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International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One
**Taking the Lead to Be Patterns
and to Love the Lord with the First Love**

Scripture Reading: John 6:57; 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; 1 Thes. 1:5-7;
Rev. 2:4-5; Eph. 6:24; Psa. 110:3; 22:3

John 6:57	As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
1 Tim 1:16	But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.
1 Tim 4:12	Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
1 Thes 1:5	For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.
1 Thes 1:6	And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,
1 Thes 1:7	So that you became a pattern to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.
Rev 2:4	But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
Rev 2:5	Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.
Eph 6:24	Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.
Psa 110:3	Your people will offer themselves willingly / In the day of Your warfare, / In the splendor of their consecration. / Your young men will be to You / Like the dew from the womb of the dawn.
Psa 22:3	But You are holy, You who sit enthroned / Upon the praises of Israel.

I. We need to take the lead to be patterns as elders and responsible ones:

- A. The Lord Jesus was a pattern of enjoying the Father as the richest grace and the sweetest love to live because of the Father for the Father's glory—John 6:57; Isa. 7:14-15; John 5:19; 4:34; 17:4; 14:10, 24; 5:30; 7:18; Luke 22:27; Matt. 20:26-28.

John 6:57	As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
Isa 7:14	Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.
Isa 7:15	He will eat curds and honey until he knows how to refuse evil and choose good.
John 5:19	Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.
John 4:34	Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work.
John 17:4	I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do.
John 14:10	Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.
John 14:24	He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.
John 5:30	I can do nothing from Myself; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.
John 7:18	He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.
Luke 22:27	For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am in your midst as the one who serves.
Matt 20:26	It shall not be so among you; but whoever wants to become great among you shall be your servant,

- Matt 20:27 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave;
 Matt 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.
- B. The Lord Jesus charged us to learn from Him, taking Him as our pattern in being constrained by the Father's will and abounding in the work of carrying out the Father's will—11:28-30; cf. Eph. 4:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:58.
 Matt 11:28 Come to Me all who toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
 Matt 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
 Matt 11:30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.
 Eph 4:20 But you did not so learn Christ,
 Eph 4:21 If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him as the reality is in Jesus,
 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
- C. Paul was a pattern to the believers of living Christ for His magnification by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ for the Body of Christ—1 Tim. 1:16; Phil. 1:19-21a.
 1 Tim 1:16 But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.
 Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
 Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
 Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- D. Paul charged Timothy to be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity—1 Tim. 4:12.
 1 Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
- E. Paul said that we should be imitators of God, as beloved children—Eph. 5:1; Matt. 5:48.
 Eph 5:1 Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children;
 Matt 5:48 You therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- F. Paul said that we should be imitators of him, as he was of Christ—1 Cor. 11:1; 4:16; 1 Thes. 1:5-6; 2 Thes. 3:9; Phil. 3:17.
 1 Cor 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.
 1 Cor 4:16 I exhort you therefore, Become imitators of me.
 1 Thes 1:5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.
 1 Thes 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit,
 2 Thes 3:9 Not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us.
 Phil 3:17 Be imitators together of me, brothers, and observe those who thus walk even as you have us as a pattern.
- G. The Thessalonians became a pattern to other believers and became imitators of the churches of God—1 Thes. 1:7; 2:14.
 1 Thes 1:7 So that you became a pattern to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.
 1 Thes 2:14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, for you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they also from the Jews,
- H. Peter said that Christ left Himself as a model so that we may follow in His steps to become His reproduction—1 Pet. 2:21.
 1 Pet 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered on your behalf, leaving you a model so that you may follow in His steps;
- I. John said that "even as He is, so also are we in this world"; this refers to Christ who lived in this world a life of God as love and who is now our life so that we may live the same life of love in this world and be the same as He is—1 John 4:17; cf. 3:3, 7.

- 1 John 4:17 In this has love been perfected with us, that we have boldness in the day of the judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.
- 1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope set on Him purifies himself, even as He is pure.
- 1 John 3:7 Little children, let no one lead you astray; he who practices righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous;

II. To love the Lord with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the preeminence, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psa. 73:25-26; 80:17-19:

- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- 2 Cor 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- 2 Cor 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.
- Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength."
- Psa 73:25 Whom do I have in heaven but You? / And besides You there is nothing I desire on earth.
- Psa 73:26 My flesh and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever.
- Psa 80:17 Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, / Upon the son of man whom You have strengthened for Yourself;
- Psa 80:18 Then we will not turn back from You. / Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.
- Psa 80:19 O Jehovah God of hosts, restore us; / Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved.

A. The beginning of love in everyone toward the Lord is a vision of His person; the leaving of the first love toward the Lord is the source of and main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages; nothing but love can keep us in a proper relationship with the Lord—Phil. 3:8; Matt. 26:6-13; Eph. 3:16-19; 6:24; Rev. 2:4-5; cf. 3:20.

- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Matt 26:6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
- Matt 26:7 A woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of ointment of great value, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at table.
- Matt 26:8 But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, Why this waste?
- Matt 26:9 For this could have been sold for much and given to the poor.
- Matt 26:10 But Jesus, knowing it, said to them, Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a noble deed to Me.
- Matt 26:11 For the poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me.
- Matt 26:12 For in pouring out this ointment on My body, she has done it for My burial.
- Matt 26:13 Truly I say to you, Wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her.
- Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
- Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- Eph 6:24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.
- Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.
- Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

B. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to repent and

do the first works; the first works are works that issue from the first love—2:5; 1 Thes. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:5:

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

1 Thes 1:3 Remembering unceasingly your work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father;

2 Cor 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake.

1. In Song of Songs the Lord's banner over us is love, which means that love is our motto and that everything we do is based on our love for the Lord; the seeker in Song of Songs is also "sick with love," meaning that she is joyous in the Lord as love, to the point of exhaustion—2:4-5.

S.S. 2:4 He brought me into the banqueting house, / And his banner over me was love.

S.S. 2:5 Sustain me with raisin cakes, / Refresh me with apples, / For I am sick with love.

2. God's love in Christ is a banner spreading over us, displaying, exhibiting, that we who are loved by God are always more than conquerors—Rom. 8:31-39.

Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Rom 8:32 Indeed, He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Rom 8:33 Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies.

Rom 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Rom 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

Rom 8:36 As it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we have been accounted as sheep for slaughter."

Rom 8:37 But in all these things we more than conquer through Him who loved us.

Rom 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers

Rom 8:39 Nor height nor depth nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. We have a love that conquers everything if we live in His love.

4. If we have left our first love toward the Lord and do not repent and do the first works, we will lose the testimony of the Lord, and the lampstand will be removed from us.

C. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to have a personal, affectionate, private, and spiritual relationship with the Lord—S. S. 1:1-4.

S.S. 1:1 The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.

S.S. 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! / For your love is better than wine.

S.S. 1:3 Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you.

S.S. 1:4 Draw me; we will run after you - The king has brought me into his chambers - / We will be glad and rejoice in you; / We will extol your love more than wine. / Rightly do they love you.

D. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live a day-by-day life of morning revival so that we may satisfy Christ by being His young men like the dew from the womb of the dawn (Psa. 110:3), so that we may have the tongue of an instructed one to know how to sustain the weary with a word (Isa. 50:4-5), and so that we may fellowship with God, seeking God's will and pleasure for His gospel service (Mark 1:35).

Psa 110:3 Your people will offer themselves willingly / In the day of Your warfare, / In the splendor of their consecration. / Your young men will be to You / Like the dew from the womb of the dawn.

Isa 50:4 The Lord Jehovah has given me / The tongue of the instructed, / That I should know how to sustain the weary with a word. / He awakens me morning by morning; / He awakens my ear / To hear as an instructed one.

Isa 50:5 The Lord Jehovah has opened my ear; / And I was not rebellious, / Nor did I turn back.

- Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.
- E. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live a day-by-day life of consecration, becoming today's Nazarites, who are fully separated unto God and saturated with God in order to bless the children of God by dispensing God in His Divine Trinity into them—Psa. 110:3; Num. 6:1-9, 22-27.
- Psa 110:3 Your people will offer themselves willingly / In the day of Your warfare, / In the splendor of their consecration. / Your young men will be to You / Like the dew from the womb of the dawn.
- Num 6:1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
- Num 6:2 Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, When a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to Jehovah,
- Num 6:3 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink, nor shall he drink any juice of grapes, nor eat fresh or dried grapes.
- Num 6:4 All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grape vine, from the seeds even to the skin.
- Num 6:5 All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to Jehovah; he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long.
- Num 6:6 All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not come near a dead person.
- Num 6:7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is upon his head.
- Num 6:8 All the days of his separation he is holy to Jehovah.
- Num 6:9 And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him so that he defiles the head of his separation, then he shall shave his head on the day he becomes clean; on the seventh day shall he shave it.
- Num 6:22 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
- Num 6:23 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the children of Israel; you shall say to them,
- Num 6:24 Jehovah bless you and keep you;
- Num 6:25 Jehovah make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
- Num 6:26 Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.
- Num 6:27 So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel, that I Myself may bless them.
- F. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live a life of prayer—1 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 6:6; 14:22-23; Dan. 6:10; 2:17-18; 1 Tim. 2:1; 2 Tim. 1:3; 1 Thes. 5:17.
- 1 Sam 12:23 Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I would sin against Jehovah by ceasing to pray for you, but I will instruct you in the good and right way.
- Matt 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- Matt 14:22 And immediately He compelled the disciples to step into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.
- Matt 14:23 And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.
- Dan 6:10 Now when Daniel came to know that the writing had been signed, he went to his house (in his upper room he had windows open toward Jerusalem) and three times daily he knelt on his knees and prayed and gave thanks before his God, because he had always done so previously.
- Dan 2:17 Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions,
- Dan 2:18 That they might request compassions from before the God of the heavens concerning this mystery so that Daniel and his companions would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.
- 1 Tim 2:1 I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men;
- 2 Tim 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, while unceasingly I have remembrance concerning you in my petitions night and day,
- 1 Thes 5:17 Unceasingly pray,
- G. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to love,

treasure, and muse on God's word—Psa. 119:11, 14-15, 23, 48, 72, 78, 97, 99, 111, 113, 119, 127, 140, 147-148, 159, 162-163, 165, 167.

- Psa 119:11 In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.
Psa 119:14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies / As much as in all riches.
Psa 119:15 I will muse upon Your precepts / And regard Your ways.
Psa 119:23 Princes as well have sat and spoken against me, / But Your servant mused upon Your statutes.
Psa 119:48 And I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love; / And I will muse upon Your statutes.

