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*Thank You Bro Dana*

# **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

## *The Question Answered*

**by**

**Dana Chandler**

**NOTE:** The following letter was first sent to Mr. Roy Deaver, coeditor of *The Spiritual Sword*, in response to an article he wrote entitled "When A Brother Accuses Me Of Practicing Anti-ism." It is duplicated here in its entirety. D.R.C.  
"Dear Mr. Deaver:

This letter is in response to your article published in *The Spiritual Sword*, dated January 1986, entitled "When A Brother Accuses Me of Practicing Anti-ism." Upon reading this article, I must disagree with you on all but a few points that you brought out. However, I will limit my discussion to the comments made on pages 25 and 26 concerning anti-Sunday school brethren. Please recall if you will Paul's statement to Timothy that " All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) With this thought firmly planted in our minds let us examine your article.

On page 26 of your article you ask the following question:"....does the Bible authorize the practice of teaching the Bible in simultaneous Bible classes?" To this I must reply emphatically: "No!" I would like to defend my stand in three separate parts. These parts are as follows: 1. Historically, 2. Socially, 3. Scripturally, with the third part being the most important. The scriptures tell us in I Thessalonians 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

### *1. History proves that the Bible class arrangement of teaching is unscriptural:*

I Timothy 4:1-6, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath

created to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine unto which thou hast attained."

Writing on "The Sunday School Idea and the American Restoration Movement," Dr. William S. Banowsky said in the October 1967 issue of the *20th Century Christian*, "The idea of a Sunday school apparently originated with Robert Raikes, an Englishman, in 1780. In 1786, three years after Great Britain declared the thirteen colonies to be an independent nation, the first Sunday school was started on this side of the Atlantic." Mr. Banowsky goes on in his article to tell of the spread of the Sunday school among the denominations and of early opposition to it by leaders in the Restoration Movement. He shows that the practice did not gain acceptance among a majority of the congregations until the early 1900's. In the same issue of the *20th Century Christian*, October 1967, the editors say, "Churches of Christ borrowed from denominational neighbors the Sunday school idea when it was hale and hearty. One wonders whether Churches of Christ shall have sufficient dedication, imagination, and resourcefulness to see the idea to its full potential, now that it has come upon bad times." Any major encyclopedia will provide more evidence concerning this subject.

Since it is a matter of historical record that the Bible class is of modern origin and that it was unknown to the apostolic church, I must reject it on the same ground that I reject instrumental music in the worship, which was likewise absent from the practices of the early church. I am amazed at how vehemently many brethren condemn the use of musical instruments in the worship service, yet the same principle applies here. In delivering His new will and testament by the Holy Spirit in the apostles, the Lord set forth how we are to teach in the worship service. Sunday school, Bible classes or whatever you want to call them were established by man and this is attested to by scholars universally. This innovation was from man, and has never been set forth by the Lord in revelation. It is for this reason I cannot endorse the Bible class arrangement in the church.

*2. The Bible class arrangement of teaching takes the responsibility of teaching the child out of the home and into classes:*

II Timothy 3:15 "From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." II Timothy 1:5, "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well." Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

At a time when many are crying that the family unit is dead, there are those that continue to destroy it by separating the members of the family with clubs, activities, youth groups and any other number of social gatherings. The Bible class arrangement of teaching plays an important role in this destruction. By taking the responsibility of instruction of children in the basic precepts of the Lord from the parents, the Bible class propagates the isolation of parent and child even more than it probably already is.

Jack Hutton writes in his article. "Teaching the Bible in the Home." "One of the most important ways of teaching children both directly and indirectly is having family worship in the home. Through this activity parents show their children true evidences of their sincerity. Here they are able to reveal their best to their children. Boys assimilate the attitudes of their father and in family devotions they will see that Dad is not ashamed to be dependent on God." Family worship will draw the members together. Communication lines will be opened and many of the problems of growing up avoided. In the home we can make sure that all is well, and parents and children can feel secure against the wrongs of the world. Families can explore the problems of life with Bible answers and examples in the manner in which they alone would know how to provide.

Many say that the Bible class offers children the opportunity to learn something that they would not learn at home, especially if their parents are not members. It is a well accepted fact that family members can often be very influential in converting each other. A child that is shown how a Christ centered family conducts themselves in the home through their worship would be more inclined to promote the same thing in their own home. The Bible class arrangement on the other hand would tend to make the child think that worship needs were met there and not at home. It is for this reason also that I cannot endorse the Bible class arrangement in the Church.

