

LIVING UNDER THE UNIQUE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST AND IN THE UNIQUE DIVINE FELLOWSHIP

(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two Practicing the Church Life under the Unique Headship of Christ

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:18; 2:19; 3:4; Phil. 1:1; Eph. 1:10, 22-23; 4:15-16

- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
- Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.
- Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:
- Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ^{3to be} ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.
- Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

I. The unique headship of Christ is closely related to the constitution of the church—the way in which the church is formed and arranged—Col. 1:18; Phil. 1:1:

- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:
- A. The constitution of the church is according to the truth that Christ is the unique Head; the church is constituted absolutely with Christ as life and with Christ as the unique Head—Col. 1:18; 3:4, 11.
- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.
- Col 3:11 ¹Where there ²cannot be ³Greek and ^aJew, ^{4b}circumcision and uncircumcision, ^{5c}barbarian, ⁶Scythian, ⁷slave, ⁸free man, but ^{9d}Christ is ¹⁰all and in all.
- B. The concept of organization related to the church cannot be found in the New Testament; organization leads to a hierarchy, and any kind of hierarchy is an insult to the unique headship of Christ—1:18; 2:19.
- Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.
- C. In the New Testament, among God's people there is no unique, definite, official, or permanent leadership; such a leadership would be an insult to the unique headship of Christ—Matt. 23:8-11; Acts 5:31; Heb. 13:7, 17, 21.
- Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.
- Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.
- Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.

Matt 23:11 And the ^agreatest among you shall be your servant.
 Acts 5:31 This One God has ^{1a}exalted to His ^bright hand as ²Leader and ^cSavior, to ³give ^{4d}repentance to Israel and ^eforgiveness of sins.
 Heb 13:7 ¹Remember the ones ^aleading you, who have ^bspoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their ^cmanner of life, ^dimitate their faith.
 Heb 13:17 ¹Obey the ones ^aleading you and ^bsubmit to *them*, for they ^cwatch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.
 Heb 13:21 ^aPerfect you in every ^bgood work for the ¹doing of His ^cwill, doing ^din us that which is well ^epleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ; to Him be the ^fglory forever and ever. Amen.

D. The scriptural principle with regard to eldership is plurality; this plurality keeps any elder from being an official or permanent leader—Acts 14:23:

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed ^{1a}elders for them ²in every ^bchurch and had prayed with ^cfastings, they ^dcommitted them to the Lord into whom they had believed.

1. With the plurality of the eldership, there is no definite leader, and the unique headship of Christ is regarded, preserved, and respected—Titus 1:5.

Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in ^aCrete, that you might set in order the things *which I have begun* that remain and appoint ^belders in ^{1c}every city, as I ^ddirected you:

2. The practice of making an arrangement as to who is first among the elders is contrary to the truth regarding the plurality of the eldership under the unique headship of Christ—1 Pet. 5:1.

1 Pet 5:1 ¹Therefore the ^{2a}elders among you I exhort, who am a ³fellow elder and ^{4b}witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a ⁵partaker of the ^cglory to be revealed:

3. “God has ordained that several elders together share the work of the church, so that no one individual should be able to run things according to his own pleasure, treating the church as his own special property and leaving the impress of his personality upon all its life and work...As they honor one another and trust one another to the leading of the Spirit, none taking the place of the Head, but each regarding the others as fellow members, the element of mutuality, which is the distinctive feature of the church, will be preserved” (Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 49-50).

E. We should not regard certain persons as intermediaries between us and the Lord; we must never be an intermediary between God’s people and the Lord Himself, and we must never take someone else as an intermediary between us and the Lord—Matt. 23:8-11.

Matt 23:8 But you, do not be called Rabbi, for ¹One is your ^aTeacher, and you are all ^bbrothers.

Matt 23:9 And do not call *anyone* on earth your father, for ¹One is your ^aFather, ²He who is in the heavens.

Matt 23:10 Neither be called ¹instructors, because ²One is your Instructor, the Christ.

Matt 23:11 And the ^agreatest among you shall be your servant.

