

What Does the Bible Teach About the “One Cup, No Bible Classes” Movement?



Historical Background

- Today, over 1,100 congregations in the U.S. are non-class churches. These churches are divided over whether individual containers may be used to serve the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper.
 - In 565 non-class congregations, individual containers are used.
 - In 561 churches, one cup is used.

Historical Background

- ❑ Non-class groups are found in 28 states and contain 1.8% of professed members of churches of Christ.
 - Prominent in Texas (197), Oklahoma (66), Arkansas (55)
- ❑ One cup congregations are found in 34 states, and constitute only 1.4% of the total membership.
 - Leading states are Texas (103), California (59), Oklahoma (50), and Missouri (50)
 - One Cup groups claim their highest percentage in Pennsylvania (12%).

Historical Background

- Non-class brethren disagree among themselves over the use of a located preacher.
 - **Mutual edification** (or mutual ministry) suggests that the engagement of a person as the exclusive “preacher” for the congregation be disallowed in favor of giving all male members an opportunity to “edify” the church in public assembly.
 - Concentrated in Missouri, and total 141 churches accounting for only 1% of churches of Christ.

Historical Background

- ❑ Churches which espouse premillennial ideas number only 81, found primarily in Kentucky (46) and in Louisiana (21).
- ❑ A few congregations subscribe to the A.D. 70 theory (4).
- ❑ A few teach baptism in the name of Jesus only (3).
- ❑ These do not represent major divisions.

The One Cup Issue

- Don L. King, publisher of Old Paths Advocate in 1997 wrote: "We are concerned with things we hear about the subject of fellowship. Why do we worship with one-cup? Answer: because we read it plainly in Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25-28. Is it wrong, sinful to use more than one? Answer: yes, because more than one-cup violates the example given in these verses, it violates the command for us to do as Jesus did. Listen, brethren: we believe it is wrong to use more than one-cup. We believe people are going to be lost for using more than one-cup. Surely, we believe that! If people are not going to be lost for using more than one, then let's give up the fight and heal the division caused by those who have insisted on using more than one. Individual cups are a sinful violation of the Bible pattern. What about Bible Classes? Is it right to divide the public assembly into classes for the purpose of teaching and allow women to teach? The pattern is always an undivided assembly with one man at a time doing the teaching."

The One Cup Issue

- ❑ Throughout the history of the Restoration movement, most churches of Christ followed the denominational pattern of using a limited number of chalices or cups.
 - Bethany church of Christ and Alexander Campbell
- ❑ The use of individual communion cups was introduced in a Congregational Church in Putnam County, Ohio in 1893 by Rev. Dr. J. G. Thomas.
 - In March 1913, the Apostolic Way edited by Dr. G. A. Trott denounced the “cups” fashion.
 - H. C. Harper, J. W. McGarvey, and David Lipscomb were very vocal against individual cups.

The One Cup Issue

- David Lipscomb: "Communion is a joint participation of two or more in one work or service. The communion of the Lord's Supper is the joint participation of the members in the loaf and in the cup. This shows a communion of the many on one cup and one bread. To divide the cup and bread into many parts and for each to partake of his own bread and cup destroys the idea of communion and separates them into many instead of a communion into one. It is very certain the bread and cup were not divided into many parts in the days of Jesus and the apostles, and the feeling grows up from a disposition to follow other rules than the example of the Master."

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ The Lord does not approve of this division.
 - John 17:17-21 - "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. 20 I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me."
 - John 13:34-35 - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- Use of Metonymy in the Scriptures:
 - "METONYMY is a combination of two Greek words: "META" - Change, and "ONOMA" - name; Hence a change of name; the employment of one name or word for another" (*Hermeneutics by D. R. Dungan*)

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ They have “Moses and the Prophets” which means the books or writings of Moses and the prophets - Luke 16:29.
- ❑ “The earth was corrupt” means the people living in the earth were corrupt - Gen. 6:11.
- ❑ “God so loved the world” - John 3.16,17. He loved the people in the world.
- ❑ Noah “prepared an ark to the saving of his house” - Heb. 11:7. “HOUSE” is the metonymy which stands for his family and not a physical structure.
- ❑ “House of God” for the family of God - 1Tim. 3.15.

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ The Samaritan woman asked Jesus, “Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?” - John 4:12. Does that mean that all put their lips to the well? Did they drink the well or the water contained in the well?
- ❑ Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one thing stands for another.
 - Hired hand means a hired person, not just his hand.
 - 500 head of cattle are 500 whole cows, not just the heads.
 - The cup means the contents of the cup, fruit of the vine, not the container itself.

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ “This (cup) is my blood of the New Testament” - Matt. 26:26-29. “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until...”
- ❑ “This (cup) is my blood of the New Testament” - Mark 14:22-25. “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until...”
- ❑ “This cup is the New Testament in my blood” - Luke 22:17-20.
- ❑ “The cup which we drink, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” - 1Cor. 10:16
- ❑ “This cup is the New Testament in my blood” - 1Cor. 11:25.

