

How To Begin a Community Bible Class

Increase your Sunday school attendance
by as much as 30% or more

Please read these procedures in their entirety. As you read, look for principles, not methods. Methods of reaching people vary from place to place, but principles remain the same. Also, look for the possibilities not the problems. Anyone can see the problems, but it takes people of faith to see the possibilities.

If you look at the problems first, you will get discouraged. Look at the possibilities first; then you will be motivated to overcome the problems. Anything worthwhile will have many problems. Don't be like the Israelites when they first came to the border of the Promised Land. After the spies returned, the vote was two million to two not to go take possession of the land. Why? They looked at the problems, not the possibilities with God on their side.

It doesn't take any faith to see the problems or difficulties, but it does take faith to see the possibilities and what God can do when we step out on faith.

As someone has said, "Only a fool does the same thing the same way and expects a different result." Look for new ways to reach people as you read this.

The CBC is a bridge class. It can meet in your church auditorium or fellowship hall. The CBC is designed to reach people who do not attend a "traditional" Sunday school class. The material taught in the class is *Journey Of A Lifetime*, which should have already been taught in your church to give your regular members an opportunity to take the course. Regular church members should not attend this class because they are intimidating to the non-churched in a Bible study situation. There are many people who will attend this kind of class but would never darken the doors of your church.

The class should also be publicized as a "**no strings attached Bible study**," indicating no one will be pressured to join a church or make any kind of decision. Also, people are assured they will never be called on to read, pray, or speak in any manner.

The pastor should teach this class. There are several reasons for the class being taught by the pastor. The pastor is looked upon in the community as a knowledgeable and trained Bible teacher. The pastor is also probably the best large group teacher in the church. By his teaching the class, attendees will get to know the pastor and feel comfortable with him. Then, when they decide to make a decision for Christ, it will be much easier for them.

The CBC has at least four advantages over the traditional Sunday school class or small group Bible study:

First, a large class offers anonymity (the feeling of being anonymous), so the unchurched are not intimidated by feeling they will “stick out like a sore thumb.”

Second, the fear of being called on to pray, read, or speak is totally eliminated. The number one fear of every human being is to be embarrassed in front of a group of people.

Third, the most appealing study to non-churched persons is one that will give them an overview of the entire Bible. Everybody wants to know about the #1 best seller of all time. They will come for the sake of knowledge, even though initially they may not be concerned about their spiritual condition. *Journey of A Lifetime* has been designed specifically for this type of outreach and study. This CBC will not work nearly as well with traditional Sunday school literature or literature designed for small groups.

Fourth, the “laid back” atmosphere produced by casual dress and coffee and donuts is appealing, especially to those who often are turned off by traditional Bible study methods.

You must be patient because decisions will result through the process of osmosis. Over the course of the study, many in the class will make decisions for Christ, as a natural result of being exposed to the Word of God. However, you are dealing with people on the spiritual fringe, so don't try to rush them. Remember . . . *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17, NKJV). In some cases, four or five months may need to pass before you begin to reap from the spiritual seeds sown in the class. I have seen a few take two or three years before making a decision for Christ. Give God's Word time to work (see Isaiah 55:10-11 & Hebrews 4:12).

CBC Countdown Sheet

Three Months Before:

_____ Explain the concept to church leaders, deacons, etc. Build a consensus beginning with church leaders. Remember the old saying that is perhaps the most important thing a pastor needs to remember when presenting a new program or idea: “Most people are down on whatever they are not up on.” So, get your church leaders up on the way a CBC can reach out in a unique way. Get them excited about the possibilities.

_____ Lead the church to set up a special fund so church members can donate to the expenses of getting the class started. You will need money for advertising, study materials, etc. Some church members will give to something like this when they seldom give to anything else. Explain and promote this fund in the church newsletter and bulletin.

_____ Explain that the expenses will take care of themselves. The average adult in the USA who attends the CBC will give about \$10 per Sunday by the end of the first year,

or \$520 a year. For every ten people, you can expect around \$5,000 to be given annually after the first year. Even if it's only \$5 each, every ten people will give \$2,500 annually. So, a CBC isn't really an expense; it is a new financial resource for your church.

_____ Choose a name for the class that is not denominational. You can call it the "Community Bible Class," or the Pastor's Class. For me, "Community Bible Class" has worked best.

Eight Weeks Before:

_____ Begin promoting the class in the church newsletter, bulletin, and from the pulpit, asking people to begin praying about whose names they will turn in as prospects. Explain God will bring someone to their attention as they pray. Request they turn in the names of people they believe are reachable, not the most hardened and indifferent people in town. Do not give out prospect cards until members have had at least one week to pray about the names they will turn in.

_____ Print an adequate number of prospect cards. Include blanks for name, address, and phone number of prospect. This can be done on the church's copy machine. Print the prospect cards on card stock. Twice your Sunday school attendance is a good number with which to begin.

_____ Have a Sunday school officers' and teachers' meeting to explain the CBC. Have prospect cards available for all adult teachers to distribute in the Sunday school classes on Sunday. They will need at least one for each person enrolled in their class. Explain that each Sunday school teacher and deacon is asked to turn in at least two prospects and other church members at least one. Make it fun by saying, "Teachers and deacons are asked to do more because the Bible teaches that in heaven they will receive a stricter judgment, and as a good pastor, I'm just trying to keep you out of trouble when you get to heaven." A prospect is a person who does not attend Sunday school or church anywhere.