Psa 119:72 The law of Your mouth is better to me / Than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.
Psa 119:78 Let the proud be put to shame, for they have subverted my cause with a lie; / But I will muse upon Your precepts.

Psa 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! / All day long it is my musing.
Psa 119:99 I have more insight than all my teachers, / For Your testimonies are my musing.
Psa 119:111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever, / For they are the gladness of my heart.
Psa 119:113 I hate those who are double-minded, / But I love Your law.
Psa 119:119 You do away with all the wicked ones of the earth like dross; / Therefore I love Your testimonies.

Psa 119:127 Therefore I love Your commandments / More than gold, indeed, more than fine gold;
Psa 119:140 Your word is very pure, / And Your servant loves it.
Psa 119:147 I anticipated the dawn and cried out; / I hoped in Your words.
Psa 119:148 My eyes anticipated the night watches, / That I might muse upon Your word.
Psa 119:159 See how I have loved Your precepts; / O Jehovah, enliven me according to Your lovingkindness.

Psa 119:162 I rejoice at Your word, / Like one who finds great spoil.
Psa 119:163 I hate and abhor falsehood, / But I love Your law.
Psa 119:165 There is great peace for those who love Your law, / And there is no occasion of stumbling for them.

Psa 119:167 My soul has kept Your testimonies, / And I love them very much.

H. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to be governed by the direct, firsthand presence of the Lord—Exo. 33:11, 14; 13:21-22; 2 Cor. 2:10.

- Exo 33:11 And Jehovah would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his companion. And Moses would return to the camp, but his attendant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart out of the tent.

Exo 33:14 And He said, My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.
Exo 13:21 And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might go by day and by night.
Exo 13:22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night departed from before the people.
2 Cor 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;

I. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to love the church in the church-loving Christ—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 16:24.

- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her
2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?
1 Cor 16:24 My love in Christ Jesus be with you all.

J. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to love the ministry that builds up the church—2 Cor. 8:5; 1 John 1:3; Eph. 4:11-12.

- 2 Cor 8:5 And this, not as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.
1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,
Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

K. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to live and

walk by the Spirit, to serve by the Spirit, and to minister the Spirit—Gal. 5:25; Phil. 3:3; 2 Cor. 3:6; Zech. 4:6; Judg. 9:9; cf. 1 Sam. 2:30b.

Gal 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Zech 4:6 And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.

Judg 9:9 But the olive tree said to them, Shall I leave my fatness, because of which God and men are honored by me, and go to wave over the trees?

1 Sam 2:30b ... but now Jehovah declares, Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who spurn Me will be lightly esteemed.

- L. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to take Him as the fountain of living waters; God's intention in His economy is to be the fountain, the source, of living waters to dispense Himself into His chosen people for their satisfaction and enjoyment to produce the church, God's counterpart, as God's increase, God's enlargement, to be God's fullness for His expression—Jer. 2:13; John 4:14b.

Jer 2:13 For My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water.

John 4:14b ... but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

- M. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to eat Him as the tree of life; eating Christ as the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life—Rev. 2:7.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

- N. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to continually come to Him to contact Him, take Him, receive Him, taste Him, and enjoy Him—Isa. 57:20, footnote 1.

Isa 57:20 But the ¹wicked are like the tossed sea, / For it cannot be calm, / And its waters toss up mire and mud.

footnote 1 The evil condition of the wicked is that they do not come to the Lord to eat and enjoy the Lord (cf. 55:1-2). They do many things, but they do not come to contact the Lord, to take Him, to receive Him, to taste Him, and to enjoy Him. In the sight of God, nothing is more evil than this. Cf. note 7¹ in ch. 55.

- O. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to take Him as our centrality—our holding center—and our universality—our everything; we need to take Him as the center, content, and circumference of our personal universe—Col. 1:17b, 18b.

Col 1:17b ... and all things cohere in Him;

Col 1:18b ... He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;

- P. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to aspire and determine to gain the honor of pleasing Him in all things—2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10; Heb. 11:5-6.

2 Cor 5:9 Therefore also we are determined, whether at home or abroad, to gain the honor of being well pleasing to Him.

Col 1:10 To walk worthily of the Lord to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and growing by the full knowledge of God,

Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him. For before his translation he obtained the testimony that he had been well pleasing to God.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

- Q. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to have a

clear sky like awesome crystal with God's sapphire throne above it; this means that there is nothing between us and the Lord and that we are filled with the heavenly atmosphere, condition, and situation of His ruling presence—allowing Him to rule and reign within us—Ezek. 1:22, 26.

Ezek 1:22 And over the heads of the living creature there was the likeness of an expanse, like the sight of awesome crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

Ezek 1:26 And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was One in appearance like a man, above it.

- R. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to hold Him as the Head, staying intimately connected to Him and enthroning Him as the ruler and decider of everything in our life—Col. 2:19.

Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

- S. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to ask for the counsel of Jehovah in every detail of our Christian life and work—Josh. 9:14; Phil. 4:6-7.

Josh 9:14 And the men took some of their provisions, but they did not ask for the counsel of Jehovah.