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ “Take this (cup) and divide it among yourselves” - Luke 22:17-18
 - Did Christ mean to divide the container or the contents?
- ❑ Christ did not take a plate for the bread, but the one cup folks do. Will they be lost if they use a plate, because it is not specifically authorized?
- ❑ Where was the Lord’s Supper instituted?
 - In an “Upper Room” - Mark 14:14-16, 22-25.
 - Why don’t they bind an upper room?

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- How Many Elements in the Supper?
 - Those who advocate one cup say there are three elements:
 - The bread represents the Body
 - The fruit of the Vine represents the Blood
 - The Cup (container) represents the New Testament.
 - They have failed to rightly divide the word.

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ Paul said, "For as often as ye eat this bread (first element) and drink this cup (second element)..." - 1Cor. 11.26.
 - There is no physical way one can drink a container.
- ❑ Paul says further, "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (vs. 27).
 - Paul does not say one would be guilty of the body and container of the Lord (which would be a third element).

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- Matt. 26:27 - Jesus "Took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying 'Drink from it, all of you.'"
 - Did Jesus mean they should drink the container or contents?
- In verse 28, He says, "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
 - Was His blood the container or contents?

What Do The Scriptures Say?

- ❑ In verse 29 He says, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom." Was the fruit of the vine the container or contents?
- ❑ Jesus told His disciples, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name ... he shall not lose his reward" - Mark 9:41. If someone gave one of them two cups of water, would he lose his reward?
- ❑ Clearly the references are to the contents and not the container.

Questions

- ❑ While passing the fruit of the vine to the assembly, if the cup should be accidentally dropped and broken and its contents spilled, how would you scripturally serve the remainder of the assembly?
- ❑ If the cup represents the New Testament and there was only one cup, how many New Testaments should be in the assembly? Can there be more than one New Testament in the assembly?

Questions

- ❑ If only one cup is to be used, how are Christians around the world to partake when only one cup is used? If one says one cup in each church, he has the church using ten thousand cups around the world.
- ❑ 1Corinthians 10:16-17 mentions "one bread." Must all Christians around the world partake of the same loaf of unleavened bread?
- ❑ Luke 4:17 speaks of the Bible as "the book" (singular). Do you object to the fact that there is more than one copy of the Bible?

Conclusions

- ❑ The argument of one cup only is not valid. It is clear that Jesus intended to focus, not on the container, but on its contents.
- ❑ When brethren bind what God has loosed and make it a test of fellowship, they have become sectarian and denominational.
- ❑ Therefore, one cup, no Bible class, or mutual edification congregations that bind these matters as tests of fellowship are denominational churches of Christ.



Are Bible Classes Biblical?

There Have Been Bible Classes From The Beginning

- Patriarchal Age

- Gen. 9:8-9 - “Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: ‘And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you.’”

- Gen. 18:19 - “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice...”

There Have Been Bible Classes From The Beginning

- Early Mosaic Period
 - 2Chron. 15:3 - “For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law.”
 - 2Chron. 17:8-9 - “And with them he sent Levites... the priests. So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.”

There Have Been Bible Classes From The Beginning

- Late Mosaic Period
 - Neh. 8:7-8 - “Also Jeshua... and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.”

There Have Been Bible Classes From The Beginning

- Close of the Mosaic Period
 - Luke 19:47 - “And He was teaching daily in the temple...”
 - John 7:14 - “Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.”
 - John 8:2, 4 - “Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them... they said to Him, ‘Teacher’...”

There Have Been Bible Classes From The Beginning

- The beginning of the Christian Dispensation
 - Acts 5:42 - “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”
 - Acts 18:24-26 - “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- There are no verses that say, “Thou shalt hold Bible classes in local churches.” However, the scriptures authorize and mandate the practice.
- The authorized office of teacher in the church:
 - Eph. 4:11-12 - “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- The authorized office of teacher in the church:
 - 1Cor. 12:28-29 - “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?”
 - Gal. 6:6 - “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”
- Local churches are required to have active teachers; this tacitly presupposes the existence of Bible classes.

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- All Christians need to make the effort develop teaching ability.
 - 2Tim. 2:24 - “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient”
 - Heb. 5:12 - “For though by this time you ought to be teachers...”
- Not all Christians will become teachers.
 - James 3:1 - “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- Elders are responsible to feed the flock; part of that is determining how often and to what extent the local flock feeds.
 - 1Peter 5:2 - “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers...”
 - Acts 20:28 - “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- How classes are conducted is determined by autonomous congregations.
 - By sending individuals out to teach one on one - Acts 5:42
 - By holding studies in homes - Acts 10:24-25, 33
 - In public settings - Acts 16:13-14
 - In facilities rented or owned by the local church - Rom. 16:5

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- Bible classes are a work of the church, but not the exclusive work of the church.
 - The scriptures speak of individuals who taught apart from the direct oversight of a local congregation - Acts 8:26-40
 - The scriptures speak of families who gather for Bible study - Eph. 6:4

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- The scriptures speak of schools of prophets who studied the law of Moses and the prophets.
 - 2Kings 6:1 - “And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us.”
- The scriptures speak of groups of teachers and preachers traveling about teaching and preaching.
 - Acts 21:8 - “On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.”

Can A Local Church Conduct Bible Classes?