II. The order of the church comes out of the authority in the church—the honoring of the unique headship of Christ—Col. 1:18; Phil. 1:1:

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:

A. In the church there is no human organization, but there is a spiritual order—v. 1; 1 Cor. 14:40; 11:34b:

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, ^aslaves of Christ Jesus, to all the ^bsaints in Christ Jesus who are in ^{1c}Philippi, ²with the ^{3d}overseers and ^{4e}deacons:

1 Cor 14:40 But all things must be done ¹becomingly and in ^aorder.

1 Cor 11:34b ...And the ¹rest I will set in order when I come.

1. The genuine church practice depends on the proper order under the Holy Spirit; without this order we cannot have the real practice of the church life—Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

Acts 20:28 ^aTake heed to yourselves and to all the ^{1b}flock, among whom the Holy ^{2c}Spirit has ^dplaced you as ^{3e}overseers to ^{4f}shepherd the ^gchurch of God, which He ^hobtained through ⁵His own ⁱblood.

1 Cor 12:4 ¹But there are ²distinctions of ^{3a}gifts, but the ^bsame Spirit;

1 Cor 12:5 And there are distinctions of ^{1a}ministries, yet the ^bsame Lord;

1 Cor 12:6 And there are distinctions of ¹operations, but the ^asame ²God, who ^boperates all things in all.

1 Cor 12:7 But to ^aeach one is given the ¹manifestation of the Spirit ²for ^bwhat is profitable.

1 Cor 12:8 For to one through the Spirit a ¹word of ^awisdom is given, and to another a word of ^bknowledge, according to the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:9 To a different one ^{1a}faith in the same Spirit, and to another ²gifts of ^bhealing in the one Spirit,

1 Cor 12:10 And to another operations of ^{1a}works of power, and to another ^{2b}prophecy, and to another ^{3c}discerning of spirits; to a different one *various* kinds of ^{4d}tongues, and to another ^{5e}interpretation of tongues.

1 Cor 12:11 But the one and the same Spirit operates all these things, ^adistributing to each one respectively even as He ^bpurposes.

2. The Head of the church is Christ the Lord, and the authority in the church is the headship of Christ—Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:18:

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All ¹authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

- a. In the church there must be order, but this order comes from the headship of Christ—Eph. 1:22-23.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

- b. If we would keep a right order in the church and among the saints, we must learn to submit to the unique headship of Christ—1 Cor. 11:3.

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

- B. We can have the real practice of the church life only by submitting to the unique headship of Christ—Col. 1:18; 2:19:

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

1. If we intend to practice the church life, we must learn to always submit to the headship of Christ—v. 10.

Col 2:10 And you have been made ¹full in Him, who is the ^aHead of all ²rule and authority.

2. When we are right with the Head, we are right with all the members and with the Body—1:18; 2:19; 3:15.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

Col 3:15 And let the ^{1a}peace of Christ ²arbitrate in your hearts, to ³which ⁴also you were called in ^bone Body; and be ^{5c}thankful.

3. If we all honor the unique headship of Christ, there will spontaneously be a wonderful spiritual order among us in the church life—1 Cor. 14:40.

1 Cor 14:40 But all things must be done ¹becomingly and in ^aorder.

C. The order in the church comes from the headship of Christ being realized by us in a practical way—11:3, 16; Eph. 1:22:

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

1 Cor 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we do not have ¹such a custom of *being so*, neither the ^{2a}churches of God.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

1. If we try to practice the church life without realizing the unique headship of Christ, we may meet together, but we will not have the reality of the church—1 Cor. 11:17.

1 Cor 11:17 ¹But I give *you* ²this charge and do not ^apraise *you*, because you ^bcome together not for the better but for the worse.

2. If we do not have the spiritual order in the church that comes from realizing the headship of Christ in a practical way, there is no possibility for us to practice the real church life—v. 3; 14:40.

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

1 Cor 14:40 But all things must be done ¹becomingly and in ^aorder.

D. We need to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, who is the unique Head—Eph. 5:21, 23:

Eph 5:21 Being ^{1a}subject to ²one another in the ³fear of Christ:

Eph 5:23 For a husband is ^{1a}head of the wife as also Christ is ^bHead of the church, He Himself *being* the ²Savior of the Body.

1. If we are not subject to one another, we offend Christ as the Head and have no fear of Christ in His unique headship—v. 23; 1:22.

Eph 5:23 For a husband is ^{1a}head of the wife as also Christ is ^bHead of the church, He Himself *being* the ²Savior of the Body.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

2. Only the Head is unique and different from the Body; none of the members is in a special or superior class—5:30; Rom. 12:4-5.