Phil 4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

- T. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to give the flow of life, the flow of the Lord Jesus within us, the preeminence in all that we are and do; then He is the shining One, the redeeming One, the reigning One, the flowing One, and the supplying One within us—Ezek. 47:1; Rev. 22:1-2.

Ezek 47:1 Then He brought me back to the entrance of the house, and there was water flowing out from under the threshold of the house to the east (for the house faced east); and the water flowed down below the south side of the house, on the south of the altar.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.

Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

- U. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to be dominated, governed, directed, led, and moved by our mingled spirit, caring for the rest in our spirit by being His captives and by praying, "Lord, make me Your captive. Never let me win. Defeat me all the time"—2 Cor. 2:13-14.

2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.

2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.

- V. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to enthrone Him with our praises; praise is the highest work carried out by God's children—Psa. 22:3; 119:164; 34:1.

Psa 22:3 But You are holy, You who sit enthroned / Upon the praises of Israel.

Psa 119:164 Seven times a day I praise You / For Your righteous ordinances.

Psa 34:1 I will bless Jehovah at all times; / His praise will continually be in my mouth.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

TO OVERCOME THE LEAVING OF THE FIRST LOVE

I must testify that I love the Lord. I received the Lord sixty-seven years ago in 1925. After all of these years, I feel that the Lord is still so intimate to me and that I am so close to Him. I do not care for any religion. I care for this dear One, this living One. Whenever I mention His name, I am happy. When we wake up in the morning, the first thing we should do is say, "O Lord Jesus. O Lord Jesus." It is better to add, "I love You." We should say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You. O Lord Jesus, I love You." How intimate, how sweet, and how affectionate this is!

Our God, our Christ, our Lord, is not only loving but also very affectionate. He is full of affection. God has "fallen in love" with us, His chosen and redeemed people. If you say, "O Lord Jesus, I love You," right away you will fall in love with Him. Quite often I would not do some things, not merely because they are not right or because I fear God but because I love Him. I would say, "Lord Jesus, I love You, so I cannot do this." I just cannot do certain things, because I love Him.

We need to overcome the loss of the first love. The church in Ephesus was a good church. It was an orderly church and a formal church (Rev. 2:2-3). Surely we would like such a church, but such an orderly church had left the first love (v. 4). The Greek word for *first* is the same as that translated *best* in Luke 15:22. Our first love toward the Lord must be the best love for Him. When the prodigal son in Luke 15 came back home, the father told the servants to bring the *best* robe. The *best* here is the first.

Now I would like us to consider what the first love is. Many Christians think that the first love is the love with which we loved the Lord Jesus when we were saved. I would not say that this is wrong, but it is not adequate. The first love which is the best love is much more than this.

The first love is the love which is God Himself. In the Bible we are told that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). In the whole universe, only God is love. The Lord charges the husbands to love their wives. But it is impossible for the husbands to love their wives in themselves because we are not love. There is only one Person who is love—God.

God is not only the best but also the first. In the whole universe, God is first. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God..." This is the opening of the Bible. God is the beginning. God is the first. Colossians tells us that our Christ must have the first place. He must have the preeminence (1:18b). Christ must be the first. What is it to recover the first love? To recover the first love is to consider the Lord Jesus as the first in everything. If we make Christ everything in our life, that means we have overcome the loss of the first love.

We need to consider our situation. Is Christ the first in everything with us? The first item we have to overcome is the loss of Christ as the first, as the best, as the real love. The failure of Israel was that they forsook God, the fountain of living waters, and the degradation of the church is the leaving of the first love. Actually, to leave the first love is just to leave Christ, not taking Him as the first in everything.

Christ should be first not only in big things but also in small things. When the brothers buy a necktie, they should give Christ the first place. If I wore a certain kind of tie in a very worldly style, I would not be able to speak for the Lord in my ministry. Even for the sake of my conscience, I cannot wear certain styles of ties. The sisters should give Christ the first place in the way that they style their hair. If the sisters give Christ the preeminence in the way that they style their hair, this means that they are taking Him as their first love. Sisters who have a worldly hair style do not have Christ as their first love. They are not giving Him the preeminence. We should give Christ the preeminence in the way that we dress and the way that we style our hair. When we give Christ the preeminence in everything, this is to recover the loss of the first love.

Some think that the first love was our love for the Lord at the beginning of our Christian life when we were saved. But when I was saved, although I was very grateful to the Lord, I did not have such a strong heart to love Christ as I do today. Sixty-seven years ago I was saved and I loved the

Lord Jesus, but not as much as I do today. Thus, the first love must be to have God, Christ, the Lord, our Master, as the first One in everything.

At times when I am getting dressed, I talk to the Lord by saying, "Lord, do You like this shirt? Do You like this pair of shoes?" Such a talk is very intimate with the Lord as the first love. To recover the first love is to give Him the preeminence in great things as well as in small things. The husbands should give Christ the preeminence in the way that they talk to their wives. We need to ask the Lord to forgive us for all the things in which we do not give Him the preeminence.

If we love the Lord Jesus in such a way and to such an extent, we will never stay in the three "isms." We will never remain in any religion. We will love all the Christians, but we will hate any "anity." We should love all the Christians, but we should hate the religions in which they are. Because the Lord hates these "isms," we also should hate them. We should hate what the Lord hates (cf. Rev. 2:6).