- No Bible Class Congregations acknowledge this, but mandate that Christians are limited to a single class attended by all taught by only one teacher. When one asserts or limits more than what is revealed or implied in the word, the onus of proof falls upon him. Such brethren begin with an assumption: “Christians cannot separate into Bible classes.” Then they interpret the scriptures through the lens of their assumption.

Who Is To Be Taught In The Bible Classes?

- Doesn't the Bible say that children are to be taught at home?
 - Fathers are to teach children.
 - Eph. 6:4 - "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."
 - Mothers are to teach their children.
 - Prov. 1:8 - "My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother"
 - 2Tim 3:15, 1:5

Who Is To Be Taught In The Bible Classes?

- Jesus and John taught children that were not their own offspring.
 - Mark 10:14-16
 - 1John 2:13 - “I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.”

Can A Sister Teach Bible Classes?

- Yes
 - Titus 2:3-5 - “The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.”

Can A Sister Teach Bible Classes?

- However, there are limits on whom, where, and when a woman may teach.
 - A woman may not exercise authority over men in a formal, spiritual setting.
 - 1Cor. 11:3; 1Tim 2:11-15
 - However, she can participate in teaching a man in an informal setting.
 - Acts 18:26

Can A Sister Teach Bible Classes?

- A woman can participate in a Bible class so long as she does not oversee it. Silence in church notwithstanding.
 - 1Cor. 14:34-37
- Even in the assembly, there are occasions where women must speak.
 - Singing - Eph. 5:19
 - Confession before baptism - Rom. 10:9-10
- Women spoke in spiritual gatherings.
 - Sapphira responded to Peter's question - Acts 5:8
 - Rhoda announced Peter's release - Acts 12:12-15

Is Bible Class A Part Of Worship?

- The scriptures recognize that there is a difference between a Bible class and a worship assembly; it is based on the intent and purpose for the gathering. To be a part of worship, it must be done when the whole congregation is called together for the purpose of worship.
 - 1Cor. 11:18, 20, 33 - “For first of all, when you come together as a church... Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper... Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”

Is Bible Class A Part Of Worship?

- In a worship assembly, 1) all, 2) come together, 3) to worship.
- In a Bible study, 1) all, 2) separate into different classes, 3) for the purpose of Bible study.

Is Bible Class A Part Of Worship?

- Not every assembly of brethren is for worship.
 - Acts 15:4, 6, 22 - “And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them... Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter... Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.”

The Differences Between the Assembled Church and a Bible Class


- Bible study does not require meeting with others.
 - Church assembly for worship requires meeting with others.
- Bible study can happen with strangers and unbelievers.
 - A church functions only with other believers gathering together regularly.
- Bible study does not need to have doctrinal agreement. They work toward it.
 - The church requires doctrinal agreement in order to be the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Differences Between the Assembled Church and a Bible Class

- Bible classes may be formed to help others discover the Bible rightly divided.
 - A church must be formed on the apostolic pattern established on scripture already rightly divided.
- A Bible study class will fulfill its purpose when it is done studying.
 - A church cannot fulfill its purpose until it works out what it has studied. A church that only studies without doing the work is not functioning properly.
- Bible study classes have no responsibility to others in the group.
 - The church exhorts members to edify, sanctify, and serve each other.

The Differences Between the Assembled Church and a Bible Class

- Bible study classes may study something questionable to see if it is true.
 - A church has a responsibility to avoid wrong teaching and encourage separation from the world.
- Bible study classes do not require a specified order.
 - Churches have leadership that is responsible to keep order in the church.
- Bible studies require no long term commitment. Studies are changed as students advance in age and learning.
 - To function as a church, there must be a commitment to its work.

The background of the slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of an open Bible. The pages are yellowed with age, and the dark cover of the book is visible. The text is overlaid in white, making it stand out against the darker background.

The Differences Between the Assembled Church and a Bible Class

- A Bible study takes less work and there is no need for direct personal involvement. Participation can be passive.
- A church has more functions and requires personal responsibility to function. Church ministry encourages active participation.

The Bible Emphasizes Bible Study

- We put heavy emphasis on Bible classes in this local congregation, because the word of God puts emphasis on Bible study as a work of the church.
- In view of the fact that God's word requires it, the elders here are diligent to make sure they are quality classes, and the teachers do an exceptional job teaching them, then why are so many choosing to wait until after the classes to come on Sunday morning or treating Wednesday night lightly and negligently?

The Bible Emphasizes Bible Study

- You are required to study the word of God.
 - 2Tim. 2:15 - “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
- If you are convinced that you are getting sufficient Bible study without the teaching you receive in Bible classes, then you know more than the Lord; for, He wills that your Bible study be supplemented by Bible study supplied by the local church.

The Bible Emphasizes Bible Study

- When brethren practice one cup or no Bible class as an expediency for the local church without binding it on others, they are faithful congregations autonomously functioning within the bounds of authority in the use or non-use of expediencies.
- When brethren bind what God has loosed and make it a test of fellowship, they have become sectarian and denominational. One cup, no Bible class, mutual edification congregations that bind these matters as tests of fellowship are denominational churches of Christ.