

# The Curriculum

The textbook is the Bible - students bring their own Bibles from home.

## Why the Bible is the Best Textbook for a Bible Curriculum

Of the various Bible curricula offered for use in the public schools, only one uses the Bible as its primary textbook, the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS). Why, you might ask, should this be? Isn't it only logical that a class on the Bible should allow students to actually hold and read that great book for themselves? While I do not purport to speak for the other groups offering a Bible course, I would suggest a few possibilities as to why they do not use the Bible as the textbook. First, of course, is the uncertainty surrounding the legality of actually reading the Bible in public schools. After all, haven't the courts banned schools from reading the Bible?

The answer to that question, thankfully, is no. The law prohibits only the mandatory reading of the Bible on a daily basis as a devotional exercise; it does not bar an elective course that permits students to read the Bible voluntarily as part of their normal school work. In fact, the Supreme Court actually encourages use of the Bible in a formal classroom setting.

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Confusion over use of the Bible in public schools, then, is not a valid excuse for not allowing students to use the Bible as a textbook.

But aside from the constitutional issue, prudential concerns over offending someone by, for example, selecting a "Protestant" version of the Bible, or a "Catholic" version over others may lead some not to employ the Bible as the primary textbook. These concerns, I suggest, are overblown and illegitimate. Indeed, carried to their logical conclusion, they would preclude ever studying the Bible at all, which would defeat the purpose of the course altogether.

Not only is the use of the Bible as a primary textbook a good way to approach a class on the Bible, I would suggest it is the best way. Any Bible curriculum that does not allow students to read it for themselves and draw their own conclusions insults the intelligence of the students and short changes them from getting a well-rounded education. In the final analysis, refusal to allow students to use their own Bibles in a Bible class is the ultimate in arrogance and arbitrary censorship. Let the students read and study the Bible itself, not what some expert says about it; it is the right thing to do.

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