The Lord said to let the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. Then when He comes back, the first thing He will do is to send angels to bind up the tares in bundles and throw them into the lake of fire. The sons of the kingdom, the wheat, constitute the kingdom, whereas the sons of the evil one, the tares, have formed the outward appearance of the kingdom, which is today's Christendom. The Lord hates this outward appearance, so we must overcome it.

We also need to overcome in the kind of ties we wear, in the way that we style our hair, and in all of the small things. In all things we should give the preeminence to Christ. If we do this, our Christian life will be different, and our feeling will be different. Throughout the day, we will be happy in the Lord. When we are joyful in and with the Lord, everything is pleasant. On the other hand, when we are not joyful in the Lord and with the Lord, everything is unpleasant. The enjoyment of the Lord as grace is with those who love Him (Eph. 6:24). Thus, the first thing we have to overcome is the leaving of the first love. The leaving of the first love is the source of and main reason for the failure of the church throughout the ages.

TO MAINTAIN THE EATING OF CHRIST AS THE TREE OF LIFE

In such a good, orderly, and formal church like the church in Ephesus, we need to first overcome the loss of the first love. The second thing we need is to maintain the eating of Christ as the tree of life. It is in the epistle to the Ephesians that the Lord says, "To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

The Lord Jesus charged us to overcome the leaving of the first love and to maintain the eating of Christ as the tree of life. If we give the preeminence to Christ in everything and enjoy Him as the tree of life every day, we will be marvelous, overcoming Christians. When we enjoy Christ as the tree of life, we have the Paradise of God. The tree of life is first seen in Genesis in the garden of Eden. That garden of Eden was the paradise of God at that time. Today our paradise is the church life.

I have been in the church life for sixty years, starting from 1932, so I have much church life experience. If you do not give the preeminence to the Lord or enjoy the Lord, even for a month, the church life may become an unpleasant place to you. Of course, you might not say this, but deep within you would think that there is not much good in the church life. Then the church is altogether no longer a paradise to you. But when you overcome the loss of the first love and maintain your eating of Christ, your enjoying of the Lord, right away the church life becomes paradise to you. Thus, our sensation and our attitude toward the church depend upon our situation. If we give the Lord the preeminence in everything and enjoy Him as the tree of life throughout the day, right away the church, regardless of its condition, becomes paradise to us. This is why the Lord says that we have to eat the tree of life in the Paradise of God.

Of course, the Paradise of God in Revelation 2:7 actually refers to the New Jerusalem in the thousand-year kingdom. If we enjoy the Lord in this age, we will be rewarded with the eating of the tree of life, Christ Himself, in the New Jerusalem as the Paradise of God in the thousand-year

kingdom. We need to continue in the enjoyment of the life supply of Christ in the present church life so that we can be rewarded with the enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life in the Paradise of God, the New Jerusalem, in the millennial kingdom. In the New Jerusalem in its freshness as the Paradise of God, we will participate in full in the enjoyment of the rich life supply of Christ as the embodiment of the processed and consummated Triune God.

TO SHINE FORTH THE DIVINE LIGHT AS THE LAMPSTAND

We need to overcome the leaving of the first love, to maintain the eating of Christ as the tree of life, and to shine forth the divine light as the lampstand (Rev. 2:5b). Love is related to life, and life is related to light. Love, life, and light are a trinity. If you make Christ the first in everything, you have love. If you have this love, you have life, and you will enjoy the Lord. If you have life, this life becomes light to you. The light of the lampstand, the church, shines forth corporately versus individualistically in the dark night of the church age.

TO KEEP THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS AS THE SHINING OF THE LAMPSTAND IN THEIR LOCALITY

If we are enjoying Christ as our love, life, and light, we will keep the testimony of Jesus as the shining of the lampstand in our locality (Rev. 12:17b). We will testify of Christ's person as God and as man and of Christ's human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, descension, and second appearing. The shining of the light is a testimony. In every aspect of our daily life, we should be shining forth Christ. This shining is the shining of the lampstand.

We need to remember these four words that begin with the letter "I"—love, life, light, and lampstand. These four "I" words start with love. We must give the Lord Jesus the preeminence in every way and in everything to recover the first love. Then we will enjoy Him as the tree of life, and this life right away becomes the light of life (John 8:12). Then we will be shining in our daily life and corporately as the lampstand. Otherwise, the lampstand will be removed from us individually and from the church corporately. The Lord warned the church in Ephesus to repent and recover the first love for the enjoyment of Him. Otherwise, the lampstand would be removed from them. We need love, life, light, and the lampstand. Then we will be rewarded by the Lord with what we are and live in Him.

In the Bible, the principle is that our reward is always what we are. What we are will become our reward. If we love others, our loving others will be a reward to us. If we honor our parents, our honor to them will be a reward to us. If we do not live Christ and behave in Christ in the church life, there will be nothing as a reward to us in the church life. Instead, because we do not live Christ, we may feel bitter toward the elders and toward all the saints. If we live Christ and behave in Christ, this living, this behaving, will become our reward. Then we will be happy in the church life. If today we take Christ as the first in everything, we will have love, we will enjoy Him as life, we will shine forth with Him as light, and we will become the shining lampstand as the testimony of Jesus. This eventually will become our reward not only in this age but even more in the coming age. In the thousand-year kingdom we will enjoy Christ as our reward in the Paradise of God. (*The Overcomers*, pp. 30-36)

LOVING THE LORD

For the God-ordained way, the biblical way, the new way, we all need, first of all, to love the Lord. In John 21 the Lord asked Peter if he loved Him. Peter told the Lord, "You know that I love You." Then the Lord answered, "Feed My lambs," and "Feed My sheep" (vv. 15, 17). To speak is not only to edify or to teach but also to feed the lambs and to feed the sheep. If we are going to feed the Lord's sheep, we have to speak. Without speaking, how could we feed any Christian? For us to feed the Lord's sheep, we must love Him. We should tell the Lord, "Lord, I love You, so I like to speak

You forth to others.” The more that we love Him, the more we are qualified, equipped, and even perfected to speak.

