

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEREAN CLASSES

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

In sending current report to Tabernacle I feel constrained to express anew my hearty Christian Love for you, as I perceive the activity of our opponents increasing in their efforts to overthrow the work committed to you. You have our prayers, as well as our sympathy, in the trials incidental to the various attacks being made in the public press against you. I feel confident the same Grace which has held you up in the past will prove sufficient to the end.

Most of the classes seem to be leaping forward in the things of the Spirit, as though trying to make amends for past slackness.

I notice a few classes making the serious mistake of thinking a constant change is essential to "keep from getting into a rut." Thus in one class the Lord evidently saw a more competent leader was needed, and He sent a brother to work here who had the necessary qualifications. After serving two six months' terms *that spirit of change refused to elect him*, or, rather, prompted him to think he ought not to be elected again. The present Elder is a good brother, but the two as Elders together would be able to accomplish manifold more. – Eccle. 4:9-12.

That same idea causes *this class to shift its meetings around, even including the Sunday services*, until some of the irregular attendants are discouraged from going out for fear they will go to one home and find the meeting is not to be held there. That *is one reason why they never become regular attendants*.

Another thing, some of the classes need advice upon the *conduct of Berean classes, as quite a few places where they think they have Berean classes they really have preaching services*. The Elder asks

the questions, one or two of the friends give a very brief answer, and then *the Elder preaches a 10 or 15-minute sermon; this is repeated with next question, and so to the end.*

There are some very small and weak classes where I can [R5143 : page 378] imagine this might be allowable, but in every case where I have found it to be their method there *seemed to be no excuse for it.*

We have been enjoying very precious fellowship with the Brethren in Illinois, and are greatly rejoicing in the privileges of service in the cause which has as its object the glory of God. With much Christian Love,

Yours in His Precious Name,

BENJ. H. BARTON.

THE EDITOR'S REPLY

I embrace this opportunity to endorse the statement of Brother Barton, given above. We need to keep well balanced. While the Classes are to retain the full control of their own affairs, this does not mean that they should ever speak or think slightingly of those whom they have chosen, under what they believe to be Divine Guidance, to be their Elders or leaders. Let us remember the Apostle's words, "Obey those who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." – Heb. 13:17.

A faithful leader, who does not attempt to take the control from the hands of the Class, can be, and should be, trusted greatly. His is a labor of love, and not for filthy lucre; and the love of the whole Class should be freely paid to him as in a measure a reward for his faithfulness in the service. This does not mean that the control should be left in the hands of one Elder, nor that he should feel offended that others should be brought to the front, even if he be the most competent one. As Elder brethren the leaders should be on the lookout to help,

encourage and instruct all the younger brethren, and to prepare them for the work of Deacons, and, subsequently, for Eldership.

Some of the Lord's dear people seem a little inclined to run to the extreme. Strong characters are always in danger of going to extremes. The Apostle exhorts, "Let your moderation be known to all." To have our affairs conducted decently and in order is not Babylonish in any evil sense. Can we imagine Heaven as without rules, regulations and order? Do we not recognize that order is Heaven's first law? Does not the Apostle intimate that the Lord is setting the various members in the Body as it pleases Him? Could it be wrong for us to co-operate with God in the recognition of His will and in carrying it out? Surely not! It is just as bad, or even worse, for a small minority to tyrannize over the majority as it would be for a reasonable majority to tyrannize over the minority. The spirit of love bids us remember the Golden Rule, and be as generous to others as we would have them be to us.

I quite agree with Brother Barton's suggestions respecting too great a desire for change. Recently we learned of one Class which rotates its leaders every week. This would not be so bad, of course, for prayer and testimony meeting, though even then it would appear as if a month or a quarter **[R5143 : page 379]** would be better for each leader; but in the case of the Berean Studies a weekly change seems *very injurious*, both for the leader and for the Class. Continuity, connection with previous lessons, is very desirable. We recommend at least three months' incumbency for Berean Study leaders.

RESPECTING BEREAN STUDIES

Brother Barton's suggestion is good, that a successful teacher is **one** who draws the answers from the Class. It is in this very particular that the Berean Studies are helping the Lord's people more and more. Now, it is true that some persons who have a talent for talking or preaching have insufficient talent for teaching – for drawing answers from the Class. In such a case it might be well to give different Elders

an opportunity to show whether they possess aptness to teach, which the Apostle explains to be one of the qualifications of an Elder.

Many Class leaders report that it is impossible for them to get the friends to study the lesson in advance. It is a pity that this is so, but it would not be wise to cause offense to any or to hinder any from attending the meetings by berating them for failure to study the lessons. We advise another course: At the beginning of each study let the pages of Studies in the Scriptures referred to in the lesson be read by some one capable of reading clearly, distinctly, forcefully; and then shut the books and discuss the subject along the lines of the questions. A very helpful way is for the leader to assist by gathering up some of the fragmentary statements of an answer and helping to put them together. The effect is to encourage the answerers for another occasion and to make the answers more valuable for the time. On the whole, the Berean Studies, we are sure, are doing very effective work in grounding and establishing in the Truth.

We urge all the dear brethren that they keep up the regular reading of the **STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES**, ten to twelve pages a day, wholly regardless of the Berean lessons. What will be read will be so much of aid in connection with the lesson studies.

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