Eph 5:30 Because we are ^amembers of His ^bBody.

Rom 12:4 For just as in ^aone body we have ^bmany members, and all the members do not have the ^csame ¹function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually ^{2a}members one of another.

III. If we honor the unique headship of Christ, then in the Lord's recovery the church as the enlargement of Christ will be not only the house but also the city—Ezra 1:2-3; Neh. 1:9; 2:5, 17; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 21:14:

Ezra 1:2 Thus says Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heaven given to me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Ezra 1:3 Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—He is God—who is in Jerusalem.

Neh 1:9 But if you return to Me and keep My commandments and perform them, though your outcasts are under the ends of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.

Neh 2:5 And I said to the king, If it please the king and if your servant has found favor before you, that you would send me to Judah to the city of my fathers' graves that I may rebuild it.

Neh 2:17 Then I said to them, You see the bad state we are in, that Jerusalem lies in waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5e}truth.

Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve ^{1a}foundations, and on them the twelve names of the ^btwelve ²apostles of the Lamb.

A. The church as the house is mainly with Christ as life, and the church as the city is mainly with Christ as the Head—1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 5:14; Col. 3:4; 1:18:

1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know ¹how one ought to conduct himself in the ^{2a}house of God, which is the ^bchurch of the ^{3c}living God, the ^{4d}pillar and base of the ^{5c}truth.

Matt 5:14 You are the ^{1a}light of the world. It is impossible for a ^{2b}city situated upon a mountain to be hidden.

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

1. When we experience and enjoy Christ as life, we have the church as the house; when we realize the unique headship of Christ, the church will be enlarged as the city, which signifies the kingdom of God—Matt. 16:18-19.

Matt 16:18 And I ¹also say to you that you are ^{2a}Peter, and upon ³this ^brock I will ^{4c}build My ^{5d}church, and the ^{6e}gates of ^fHades shall not prevail ^gagainst it.

Matt 16:19 I will give to you the ^{1a}keys of the ²kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you ^{3b}bind on the earth shall ⁴have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in the heavens.

2. The church as the city is built not only with Christ as life but also with the headship of Christ; thus, Christ must be not only our life but also our Head, not only our enjoyment but also our authority—Col. 3:4; 1:18; 2:19.

Col 3:4 When ¹Christ our ^{2a}life is ^bmanifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in ^cglory.

Col 1:18 And He is the ^aHead of the ^bBody, the church; He is the ^cbeginning, the ^{1d}Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

Col 2:19 And ¹not ^aholding the Head, ^{2b}out from whom all the ³Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the ⁴joints and ⁵sinews, ⁶grows with the ⁷growth of God.

B. For the church as the city, our will must be exercised, renewed, and transformed so that it will be subdued under the unique headship of Christ—S. S. 4:1b, 4; 6:4.

S.S. 4:1b ... Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats That repose on Mount Gilead.

S.S. 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, Built for an armory: A thousand bucklers hang on it, All the shields of the mighty men.

S.S. 6:4 You are as beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, As lovely as Jerusalem, As terrible as an army with banners.

C. We need to see that a local church is an expression of the Body of Christ, that the Body is under the headship of Christ, and that we all must be under the authority of Christ; if we see this and honor the unique headship of Christ, the church will be enlarged from the house to the city for the King and His kingdom—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:12-13, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Rev. 11:15.

1 Cor 1:2 To the ^{1a}church of God which is ²in ^bCorinth, ³to those who have been ^{4c}sanctified ⁵in Christ Jesus, the ^{6d}called saints, ⁷with all those who ^{8e}call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, *who is* ^{9f}theirs and ours:

1 Cor 12:12 ¹For even as ²the body is ^aone and has many ^bmembers, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

1 Cor 12:13 For also in ^{1a}one Spirit we were all ^bbaptized into ^{2c}one Body, whether ^{3d}Jews or Greeks, whether ⁴slaves or free, and were all given to ^{5e}drink one ^fSpirit.

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the Body of Christ, and ^amembers individually.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

Rev 11:15 And the ^{1a}seventh angel ^{2b}trumpeted; and there were loud ^cvoices in heaven, saying, The ^{3d}kingdom of the world has become the ^ekingdom of our Lord and of ^fHis Christ, and He will ^{4g}reign forever and ever.

