

Unity In The Church

No Bible Class/Upper Room Only

(I Co 14:23)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on the “Unity In The Church.”
 - a. Last week we looked at the “One Cup” issue.
 - i. **Mt 26:27-28** “And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”¹
 - b. This week we are going to look into the issue of “No Bible Class” and meeting in an “Upper Room Only.”
 - i. **Ac 20:7-8** “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.”
3. When it comes to the divisions in the church concerning the “anti” persuasion there are more common divisions than these two we will be talking with today.
 - a. This however doesn’t change the fact that these are a division in the brotherhood and as such it too must be addressed.
 - i. In the 2008 “Churches of Christ in the United States” these numbers are given as to the number of congregations by persuasion.
 1. There are roughly 2000 “non-institutional” churches of Christ.
 - a. One cup 554
 - b. No Bible Class 510
 2. The non-institutional make up about 1/5th of the churches of Christ.
4. I want to stop just a moment and explain what I mean by “anti” for this and the following sermons to come.
 - a. We have until last week been looking at those that would rightfully hold the title liberal.
 - i. Some mistakenly think this terminology is not found in Scripture concerning Christians however this is not true when one actually learns the definition of liberal.
 1. Liberalism simply means authorizing and practicing that which the Bible has not authorized.
 - a. An example of this would be mechanical instruments, praise teams, small groups (in their current form)...
 2. The Bible clearly talks about Christians that fit this very definition.
 - a. **II Ti 4:3-4** “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

Unity In The Church

- b. Starting last week and continuing through this series we will be looking at those that would rightfully hold the title anti.
 - i. Once again many do not like this terminology to describe our brethren however when one looks at the definition one can clearly see those that would rightfully be called such.
 - 1. Anti-ism simply means forbidding what the Bible authorizes.
 - a. An example of this would be one cup for the fruit of the vine, no eating in a “church building,” no bible classes...
 - 2. The Bible clearly talks about Christians that fit this very idea.
 - a. **I Co 9:3-6** “This is my defense to those who would examine me. 4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink? 5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?”
- 5. Brothers and sisters armed with this knowledge let us examine this topic before us.
 - a. Let us do so with an open heart and a ready mind.

I. The Upper Room Only Argument

- A. The truth of the matter is that this is a very obscure division in the brotherhood
 - 1. So much so I could find no one actually defending it, in writing, to use as an example for their argument.
 - 2. Having said that I am familiar with their argument, having talked with those that hold to such beliefs, and as such we will examine it.
- B. The argument
 - 1. Jesus established the Lord’s Supper in an upper room.
 - i. **Lk 22:12-23** “And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.” 13 And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover... 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me...”
 - 2. When we find the disciples meeting together in Acts 20 to specifically partake of the Lord’s Supper it is in an upper room.
 - i. **Ac 20:7-8** “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.”
- C. Thus...
 - 1. As they see it, God deemed the upper room as significant and as such we must follow that pattern set for.

Unity In The Church

II. The Upper Room Argument In Light Of Scripture

- A. Some things to consider before we look at this
 - 1. God authorizes in the Bible through four different methods.
 - i. Direct statements
 - ii. Examples
 - iii. Implication
 - iv. Expedience
 - 2. God authorizes two types of ways always staying within those four methods.
 - i. Specific authorization
 - a. **Mt 28:19** “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
 - 1. The specifics are go, make disciples, baptize them, by God’s authority (in His name).
 - ii. Generic authorization
 - a. **Mt 28:19** “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
 - 1. The generic aspect is “how to go.” Because we are authorized specifically to “go” but not told how we are authorized to use any means necessary that does not “violate” any of God’s law.
 - 2. Furthermore we know we have this authority because we find multiple ways people “went” to spread the gospel.
 - i. By foot, chariot, ship...
 - a. **Ac 8:29-30; Ac 20:13**
- B. We are to assemble (specific) but where is (generic)
 - 1. The Hebrew writer was clear we must not only assemble, but we must not neglect the assembly either.
 - i. **He 10:24-25** “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
 - a. Thus specifically we are commanded to assemble.
 - 2. The Scriptures make is clear that where is generic however.
 - i. We find the saints assembling in many different areas.
 - a. The temple **Ac 2:46**
 - b. An upper room **Ac 20:8**
 - c. A home **Pl 2**
- C. Thus...
 - 1. We can clearly see that this argument that we must meet in an upper room finds no such limitation in the Bible itself.

