in the Bible to children ages six months to college. These classes are age-appropriate, full of fun activities which enhance learning and encourage memorization, build up trusting and joyous relationships, and lay down a foundation that will be hard for Satan to undermine later in life. Apostasy is caused by many things, but we are foolish to tell ourselves that choosing the beach or a ball game over Bible class isn't one of those things.

Parents, I want to encourage you to make bringing your kids to Bible class on time a huge priority—Sunday at 9:00AM and Wednesday at 7:00PM. When God judges our parenting, He will not be nearly as concerned about how many homeruns our children hit or how many A's they brought home on a report card, as He will be concerned about whether or not we brought them up “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Bible class is one excellent way to do this. Don't take whining or reluctance or excuses for answers. Put your foot down and make Bible class a non-negotiable part of your activity as a family. If you start this pattern at age 3, they won't find it odd at age 13 (and they will continue it in their own homes at age 33). If you stick to this pattern, you will figure out ways to make dinner, homework, and extracurriculars all find their appropriate slots around Bible class. There is nothing “more fun” or “more important” than God.

Parents, make sure the members of your family have read the lesson beforehand, and completed any brief assignments given by the teacher. They work long and hard to provide these questions.

Parents, ask your kids about class at some point during the week; ideally, in the car on the way home. This is a powerful way to reinforce the teaching done in the classroom, and to make sure your kids are engaged. “These words ... you shall teach diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6-7).

-- John Guzzetta