IV. The church life is a life of being headed up under the unique headship of Christ—Eph. 1:10, 22-23; 4:15-16:

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

A. God is heading up His chosen ones to be the Body of Christ with Christ as the Head—1:4, 22-23:

Eph 1:4 Even as He ^{1a}chose us in Him ^{2b}before the foundation of the world to be ^{3c}holy and ⁴without blemish ⁵before Him ⁶in ^{7d}love,

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

1. The first step in the heading up of all things in Christ is for God to place His sons under the unique headship of Christ—vv. 5, 10.

Eph 1:5 ^{1a}Predestinating us unto ^{2b}sonship ³through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the ^{4c}good pleasure of His ^dwill,

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

2. When the church takes the lead to be headed up under the headship of Christ, God has a way to head up all other things—vv. 22-23, 10.

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

B. In the proper church life we are being headed up in Christ—1 Cor. 11:3:

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to know that ¹Christ is the ^ahead of every ²man, and the man is the ^bhead of the woman, and ³God is the ^chead of Christ.

1. If we do not know what it is to be headed up in Christ, we cannot know the church—Eph. 1:10, 22-23.

Eph 1:10 Unto the ^{1a}economy of the ²fullness of the times, to ^{3b}head up all ^cthings in ⁴Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 1:22 And He ^{1a}subjected all things under His feet and ²gave Him ³to be ^bHead over all things to the ^{4c}church,

Eph 1:23 Which is His ^{1a}Body, the ^{2b}fullness of the One who ^{3c}fills all in all.

2. In the church life we are taking the lead to be headed up in Christ; for this we need to grow up into the Head, Christ, in all things—4:15-16.

Eph 4:15 But ¹holding to truth in ^{2a}love, we may ^{3b}grow up into Him in all things, who is the ^{4c}Head, Christ,

Eph 4:16 ¹Out from whom ^aall the Body, being ^{2b}joined together and being knit together through every ^{3c}joint of ⁴the rich supply ⁵and *through* the ⁶operation in the ^dmeasure of ⁷each one part, ⁸causes the ^{9e}growth of the Body unto the ^fbuilding up of itself in ^{10g}love.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

Through the twenty centuries of church history the matter of how the church should be organized has been a continual problem. The church does not consist of only one or two persons. On the day of Pentecost alone three thousand were saved and brought into the church (Acts 2:41). Not long after, five thousand more were saved (4:4). It would be difficult even to know how to bring together only these eight thousand people. Eventually, there was not only a church in Jerusalem, but there were also churches in Samaria, Antioch, Asia Minor, and Europe. Furthermore, in the church there were not only believers but also apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers (Eph. 4:11). There were also elders, deacons, and deaconesses. All these believers, churches, gifts, and serving ones had to be arranged, or organized, in some way.

Actually, according to God's New Testament economy, there should not be any organization in the church. The church is not an organization but an organism. A desk, which is an organization, consists of many pieces fitted together without any life. However, our physical body, which is an organism, was not organized but was born and grew into its present form. An organism with its many organic parts is altogether a matter of life. The word *organic* means "of or related to life." An organism is an entity entirely of life. Nothing in our body is produced by organization. In contrast, in an organization nothing is living; every piece is dead. Everything in an organization is a human work arranged by human hands.

The church is an organism, not an organization, yet there is surely the need of some arrangement among thousands of people who come together in various cities as local churches. Finding this arrangement and the proper way for all the affairs of the church to be carried out is a great problem. Most seminaries have a course concerning the organization of the church, but the concept of organization related to the church cannot be found in the New Testament. We need to see the basic principle that any kind of organization leads to a hierarchy and that any kind of hierarchy is an insult to the headship of Christ.

The Church Being Constituted with Christ as Life and with Christ as the Unique Head

The church is constituted absolutely not according to the human mentality or worldly organizational methods but with Christ as life and with Christ as the unique Head. In the church, the Body of Christ, there is no other head. Regardless of his or her location or function, every member is related directly to the Head; every member has the same standing. There are no intermediary members, contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church that the so-called holy mother mediates between the believers and Jesus. We all know that this teaching of the Catholic Church is wrong, but in our actual practice we may consider that certain persons are intermediaries between us and the Lord.

