

# Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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April 5, 2009

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

## ORGANIZING LITERACY CLASSES IN THE CONGREGATION

Dear Brothers:

A Christian's spiritual progress is dependent upon his ability to read God's Word. Knowing how to read the Bible and Christian publications enables a person to become intimately acquainted with Jehovah and his purposes. This results in strong faith and helps a person to maintain integrity, even under trial. (Ps. 1:3; compare Deuteronomy 17:18-20.) In contrast, one who cannot read, cannot enroll in the Theocratic Ministry School, cannot share in the privilege of auxiliary or regular pioneering and will never be able to qualify to serve as a ministerial servant or an elder. All elders should therefore be highly concerned that all Christians, young or old, know how to read with understanding.

Reports from traveling overseers indicate that the literacy classes may not be functioning well in many congregations. Some classes are not conducted regularly, while others are not conducted effectively and are poorly attended. This should be a concern to all of us, since this can directly affect a person's spirituality. Helpful information can be found in the December 2004 *Our Kingdom Ministry* in the article entitled, "Apply Yourself to Reading and Writing." The article was designed to encourage individual members of the congregation who are illiterate, to make a sincere effort to learn to read and write. To do this however, your congregational arrangement for literacy classes must be organized and conducted in an effective way.

The body of elders is responsible to make adequate arrangements for literacy classes in their own congregation. Under their direction, the Theocratic Ministry School overseer and his assistant, have direct oversight of these classes. They need to take a personal interest in the way the classes are conducted. From time to time they should sit in on the classes to give encouragement and offer any suggestions on how the course can be improved.—See *Benefit from Theocratic Education*, page 285, "Guidelines for School Overseers."

Some elders may feel that they do not have the problem of illiteracy in their congregation. However, in many cases, a brother or sister cannot read well. This lack of fluency can hold them back from making spiritual progress. This may even be true of some who are elders, ministerial servants or pioneers in your congregation. Therefore, the body of elders should be greatly concerned that all publishers, including pioneers, ministerial servants and elders, make the effort to read well, since this can affect their ability to 'benefit themselves' spiritually.—Isa. 48:17.

With this in mind we would like to ask all bodies of elders to review their present arrangements to teach those who are illiterate to read and write. Please review carefully the following guidelines. It would then be appropriate to make any adjustments necessary so that classes are conducted properly and effectively.

## ORGANIZING LITERACY CLASSES IN YOUR CONGREGATION

The body of elders should give careful consideration to page 64 of *Apply Yourself to Reading and Writing* and page 285 of *Benefit from Theocratic Education* as well as the following instructions when organizing their literacy classes:

**Students:** The qualifications for enrolling in literacy classes are the same as the requirements for those enrolling in the Theocratic Ministry School, as set forth on page 68, paragraph 1, of *Organized to do Jehovah's Will*. Others, who are not illiterate but who cannot read well, may also be given group, or one-on-one tutoring, and this can be arranged through the Theocratic Ministry School overseer.—*be* p. 285 pp. 4-7.

Please note: In some areas, although school-age children become very literate in English, their parents may choose to attend a congregation of a different language group. In this case it would be the responsibility of the parents, not the congregation, to help the children to become literate in the language of their congregation. They would do this at home, and may find it helpful to use the brochure *Apply Yourself to Reading and Writing*. They would also endeavor to educate their children in using the language through regular family worship and preaching activities. (See the article: "How to Help Your Children Develop a Love for Reading" in the *Awake!* of February 22, 1994, page 9.) Any exceptions to this may be considered by the Theocratic Ministry School overseer.

**Classroom:** Should be free of noise and other distractions. It should be neat, well ventilated and have good seating.

**Lighting:** Lighting should be adequate so that all can see well. Where there is no electricity, it may be necessary to provide pressure lamps or lanterns for the students.

**Chalkboard, Chalk, Duster:** These items will be provided by the congregation for the class. The students should purchase their own exercise books and pencils.

**Textbooks:** Each student should obtain a copy of the new teaching aid, *Apply Yourself to Reading and Writing*. All older publications used in the past should be replaced by this new publication. After completing the textbook, the student should be ready to read *My Book of Bible Stories* and go on to the Bible itself.

**Time:** The time that would be convenient for holding the classes should be discussed between the teachers and students. A time suitable for the majority should be chosen by the elders. Students should be helped to appreciate that they need to arrange their affairs so as to attend the classes at the appointed time. This will require that they "make sure of the more important things" when arranging their affairs so as to attend. (Phil. 1:10) However, individual assistance can be given to someone whose circumstances clearly do not allow him to attend the scheduled classes. Late afternoons and early evenings are found to be most suitable. Classes should not be held late in the night, since students will become sleepy. Classes should not be held at the same time that the student talks in the Theocratic Ministry School are being given.—*be* p. 285.