_____ In all meetings and promotion, explain that the correct mailing address and phone number are critically important because you will be sending each prospect a personal letter before you call them.

Seven Weeks Before:

_____ Teachers should distribute prospect cards in all adult Sunday school classes. They should also be distributed in the worship services. Explain that the persons turned in on the cards will be invited to the Community Bible Class. Briefly explain the course, *Journey Of A Lifetime*. Stress it could make a difference in where someone they know will spend eternity, so they should turn in at least one name.

_____ Continue to promote and explain the class.

____ Encourage people to begin turning in the prospect cards.

Six, Five, & Four Weeks Before:

____ Continue promoting the new class in Sunday school and worship and collecting prospect cards.

____ Continue promoting the CBC in the church bulletin and newsletter.

____ Offer a free gift for those who attend. The two most effective words in advertising are “New” and “Free.” Take advantage of that fact).

Three Weeks Before::

____ Run first ad in local newspaper.

____ Continue encouraging members to turn in prospects.

Two Weeks Before:

____ Order a text for each person you anticipate enrolling and at least ten percent more for late enrollees. All orders are shipped within 24 hours of receipt of order. Using the toll free number or website is about two to four days faster than mailing your order.

____ Continue to run an ad in the local newspaper.

____ Enlist someone you enroll this week to be responsible for the coffee. Make sure it is someone you can depend on. Have coffeepot, coffee, and cups provided by the church. This person is responsible to see everything is ready for Sunday morning.

____ Enlist at least one people person to greet people as they arrive and to give out the lessons. Involve as many people as possible so they will feel a part of the class.

____ Continue encouraging your people to turn in prospects.

____ Send [“Sample Letter Number One”](#) to all prospects. Two things are critical in this letter, in all advertising, and phone calls. **1. Emphasize no one will be called on to pray, read, or speak in any way.** Remember the number one human fear is to be embarrassed in front of a group of people. The devil convinces many people if they come to Bible study, their greatest fear will come true. **2. Explain if they come and do not like the class for any reason, you will never pester them about coming back.** You can’t over emphasize these two things.

One Week Before:

_____ Make every effort to call every prospect before Sunday. This is very difficult, but the Lord will bless your hard work.

_____ Continue to encourage people to turn in prospects. Try to get a number equal to your average Sunday school attendance.

_____ Make enough copies of the [CBC Roll](#) to list all the people you have enrolled. When listing enrollees alphabetically, leave two blanks each time a name begins with a new letter, so you can add people who enroll later.

_____ Obtain letter-size legal pads to pass around at the beginning of the class for people to sign. You will need one for each section of chairs or pews.

_____ Have registration cards available to get the name, address, and phone number of everyone who attends.

The First Class:

_____ About ten minutes after class begins, pass legal pads around in each section of chairs or pews in the class for people to sign as a way of keeping an attendance record.

_____ Have name tags available. They will be a real asset in developing fellowship within the class. They will also greatly aid the pastor in learning the names of class members. The pastor or teacher should also always wear a name tag at each class.

_____ Be sure to have all answers on transparencies for an overhead projector or use a PowerPoint® presentation. Many people are poor spellers and having to write the answers may be embarrassing for them. Also, many people are visual learners, so this makes it much easier for them to learn. Anything visual will make the class more interesting and even exciting. You can make your own transparencies, using at least a bold 16-point font. Answers on paper masters for overhead transparencies and on PowerPoint® CD's are also available for purchase from the publisher.

_____ Be sure not to teach too long; about 45 minutes is adequate. People should leave anxious to come back; not glad a long class is finally over.

_____ Do not take up an offering in the first class, and don't have any offering envelopes in sight. Many people will already suspect you wanted them to come just to get their money. I usually don't take an offering for at least four to six weeks after beginning a new class. By that time, people are already asking about when they can give.

_____ Explain that everyone will miss class occasionally. Tell them you will also miss because of vacations, revivals, conventions, etc. Then ask, "How many of you stop

eating when you miss a meal?" In the same way, don't quit coming to church when you miss a class because this is spiritual food.

_____ Always end every class by telling them the title of the next lesson and giving them some interesting topic or fact that will be discussed. Make sure everyone always leaves anticipating the next lesson.

One Week After:

_____ Mail "[Sample Letter Number Two](#)" to all new enrollees who attended the CBC.

_____ This week and every week hereafter, go over the CBC Roll and check those present. Contact those who miss more than two consecutive weeks.

Follow Through:

Each week send a letter to every new attendee. Share your excitement about the class and a word about the next lesson. This will keep people coming and let them know you are still thinking about them. After the first six or seven weeks, call those who have missed two or more times in a row. Let them know you are not calling to scold them but just to let them know you have missed them in the class.

The attendance will drop off some after the first three or four weeks, but the letters and phone calls will keep the dropouts to a minimum. In two to four months, people in the class will usually begin to make meaningful decisions for Christ, as God's Word begins to produce fruit. Teach God's Word, and He will bless your efforts, perhaps more than in your greatest dreams.