Unity In The Church

III. The No Bible Class Argument

- A. This group within the anti-persuasion is much more well known than the previous
 - 1. As we noticed earlier of the roughly 3000 non-institutional brethren about 510 are no Bible class.
 - i. This is a relatively large amount considering.
- B. The argument
 - 1. They first start out with the assumption Bible class is the denominational Sunday School.
 - i. Delos V. Johnson in a booklet wrote this, “the Sunday School occupies a central role in the teaching programs of most churches.” (<http://goo.gl/4Ny99t>)
 - a. This doesn’t sound so bad until you consider what Sunday School they are talking about.
 - ii. G.B. Shelburne in his article “Teaching The Bible Without Sunday Schools” identified what they deem Sunday School as when he identified it with Robert Raikes, from 1780 who is credited with creating modern denominational Sunday School. (Ibid)
 - a. This type of Sunday School is a separate organization apart from the denomination itself.
 - iii. This “Sunday School” is created as another organization like unto the missionary’s society of years past.
 - 2. Their argument is based on two passages one in I Corinthians & the other in I Timothy.
 - i. G.B. Shelburne Jr. writes, “We believe that the New Testament sets forth a definite law of procedure for all public teaching assemblies of the church: men only as teachers, speaking one by one to all of the learners in one group, with the women in silence.” (Ibid)
 - a. He cites **I Co 14:31-35** and **I Ti 2:11-12**.
- C. Thus...
 - 1. As they see it, God allows only one assembly and in that assembly women cannot teach as they must be silent.

IV. The No Bible Class Argument In Light Of Scripture

- A. We must keep in mind...
 - 1. Specific and generic authority.
 - 2. Context is vital in determining God’s meaning in Scripture.
- B. Looking at I Corinthians 14
 - 1. This particular passage should not even be considered with this discussion.
 - i. First contextually it is dealing with spiritual gifts.
 - a. We don’t have that today.
 - ii. Secondly contextually it is dealing with collective assembly not group or private teaching.
 - a. Bible class is not collective assembly it is group teaching simply being located under one building.

Unity In The Church

- iii. Third contextually “women” keeping silent is dealing with the wives of the prophets “learning” not “teaching.”
 - a. First the prophets had to be men because they all could speak it just had to be done one at a time (31).
 - b. Second the women were to ask their husbands about the teaching of the prophets (35).
 - c. Third women were to be silent as in speak nothing as it pertains to learning or understanding the prophecy.
 - 1. They are allowed to teach in the assembly.
 - i. **Co 3:16**
 - 2. They are allowed to make the great confession in the assembly.
 - i. **Ro 10:9-10**
 - 2. Thus this passage has no bearing contextually on the subject at hand.
- C. Looking at I Timothy 2
- 1. It must be noticed that this passage has no bearing on the “one assembly” argument whatsoever.
 - i. It is assumed by them that Paul was dealing with a single assembly here because of what was written in in the next chapter.
 - a. **I Ti 3:14-15** “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”
 - ii. This assumption cannot be substantiated however, notice...
 - a. **I Ti 2:8** “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (NKJV)
 - 1. Notice “everywhere” not just the assembly.
 - b. **I Ti 2:9-10** “in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, 10 but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.” (NKJV)
 - 1. Notice, “in like manner” thus everywhere women were to dress in all modesty.
 - 2. Thus there is passage has no bearing on whether or not we are able to meet in groups and study God’s Word.
- D. Looking at the Bible on this subject
- 1. We know we can teach each other apart from the whole assembly worship service.
 - i. Aquila & Priscilla pulled Apollos aside making a group apart from the whole to teach him.
 - a. **Ac 18:24-26**
 - ii. The elders and apostles separated and formed another group under one room, so to speak, at the Jerusalem council.
 - a. **Ac 15:4-6**

Unity In The Church

E. Thus...

1. There is absolutely nothing unscriptural about having Bible Class.

CONCLUSION

1. Brethren let us strive to keep unity in God's Word with our brethren.
 - a. Let us stand for truth in all matters.
2. Question: Are you able to defend God's Word in this matter?
 - a. If not take these things and learn them so you are able.
3. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Have Faith In Jesus **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**