**Duration:** Each period is usually one hour in length or at most, one-and-half hours total.

**Frequency:** It is best to have two or three sessions a week. If the students apply themselves this should help learners become literate within six to eight months.

## SELECTING TEACHERS FOR THE SCHOOL

Elders should give careful consideration when selecting teachers for the class. Preferably, this assignment should be given to a brother who is a good reader and well acquainted with the language. If a brother is not available, a capable, exemplary sister can be assigned to help. She should wear a head covering when instructing the class.

**Qualifications:** In addition to knowing the language, the person should be positive, joyful and friendly. He should be someone who is punctual and does not procrastinate, so that classes start and end on time. Since the teacher will be dealing mainly with adults, he or she must be approachable, humble, tactful and respectful. The teacher should be someone who is patient and be willing to take the time to identify the students individual needs and use these as basis to help each one. The person must be reliable so that classes are not canceled because the teacher is not available. Never should the students be criticized or ridiculed. Therefore, personal characteristics such as mildness, self-control and long-suffering are very important.

When re-organizing the class, it would be good for you to replace the present teacher if he or she does not meet the above requirements. Although this should be done in a kind and tactful manner, elders should not be afraid to make this change since our primary concern is for the progress of the students.

## TEACHING IN THE LITERACY CLASS

**Groupings:** It is best to group students according to ability and age wherever possible. Classes can be of between five and ten individuals. However, if there is only one qualified teacher, it may be practical for all of the students to be in one class. The elder appointed as the “auxiliary counselor” for the Theocratic Ministry School could concentrate on assisting any ministerial servants or elders who cannot read well. Such ones should humbly welcome any counsel and assistance given in this regard.

**Regularity:** It is beneficial, where possible, for the classes to be held two or three times a week so that the students can make rapid progress. Even if some of the students are not present, the class should be conducted for the benefit of the few who are present. If any students develop the habit of missing classes regularly, they should be assisted. Try to discern the reasons for their irregular attendance. Are they frustrated or discouraged because of slow progress? In such a case they may need individual attention so that progress is quicker. Are other activities interfering with the time needed for the classes? If so, help them to appreciate the connection between reading well and making spiritual progress. Does a student lack confidence? Offer more encouragement and commendation for what they have already accomplished.

**Effective Teaching:** Progress of the students will largely depend upon the effort made by the teacher. When classes are not conducted effectively, the student quickly become frustrated and discouraged. They may begin to see the class as a waste of time. The teacher chosen should understand what is involved before accepting the assignment. When teachers have a sincere interest in each student, they will not see the assignment as a burden. (1 John 5:3) Those selected as teachers should remember that the students are not just learning how to read and write. They are learning how to feed and care for themselves spiritually. Elders should keep in mind that it is not just the students that need encouragement from time to time. The one teaching also needs to be commended and encouraged for accepting this extra assignment.

#### OBSTACLES—HOW THEY CAN BE OVERCOME

**Poor Eyesight:** Classes can be held during the daytime. Learners involved can also be encouraged or assisted, either by individuals or by the congregation, to acquire reading glasses.

**Old Age:** Use information from *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1990, page 30; August 1, 1982, pages 3-7; and *Awake!*, May 8, 1984, page 30 to encourage any who think they are so old that they cannot learn to read.

**Apathy of Learners:** All elders should take an interest in the students. Visit individuals and commend them for the progress they are making. Do this on a regular basis. In a kind and loving way, continue to highlight the practical benefits and blessings that can be found from being able to read and write. This should be a strong incentive for the students.

**Lack of Teachers:** If a qualified brother or sister cannot be found, any qualified publisher who is reliable and willing, can be used, even if not baptized.

#### LOVING SHEPHERDS—TAKE AN INTEREST IN ILLITERATE ONES!

In the end, students must take responsibility for their own effort to learn to read and write. (Gal. 6:7) However, it is the responsibility of the elders to make sure that all arrangements for literacy classes “take place decently and by arrangement.” (1 Cor. 14:40) Please take a personal interest in our dear brothers and sisters who are illiterate. If any of the elders themselves have difficulty reading well, lovingly encourage them to make improvement in this area. This will not only help them to be better teachers in the congregation but it will enable them to keep up with their personal study and Bible reading on a regular basis.

The greatest education program on earth is now being carried out by Jehovah’s people in fulfillment of Matthew 24:14. Due to illiteracy, some of our brothers and sisters are not able to share fully in this never-to-be-repeated work. It is our prayer that Jehovah will continue to bless this worldwide effort that is now being made to teach those within the organization to read well. May Jehovah bless you brothers as you care for this important need within your congregations.

We take this opportunity to thank you for all of the good work you are doing to show loving and tender care to the flock of God.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation  
of Jehovah’s Witnesses*

PS: This letter replaces the letter dated January 20, 2005, which should be destroyed. Please add this letter to the congregation’s permanent file of policy letters for future reference. Thank you.