We need to be cautious of this hidden error. On the one hand, we must never be an intermediary between God's people and the Lord Himself. We need to allow the Lord's people to receive orders directly from the Lord. By the Lord's mercy, in all the times saints have come to me for fellowship throughout the years, I have never given them a decision, an order, or a commandment. Instead, I always tell them, "You need to go to the Lord. Pray to seek the Lord's leading directly." On the other hand, we must never take someone else as an intermediary between us and the Lord. Because most believers are weak, they prefer to depend upon others rather than going directly to the Lord. Some say, "How good it is to have a spiritual brother among us. We can rely on him; he will tell us what to do and what not to do." This is terrible; it is according to the Catholic concept that the believers are too low to contact the Lord directly and that they need to pray to Mary so that she will contact Jesus for them. We do not like this teaching, but we may

practice it in principle. This teaching is heretical. The worship of Mary is the greatest blasphemy to Christ's headship. Regrettably, something has secretly crept in among us to cause some members to become intermediaries between the saints and the Lord. We need to be cautious of this.

There Being No Leader or Head in a Local Church or in the Lord's Recovery

The constitution of the church is according to the fact that Christ is the unique Head. There is no other leader. Regardless of how great our gift or our commission from the Lord is, we are all only members, not leaders. No one among us should accept anyone as an official, unique, or permanent leader. In carrying things out, there is the need for leadership. The Bible shows that on the day of Pentecost there was the need for someone to rise up to declare the gospel to the people. Peter took the lead to meet this need, but he was not an official, permanent, organizational, or positional leader. His leadership was instant and depended on his present spiritual capacity. At that time Peter had the greatest capacity; therefore, he spontaneously took the lead to carry out that ministry. However, when he later became weak, another one was raised up to accomplish God's purpose. The leadership in the Lord's recovery today must be the same. According to my portion from the Lord, I currently share in the leadership, but this does not mean that I am an official or permanent leader. Perhaps in a year someone may have more capacity in a certain matter. At that time and in that matter that person will take the lead to accomplish God's purpose. By practicing in this way, we will have no official or permanent leader among us. We have only one Leader—Christ. The plurality of the eldership and the apostles prevents any human leadership that would insult the headship of Christ. (*Crucial Principles for the Christian Life and the Church Life*, pp. 72-73, 78-80)

The Plurality of Elders

This work of leading, teaching, and shepherding the flock, which we have seen to be the special duty of the elders, does not devolve upon one man only in any place. To have pastors in a church is scriptural, but the present-day pastoral system is quite unscriptural; it is an invention of man.

In Scripture we see that there was always more than one elder or bishop in a local church. It is not God's will that one believer should be singled out from all the others to occupy a place of special prominence, while the others passively submit to his will. If the management of the entire church rests upon one man, how easy it is for him to become self-conceited, esteeming himself above measure and suppressing the other brethren (3 John). God has ordained that several elders together share the work of the church, so that no one individual should be able to run things according to his own pleasure, treating the church as his own special property and leaving the impress of his personality upon all its life and work. To place the responsibility in the hands of several brethren, rather than in the hands of one individual, is God's way of safeguarding His church against the evils that result from the domination of a strong personality. God has purposed that several brothers should unitedly bear responsibility in the church, so that even in controlling its affairs they have to depend one upon the other and submit one to the other. Thus, in an experimental way, they will discover the meaning of bearing the cross, and they will have opportunity to give practical expression to the truth of the Body of Christ. As they honor one another and trust one another to the leading of the Spirit, none taking the place of the Head, but each regarding the others as fellow members, the element of mutuality, which is the distinctive feature of the church, will be preserved. (*The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 49-50)

The Eldership in the Churches Always Being Plural

In some local churches there has been a practice of making an arrangement as to who is first among the elders. No verse in the Bible gives any indication that there should be such an

arrangement. Rather, the scriptural principle with regard to the eldership is always plurality. God does not want one brother to be the unique elder; He wants a few brothers to be a group of elders. The eldership should always be in plurality. This plurality keeps any elder from being an official leader or a permanent leader. The issue of who will take the lead among the elders is determined by each one's capacity. Because one brother has the highest capacity in certain areas, he may be the leading one in a certain matter. In another matter a different brother may have the highest capacity; therefore, in that matter he will be the leader. Six months later these two brothers may both lose their capacity, and another brother may grow and increase in his spiritual capacity by the Lord's grace and mercy. Thus, this third brother will spontaneously become the leading one among the elders. In the New Testament among God's people there is no unique, definite, official, or permanent leadership. Such a leadership would be an insult to the headship of Christ. Therefore, in each local church today there should be no head other than Christ.