According to the Scriptures, the sisters are weaker vessels according to their nature by birth (1 Pet. 3:7). This is according to God’s creation. But as long as the sisters love Him, they will speak. I was born in Christianity, and I was raised there for nineteen years without receiving the Lord as my Savior. But one day a young lady came to my hometown. I was nineteen years old, and she was twenty-five. That was over sixty years ago in conservative mainland China. For a young lady to speak to a thousand people was a very unique and unusual event. Although I had been to Christian meetings quite often, I went to this meeting full of curiosity to see this young lady speak. In my whole life, even up to today, I never heard a person speaking with that much authority. She was a young girl standing on the platform in a meeting place that was filled with about one thousand people. As I listened to her, all my curiosity was taken away. Every word that she spoke caught me, and I was fully convinced. I was a young man raised up in Christianity, but that day I was convinced and caught by the Lord. After the meeting as I was walking home, I prayed and gave my entire life to the Lord.

That young lady, who was only twenty-five years old, loved the Lord to the uttermost. That was her motive. Her love for the Lord was the factor, the element, and the very basic essence of her being powerful. The message she released was from the book of Exodus. She told the audience that Egypt typified the world and that all the worldly people were under the tyranny of Satan just as the children of Israel were under the tyranny of Pharaoh. She said that we had to be delivered out of this tyranny and that this was our exodus. When I heard this near the beginning of her message, I said to myself that I would not be under Satan’s tyranny any more. Because this young sister loved the Lord to the uttermost, she had the Lord’s authority, and the impact was in her gospel preaching.

If we love the Lord, we surely will be filled with Him. Whatever fills us within will come out of us. The overflow comes from the infilling. When we love the Lord, He will fill us. From that day in 1925 when I gave my life to the Lord, I loved to study the Bible and to talk to people about Jesus. Because I was filled with the Lord Jesus, I wanted to speak the Lord Jesus. If we are filled with the Lord Jesus, we surely will have something to pour out. If the sisters love the Lord, they will not be able to restrain themselves from speaking forth the Lord. When we love the Lord to the uttermost, we must speak. We must release the One who has filled us within. (*Speaking Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, pp. 33-34)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Friday—Second Morning Session)

Message Two
Taking the Lead to Experience Life

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; Psa. 36:7-9; John 12:24-26;
2 Cor. 4:10-12; Rom. 8:13; Matt. 7:13-14

- Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- Gen 2:8 And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed.
- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- Psa 36:7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! / Thus the sons of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
- Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
- Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.
- John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
- 2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.
- Matt 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it.
- Matt 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

I. Christ as life is the reality of the tree of life, which is the center of the universe—Gen. 2:9; John 1:4; 10:10; 14:6; 15:1; 6:35, 63; 1 Cor. 15:45b:

- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
- John 14:6 Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.
- John 15:1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.
- John 6:35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
- 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
- A. Life is the goal of God's creation—Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7-9.
- Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

- Gen 1:27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.
- Gen 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.
- Gen 1:31 And God saw everything that He had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
- Gen 2:7 Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.
- Gen 2:8 And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there He put the man whom He had formed.
- Gen 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- B. God's organic salvation, being saved in Christ's life, is the goal of the process of God's judicial redemption—John 19:34; Rom. 5:10; Col. 3:3-4; Rev. 22:1-2.**
- John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.
- Rom 5:10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled,
- Col 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- Rev 22:2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- C. Life is God Himself in Christ as the Spirit flowing out to be enjoyed by man and to please and satisfy man—Psa. 36:7-9; Rev. 22:1; Jer. 2:13.**
- Psa 36:7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! / Thus the sons of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.
- Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
- Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
- Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- Jer 2:13 For My people have committed two evils: / They have forsaken Me, / The fountain of living waters, / To hew out for themselves cisterns, / Broken cisterns, / Which hold no water.
- D. God is in Christ, Christ is the Spirit, and the Spirit is life—John 14:9-10, 17-19; 6:63; Rom. 8:2.**
- John 14:9 Jesus said to him, Have I been so long a time with you, and you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how is it that you say, Show us the Father?
- John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.
- John 14:17 Even the Spirit of reality, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him; but you know Him, because He abides with you and shall be in you.
- John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.
- John 14:19 Yet a little while and the world beholds Me no longer, but you behold Me; because I live, you also shall live.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- E. Life is the Lord Himself as the bread of life for us to eat—John 6:35, 57, 63; Matt. 15:22-27.**
- John 6:35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall by no means hunger, and he who believes into Me shall by no means ever thirst.
- John 6:57 As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

