



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Teacher Tips by Wendy Guthrie

HAVING ADDRESSED the role of classroom engagement last month, we now move to the issue of shared responsibility in building community. This installment, the third of our four-part series, focuses on the responsibility of class members to build community because community is, by definition, something that is shared. Community helps achieve our mutual goal as it fosters mutual support and mutual trust.

Mutual Goal

Every Sunday your class comes together to learn about God. This common purpose creates a partnership bond among the members of your class and with the Holy Spirit. This partnership ideally promotes equipping “people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12).

A learning context that encourages each member to participate actively in discussions, to accept accountability for personal Bible study, etc., will more readily achieve the desired goal of mature disciples of Jesus. When a classroom becomes community, we are providing the opportunity for learners to become vessels whom God can mold for his purposes.

Mutual Support

Transforming class into community makes it easier for learners to get involved in one another’s lives. The teacher who is intent on building community will promote and encourage such interaction outside of class. Fellowship and mutual support go hand in hand (Acts 2:42-47; etc.).

Holding monthly class socials is one way to promote community fellowship among class members. Another way is to create a class forum through social media or e-mail. This should be a closed site where class members can post prayer concerns, spiritual struggles, and personal victories. It can also be a place where class members

encourage one another on a daily basis by posting inspirational or scriptural messages. Such media allow students to practice biblical fellowship as they bear one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2), share in spiritual victories (Romans 1:12) and personal joys (Philemon 7), and comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18). This is the essence of the bonds of mutual support in community.

Note that you, the teacher, can only *foster* such mutual support—you cannot create it yourself. The idea of community dictates a shared responsibility on the part of students; indeed, they will play the major part in making it work. As they help build community, they will find themselves tearing down walls of fear and isolation as those walls are replaced by the support of fellowship.

Mutual Trust

The more your learners trust one another, the better they will function as a unified whole rather than as individual parts. Learners provide themselves opportunities to help one another grow in biblical understanding as they participate in creating community by embracing the shared responsibility of engaged learning. As they do, they will find themselves working together to implement biblical solutions to personal and congregational problems. Struggling together in this way challenges individualistic ways of thinking.

Students become better connected with one another as they interact in such ways outside of class. In so doing, they grow to trust one another with personal flaws and shortcomings. The result will be continued growth in spiritual attributes, fulfilling Jesus’ desire that his disciples mature in thought and action (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Mutual trust both builds and is built by community in a positive cycle of reinforcement. But wait—what about service? Isn’t that a vital part of building community? Indeed it is, and that will be the topic of our final installment, next article.