### *3. The Bible does not sanction the Bible class arrangement of teaching:*

Colossians 3:17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." John 17:8,19-21, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that thou didst send me. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

In the year 1809, Mr. Thomas Campbell made a statement which typifies the "Anties", as we are called by many. He said, "Where the scriptures speak, we speak; where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell's son, made our manner of worship noticed to others when upon meeting a Presbyterian minister over some particular religious doctrines another well known

phrase was coined: "Nothing should be required as a matter of faith or duty for which a 'thus saith the Lord' can not be produced either in expressed terms or by approved precedent." The warning found in Revelation 22:19 seems to bear this out, even though it is a warning concerning the book of Revelation. Precedent is found in these words: "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book." These words should be reason enough not to practice the Bible class arrangement, but, alas, there are those that think they are smarter than the scriptures. Our Lord clearly pointed out that anything other than obeying his words is clearly hypocrisy: "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:7-9)

Many have been severely punished because they *thought* they were doing what was right when in reality they were disobeying God. Please refer to the following examples:

a. Nadab and Abihu - Leviticus 10:1,2 - They offered strange fire unto God and were immediately killed.

b. Uzzah - II Samuel 6:3-8 - He put his hand out to steady the ark of God and was killed.

c. Moses - Numbers 20:7-12 - He struck the rock and spoke to it and was therefore not allowed to enter into the promised land.

The following statement by Irvin Barnes from his article entitled "Bible Classes and Women Teachers", adds to this discussion: Care should be exercised in determining the difference in what may be used to aid in keeping a command and something which adds to a command. A coordinate is something equal in rank or order. Scriptural instruction given by command, statement, example and necessary inference requires action, something to be done, a service to be performed. Scripture is violated by addition when another kind of action is taken other than what is specified."

Singing to make melody in your heart to the Lord is commanded as we have already pointed out. Playing on an instrument of some kind to produce a melody is another kind of action that produces another kind of melody. In both cases a melody is produced. Singing and playing an instrument are coordinates, yet one is commanded and the other is not. Playing on an instrument along with singing adds to what God has specified and is, therefore, a violation of the scriptures.

In regard to the subject of Bible classes, the following passages teach that when the church comes together for public teaching it must meet in an undivided, unclassified assembly: COMMAND: Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves

together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." EXAMPLE: Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." STATEMENT: Acts 11:26, "And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people."

In the above passages the congregation received public instruction while assembled in an undivided assembly. The unclassified, undivided assembly with one male speaker speaking at a time is specifically given as the arrangement for the public teaching of the church. See 1 Corinthians 14:27. This requires a specific action by the local church. It must come together in one place. To call members of the church to a specified address or meeting place and constrain them to meet in age groups for the purpose of being taught God's word is a public assembly and is foreign to the scriptures. Nowhere can such an arrangement be found in all of the Bible. The class arrangement requires another kind of action different from the single undivided assembly. In the class arrangement the church comes together in a number of places (classrooms) with a teacher over each group. Classes constitute an unscriptural form of church gathering coordinate to the undivided assembly. The use of classes for the purpose of public teaching is an addition to the arrangement for teaching found in the word of God.

Again, in reference to your article in the January 1986 issue of *The Spiritual Sword*, page 26, entitled "When A Brother Accuses Me of Practicing Anti=ism", The following statements were made: "The elements and the scriptural proof (with regard to the Bible classes) would be as follows: (1) Christianity is a taught religion, John 6:44,45. (2) It is right to recognize and to respect the authority which God has given to elders, Hebrews 13:17. (3) It is right to recognize and to respect the obligation which God has given to elders to feed the flock, Acts 20:28. (4) It is right to recognize that Christians must study, learn, grow, obey the elders, II Timothy 2:15; I Peter 2:2; Hebrews 13:17. (5) It is right to recognize the scripturalness of simultaneous teaching, Acts 5:25. (6) It is right to recognize the scripturalness of taking a small group out of a large group for the purpose of teaching the small group. Mark 7:15-17. (7) It is right to recognize and to respect the principle of dealing with individuals as they are able to receive, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14. (8) It is right to recognize that there can be religious gatherings larger than the home and smaller than the whole church come together, Acts 12:12ff.

