

## Discipline in Church Classrooms

What do you do about noisy, unruly classes? Is there some way to get discipline problems under control?

Suggestions are offered here:

1. *The most frequent cause of discipline problems is a lack of adequate planning on the part of teachers and leaders. Good planning takes into account the needs, interests, and abilities of each student. Take the time to get acquainted with the class members on an individual basis. Learn their names and enjoy visiting with each one! Let each student know that you value him or her as a person. Then the likelihood of discipline problems is diminished right at the start! If we care enough about the class and its progress, we will take very seriously the need for writing good lesson plans; that is, our plans will make provisions for getting students involved.*

A teacher should work long enough on a lesson plan to be able to say: "This is interesting stuff. If I were a student in this class, I'd enjoy being present!" By going into the classroom really prepared for the day's work, the teacher is free to meet students at their own levels of interest. He/she can be a warm, caring human being instead of a worried, anxious teacher who wonders inside, "What will I do next? How can we fill up the time today?" Students feel much more secure with teachers who are prepared: *Security is a vital ingredient for maintaining discipline of the best sort.*

2. *Students are much happier and cooperative in situations where they have taken some personal responsibility for what happens. Another way to put it is to say that a class needs to belong to students--to belong to them in the sense that it is their class and not just the teacher's idea. Teachers are still in the leading role, but not everything should depend on them.*

One way to go about helping students to own their classes is to have small group meetings. Be sure all the members eventually become involved in evaluating and making suggestions for the classes.

First, let the students respond freely to this question: "What do you like about your class?" Make a list on a chalkboard, accepting every serious response. Replies will vary: "We like the songs we sing," or "We like the times when we discuss our own questions."

Then the students can respond to a second question: "What would you like to see us do to make the class better than it is?" A serious list of suggestions for improvement can be added in a second column on the chalkboard. Finally, after all the small group meetings are over, and the results of the interviews have been compiled, act quickly on the students' suggestions. This is one sure way of helping them to