Honoring Christ as the Unique Head in Our Daily Life

A young brother who has been saved only a short time may approach some older brothers with a spiritual question he has been unable to resolve on his own. He may want to know whether or not he should go swimming at the beach, participate in sports, go to movies, or drink beer. If the older brothers have learned the lesson to honor the headship of Christ, when a brother opens to them in this way, they will immediately say, "Brother, we cannot tell you what to do because we are not the Head. We are not the Lord, and even you are not your lord. Jesus Christ is our Lord; He is the Head. Even if we know the answer to your question, we still cannot answer you because we do not have the position to tell you what to do. We must look to the Lord." To answer in this way is to honor the headship of Christ. However, our practice in the church life is usually not like this. We often tell people what to do and what not to do; we even stir up arguments. This is altogether wrong. Our telling others what to do is an insult to the headship of Christ. We need to practice to honor and respect the headship of Christ.

Ephesians 5:22 says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands." A sister who keeps this word by submitting herself to her husband may ask him whether or not they should take their children to a certain place, allowing him to make the decision. Concerning spiritual matters, her husband may turn to the Lord, but concerning such practical matters, he may unconsciously insult the Lord by making decisions on his own. If a brother has learned the lesson, he will tell his wife, "Although I am the husband, I am not the Lord. We need to refer this matter to the Lord. We honor Him and respect Him as the Head." (*Crucial Principles for the Proper Church Life*, pp. 49-50, 52-53)

REALIZING THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST IN A PRACTICAL WAY

The order in the church comes from the headship of Christ being realized by us in a practical way. If each of us submits oneself to the headship of Christ and takes His lordship in a real way, there will be no problem. There will be no argument; rather, a nice, spiritual order will spontaneously come into being among us. We will get nowhere by doctrines, teachings, and arguments. We can argue every day until the Lord comes back, but we will not solve the problems. However, if each one of us would submit to the headship of Christ and pray, "Lord, You are the Head, and I realize Your headship in my life in a practical way," every problem would be solved. Problems are solved not by doctrine or by teaching but by realizing the headship of Christ.

I must speak seriously. Do you realize that there is a rebellious nature within us? There is an element, an essence, within us that is always rebelling. The problem in the church is one of rebellion; no one likes to submit to others. This damages and spoils the church life. I beg you to take this word from one of your brothers. If we are going to practice the church life with sincerity, we must submit ourselves to the headship of Christ and realize the headship of the Lord. Otherwise, there is no way for us to practice the real church life. We can come together all the time, but we

will not have the reality of the church life. We will only be false, just pretending and presuming; we will not be real. To have the real church life, we need to submit. We should not try to submit to others; we should simply submit to the headship of Christ. Then we will be right in the order in the church. This is not an issue between us and others; it is an issue between us and the Head. If there is a problem between brothers or sisters, that means there is a problem between us and Christ the Head. To be sure, if we are right with the Head, we will be right with others. It is possible for us to realize the real church life only when we realize the headship of the Lord in a practical way.

We are very burdened that in these last days the Lord will recover a real church life among His children to express Christ and to bring in the coming kingdom of God. There is a great need of the real church life. The real church life requires that we know how to exercise ourselves to apply Christ as our life and realize His headship among us. We live by Him, and we live under Him. He is our life, and He is our Head. This is the only way for us to practice the real church life, and this is the only way for all the problems to be solved.

None of the problems are solved by discussion or argument. The history of the church proves that arguments never get us anywhere. In fact, the more we argue, the more trouble and problems we have. Let us submit ourselves to the headship of Christ. We need to practice to take the Lord as the Head and to realize His headship among us in a practical way. If we are going to argue with a brother, we must first check with ourselves and ask, "Am I under the headship of Christ?" If we check in this way, our argument will be gone. The headship of the Lord is the answer to our arguments.

Let us see clearly that in the church there is the need of a spiritual order, and this order comes only from the headship of Christ being realized by us in a practical way. Without this, there is no possibility for us to practice the real church life. We look to the Lord for this matter. This is very basic and very vital. If we have this, we have the church life. If we do not have this, the church life is gone. (*Basic Principles for the Practice of the Church Life*, pp. 39-41)