Subsequent study of the above statements reveal a misrepresentation of the scriptures in point 5-8. In statement 5, Acts 5:25 is used as a proof text for Bible classes, close inspection reveals otherwise. Peter and some of the apostles were placed in prison by the high priest and the Sadducees in order to quell the rising interest of the people toward the Gospel. An angel of the Lord freed them and immediately they went back to their task of preaching God's word. The high priest and his cronies sent for the apostles only to find them gone; they had returned to the temple to teach. Acts 5:25 then says, "Then came one and told them, saying, Behold,

**the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people." Reference is obviously being made to the term "men" in this verse. To say that "they are teaching the people" does not necessarily mean that all are speaking simultaneously. For example, notice Acts 3:12-26 where Peter himself was preaching; yet, in Acts 4:1-2 the priests and captain were grieved because "they spoke" and "taught the people". The term "they" is used in both places yet only one man (Peter) was speaking. This proves conclusively that when a plurality of speakers authorizes one person to speak, and concur with his remarks, that it is proper to say "they" spoke.**

**Statement 6 uses Mark 7:15-17 as an example of the deliberate division of one group from another. Again close inspection of this verse reveals that it proves no such thing. Our Lord was speaking unto the people (verse 14) and when he had completed his discourse he departed into the house (verse 17). It was then that the disciples inquired into the meaning of his words. This kind of relationship is true in many instances. An example of this would be when a lecturer has finished his talk and many gather around him to gain further insight into his discussion. Classes are not implied; divisions in groups are not intended.**

**Statement 7 does not give basis for the use of classes. The Lord saw no need in classifying people to be taught in different assemblies. The Bible teaches that parents are responsible for teaching their children (Ephesians 6:4). But the Bible also provides evidence that children can learn in an assembly of the whole church. This is inferred in the command to assemble together (Hebrews 10:25). Even under the law of Moses, God recognized that children could learn in a "together arrangement." This is shown by such scriptures as Deuteronomy 31:11-13; "When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law. And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." Also in Joshua 8:35 we read, "there was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."**

**Pat Mannon writes in his article entitled "The Sunday School" (June 1982): "But, suppose that we do try to classify everyone to teach them; how would we go about it? No one has ever come up with an idea that will perfectly fit every special need. For example, if a 70 year old man and a 12 year old girl both obey the gospel on a give date, how are they classified? The 70 year old man, who perhaps knows no more than the 12 year old girl, is placed in a class with those near his own age. The 12 year old girl, who knows as much as the 70 year old man about the Bible, is placed in a class with those near her age. The older man is fed on the "meat" of the word, as a newborn babe (I Peter 2:2), and the young girl is fed with milk. This is**

certainly not an adequate classification, but it is exactly what happens in the Bible classes or Sunday schools. Why not teach in an unclassified, undivided assembly as the Lord has taught and given us example? God surely knows the best method of arrangement for teaching his people." Dividing the assembly in order to propagate teaching fails to instruct in a way that is accepted sensibly and scripturally.

Statement number 8 fails to prove the conclusion put forth in your article. Acts 12:5-19 recounts the story of Peter's escape from jail by divine intervention and his return to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Verse 12 says: "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying." The Bible does not specify why the people were gathered together praying. One instance, when such a situation might arise is when friends and neighbors gather with the relatives of the sick and offer prayer and read scripture. Does this constitute a Bible class? Certainly not and neither does the scripture used in your statement.

Your article is very weak in the use of proof texts and in not way does it prove the usefulness of the Sunday school or Bible class arrangement of teaching the scriptures. My prayer is that you consider your stand in the light of God's word and not in the artificial light of man's knowledge.

Returning to your article on page 26, you ask a second question to which I must reply. You ask; "Does the Bible authorize the use of women as teachers in some of those Bible classes?" Again I must reply, "NO!"

When growing up we are told that the word of God is infallible, we accept it at face value. It is when "Bible scholars" come on the scene that we are told that the Bible does not really say what we think that it says. They expound the word unto us in its "proper" fashion and we are enlightened by their opinions. We are told by the denominational world that what the Bible says on salvation deals with a long gone age and not with the free gift world of today. This again is due to the exceptional ability of modern man to interpret the scriptures which could not be done by men during the first and second centuries after our Lord died on the cross. This is an idea totally foreign to Christians. The Bible is to be accepted as is and any opinions propagated by the intellectuals of today which contradict that word are to be ignored as false.

In regard to the subject of women teaching in a public assembly the Bible should be the final word and law. Again Irvien Barnes in his article "Bible Classes and Women Teachers" brings this point out in an appropriate manner: "In many of the class situations women are restricted as to whom they may teach. In most Bible classes women are not allowed to teach an adult male. They are restricted to teaching classes made up of only children and other women. In Titus 2:3-4, women are instructed to teach other women. In II Timothy 1:5 and 3:15, we have the implication of a woman teaching a child, and in Acts 18:26, the case of a woman assisting in expounding the way of the Lord more perfectly to an adult male. These

passages prove conclusively that a woman may teach another woman, a child or a full grown man. Therefore, the Bible places no restrictions whatsoever on a woman as to who she may teach! A woman is restricted, however, in where or in what capacity she may teach. She may not teach publicly. In I Timothy 2:11-12, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." The word "teach" is translated from the Greek word, "didasko," which is defined in The Analytical Greek Lexicon by Samuel Bagster and Sons, page 98; "to teach or speak in a public assembly."

A close examination of the passage of I Timothy 2:11-12 reveals two important points: 1.) a woman cannot teach publicly and 2.) a woman cannot usurp authority over the man. The term "nor" is a conjunction showing that two thoughts are being put forth and that they are equal in weight and deal with the same subject -- women. A woman may teach anybody in a private situation. She may teach no one in a public situation. God does not always give a specific reason why He wishes a certain thing done in a certain way, but in the instance of I Timothy 2:11-12, He emphasizes His will by giving two reasons and they both immediately follow verses 11 and 12: 1.) "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." Verse 13. Evidently it was God's will that the man be first and therefore he had pre-eminence. 2.) Verse 14 continues, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." When the woman listened to Satan, permitting him to deceive her, it caused her to transgress the will of God. An enormous sin was committed; one that brought death into the world for every person. God gives that as one of the two reasons why He commands her to be silent in the church. These verses should be enough to show the wrongful use of women as teachers; but, still, there are those that contradict God's word with their own.

In regard to the command given in I Corinthians 14:34, the application is definitely to the silence of women during the worship service. I Corinthians 14:23 tells us, "If, therefore, the whole church is come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" Paul then goes on to regulate the worship service. In verse 34 he discusses the woman's role. "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Paul's instructions here are no doubt influenced by synagogue procedures, where women took no active role. The Jewish synagogue was a man's world and the home was the woman's world.

Paul concludes his commands in verse 35, "...for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church."

Van Bonneau in his article "Teaching the Word" (pages 15 & 16) writes: "Here we pause to answer those three supposedly unanswerable questions that our Sunday School brethren put out on these verses. I have often wondered why they rarely give our full answers to these questions when they write and speak about them. Usually they garble our answers and in utter silence pass up the exact point that demolishes

**their position. They realize that their position looks a little better when they do this. But to the questions. 1) Is I Corinthians 14:34-35 binding on the church today? 2) Will the Lord condemn those who violate this passage today? 3) Will the Lord condemn those who encourage women to violate this passage today? They usually take the liberty to answer all three of these questions in the affirmation for us without any qualifications. Then they show that, if the passage applies, a man violates it every time he answers a woman's question in her home unless the woman is his wife. For the passage charges the women to "ask their husbands at home." So by suppressing a part of our answers, the Sunday school advocates apply the whole passage to the days of the apostles and pretend to have an unanswerable argument. But we shall not let them get by so easily. First, I shall answer their questions, then show that they do not even believe their own position. Our answer to these questions is that the latter part of verse 35 which says "for it is a shame for women to speak in the church," is certainly binding today. No doubt whatsoever about this. A child can see that the balance of the passage applies to the wives of those early prophetic teachers who had husbands that were capable of teaching them at home. Paul reasons from the particular to the general. First he enjoins silence on the wives of the prophets in particular, then gives a general law showing that it is shameful for women in general to speak in the church. The particular directions concerning the wives of the prophets do not apply today, but the general law concerning other women is applicable now."**

**When Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, wrote to the church at Corinth, giving the scripture for women to be silent in the churches, he emphasized the commands by this statement in verse 37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Paul, therefore, dismissed the possibility of any doubt concerning the authority for his words.**

Finally, if, as you say, I Corinthians 14:26-40 deals with a different time, a "special circumstance" and that "any interpretation of any passage which makes it impossible for a woman to teach is an erroneous interpretation," then why can't we have women preachers as long as they don't usurp authority over a man? Your argument is worthless as a proof text and must be discarded as but one man's "interpretation" of the scriptures and not the logical outcome of God's word.

The intent of this letter was not of malice and ridicule, but of love and compassion. My prayer is that you will have gained some insight into why when a brother calls me an Anti I am not upset by this term but by his lack of understanding. We are not Anties; we are Christians and our intent is to serve God as rightly as possible. We realize that even though something may seem to be right and enlightening, it may hinder us from our heavenly goal if it does not come from the word of God. May the good Lord loosen the scales from our eyes that we may all see more clearly to serve Him. (D. R. C.)