- Matt 15:22 And behold, a Canaanite woman came out from those borders and cried out, saying, Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter suffers terribly from demon possession.
- Matt 15:23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, Send her away, for she is crying out after us.
- Matt 15:24 But He answered and said, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- Matt 15:25 But she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!
- Matt 15:26 But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.
- Matt 15:27 And she said, Yes, Lord, for even the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

F. Life is the light, light overcomes darkness, and light is in God's word—John 1:4-5; Psa. 36:8-9; John 6:63:

- John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
- Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
- Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
- John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

1. If we want to touch life, we need the word, the inner feeling given to us by the Spirit; such a feeling is the living word of God—v. 63; 1 Sam. 3:19-21.
 - John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
 - 1 Sam 3:19 And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.
 - 1 Sam 3:20 And all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of Jehovah.
 - 1 Sam 3:21 And Jehovah continued to appear in Shiloh, for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.
2. If the Spirit in us gives us a word or a feeling to open our mouth and praise the Lord, we should receive this word and open our mouth to praise the Lord; thus, we will have light within, and this light is life, the Spirit, Christ, and God.
3. When we respond to this feeling and offer a prayer of praise to the Lord, we sense the satisfaction of life, the sweetness of Christ, the presence of God, and the moving of the Spirit.

G. All the beauty, power, brightness, and ability of the church come from the fact that Christ as life is her inward content; the church is the result of life, and life is the content of the church—Gen. 2:22; John 19:34; 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17.

- Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.
- John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.
- John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
- 1 Cor 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.

II. We need to see the obstacles that God's life encounters in man:

A. The first problem that God's life encounters in us is that we do not realize the darkness of our human concepts:

1. We need to see that the only thing that matters in the Christian life is how we take care of the living Christ in us—Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:19-21; Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 - Gal 1:16 To reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood,

- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
- Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- 2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

2. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; many people have difficulty in their spiritual life after they are saved because they do not know the pathway of life, and they do not take Christ as their life.

B. The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy—Matt. 6:2, 5; 7:5; 23:13-29:

- Matt 6:2 Therefore when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.
- Matt 6:5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward in full.
- Matt 7:5 Hypocrite, first remove the beam from your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.
- Matt 23:13 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you close off the kingdom of the heavens in the face of men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to enter.
- Matt 23:14 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour the widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers. For this reason you shall receive greater judgment.
- Matt 23:15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you go about the sea and the dry land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as yourselves.
- Matt 23:16 Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound.
- Matt 23:17 Fools and blind men, which is greater, the gold or the temple which sanctifies the gold?
- Matt 23:18 And, Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift which is upon it, he is bound.
- Matt 23:19 Blind men, which is greater, the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift?
- Matt 23:20 Therefore he who swears by the altar swears by it and by all the things upon it;
- Matt 23:21 And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by Him who dwells in it;
- Matt 23:22 And he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it.
- Matt 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you give a tenth of the mint and the anise and the cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faithfulness. But these you should have done and not neglected the others.
- Matt 23:24 Blind guides, who strain out the gnat but swallow the camel!
- Matt 23:25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inwardly they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.
- Matt 23:26 Blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and the dish so that their outside also may become clean.
- Matt 23:27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you resemble white-washed graves, which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.
- Matt 23:28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
- Matt 23:29 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build up the graves of the prophets and adorn the tombs of the righteous,

1. A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of the indwelling Christ.
 2. Our natural goodness is false spirituality and is actually a great hindrance to life; the expression of life involves the rejection of our natural disposition and preference and simply allowing Christ to operate in us and break us.
 3. If we always do things according to our disposition and natural being, the outcome will always be hypocrisy.
- C. The third problem that life encounters in us is rebellion:
1. Christ operates and moves in us in order to make us clear about His will and requirements for us and about His leading and dealing with us.
 2. However, if we do not obey but go against the feeling within, not accepting His leading or paying the price, this unwillingness and opposition are rebellion.
 3. The sin that we commit the most frequently and most severely is not outward and visible; rather, it is the sin of disobeying the sense of Christ in us; Christ is living in us, and He is constantly giving us an inward sense of life—Rom. 8:6; 1 John 2:27; cf. Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; 2 Cor. 2:12-14.
- Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
- 1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.
- Eph 3:1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles-
- Eph 4:1 I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,
- Eph 6:20 For which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I would speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- 2 Cor 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was open to me in the Lord,
- 2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.
- 2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.
- D. The fourth problem that life encounters in us is our natural capability:
1. Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly; nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities; consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them.
 2. We may be capable and talented, but we do not consider these things as sin or filthiness; instead of despising our natural capabilities, we treasure them; if they remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life.
- E. There is one solution to all these obstacles in us—we must pass through the cross and let the cross break us; if we want Christ's life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross and allow these obstacles to be dealt with and removed—Matt. 16:24-25.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.

III. We need to see the subjective obstacles encountered by God's life in us:

- A. A proper Christian is one whose mind, will, and emotion cooperate with his spirit; an abnormal Christian is one whose mind, will, and emotion cannot cooperate with, and even contradict, his spirit; thus, he lives under a veil.
- B. The first subjective problem is the problem of our mind:
 1. If the things we want to do originate from our thoughts, then these things will be

nothing more than religious activities, even if they are successful; they are not a testimony of Christ lived out from our spirit—cf. Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2.

Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,

1 Cor 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Eph 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

2. Although we have the life of Christ within, we do not cooperate with Christ's life in our thoughts and actions, and so this life cannot be lived out from us.
3. When our mind is set on the spirit, our outward actions are in agreement with our inner man, and there is no discrepancy between us and God; He and we are at peace, not at enmity; the result is that we feel peaceful within—8:6.

Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

C. The second subjective problem is the problem of our will:

1. Even though our mind often understands the intention in our spirit, and we know the will of God, we are unwilling to submit and obey.
2. We may understand, know, apprehend, and deeply sense that the Lord wants us to do a certain thing, but our will refuses to submit and surrender, and we lose the Lord's presence.
3. Both a strong will and a weak will to carry out the Lord's will are hindrances to God's life; a will that has been dealt with is both strong and pliable by being subdued and resurrected by the Lord; having a will that can cooperate with God is a great matter—Phil. 2:13.

Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

D. The third subjective problem is the problem of our emotion:

1. Our emotion needs to have God's emotion, and we need to fully enter into God's emotion—2 Thes. 3:5; Phil. 1:8.
2. We should love whatever God loves, like whatever God likes, and hate whatever God hates; our emotion and His emotion should become one emotion—Eph. 5:25; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 16:24; Rev. 2:6.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

2 Cor 12:15 But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?

1 Cor 16:24 My love in Christ Jesus be with you all.

Rev 2:6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

E. From all this we can see that our person is truly an obstacle for the living out of God's life; this is why we need to be broken and why we daily need to be strengthened into the inner man so that Christ can make His home in our heart, the main parts of which are the mind, will, and emotion—Eph. 3:16-17.

Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,

Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

IV. We need to see the pathway of life—Matt. 7:13-14:

Matt 7:13 Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter through it.

- Matt 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.
- A. A part of God’s work in His salvation is to pave a clear way for His life in us; this work is accomplished through the death of the cross—Phil. 3:10.
 Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- B. There is life in a grain of wheat, but unless the grain falls into the ground and dies, the life within the grain will not be released—John 12:24-26.
 John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
 John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.
 John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
- C. The way of life is the way of death; when there is the death of Christ operating in us, there is a way for the life of Christ to come out of us—2 Cor. 4:10; Phil. 3:10; Gal. 2:20.
 2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
 Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- D. The cross of Christ is experienced by us through the Spirit—Gal. 5:16, 24; Rom. 8:13-14; Exo. 30:23-25; Phil. 1:19.
 Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
 Gal 5:24 But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts.
 Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.
 Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
 Exo 30:23 You also take the finest spices: of flowing myrrh five hundred shekels, and of fragrant cinnamon half as much, two hundred fifty shekels, and of fragrant calamus two hundred fifty shekels,
 Exo 30:24 And of cassia five hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil.
 Exo 30:25 And you shall make it a holy anointing oil, a fragrant ointment compounded according to the work of a compounder; it shall be a holy anointing oil.
 Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- E. The stronger the Holy Spirit’s work in us is, the stronger our experience of the cross will be; wherever the Holy Spirit works, there is a putting to death by the Spirit, and resurrection life can be manifested in and through us—2 Cor. 4:11-12.
 2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- F. The discipline of the Holy Spirit also carries out the work of the cross in us:
 1. For our spiritual understanding, it is not enough only to know the Holy Spirit; we must also know the “all things” in our circumstances (Rom. 8:28); a Christian who is spiritual and lives before God needs to “read” three things every day: first, he needs to read the Bible; second, he needs to read his inward sense of the spirit; third, he needs to read his environment and circumstances, which are the persons, matters, and things around him; God arranges our environment and circumstances to cause all persons, matters, and things to work together for good, that is, for transforming and conforming us to the image of God’s firstborn Son—vv. 28-29.
 Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
2. The environment that the Lord has created for us causes us to know the Lord's grace and experience the Lord's power—2 Cor. 12:9.
- 2 Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.

V. We need to see a vision of how the life of God can be lived out of us:

- A. We need to realize and know that the life of God is in us—Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:10.
- Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
- Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
- B. We need God to open our eyes to see that our natural man, our very person, is a hindrance to the life of God.
- C. We need to see that we have been crucified on the cross, and we must hate our self; the more we see God, know God, and love God, the more we abhor ourselves and the more we deny ourselves—Col. 3:3; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6; Job 42:5-6; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:26.
- Col 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Rom 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves;
- Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You;
- Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Luke 9:23 And He said to them all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
- Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple.

VI. “There is a very heavy burden within me, a very deep feeling, that what every church today needs most is the things of life. All our work and activity must come out of life...Unless it comes out of life, our work and service will neither last nor bear much weight. If we want our work to bear abundant and lasting fruit, we must have a foundation in life. We ourselves must touch the Lord in life...Only thus can we fit into the work which God desires to do in this age...We should have only one desire—to know and experience the life of the Lord more, and to be able to share with others what we have known and experienced so that they too may obtain something...Our work should just be the releasing of the life of the Lord, the imparting and supplying of the Lord's life to others. May the Lord have mercy upon us and open our eyes to see that the central work of God in this age is that man may gain His life and grow and mature in His life. Only the work which comes out of His life can reach His eternal standard and be accepted by Him”—*The Knowledge of Life*, pp. 57-58.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

EXPERIENCING THE PUTTING TO DEATH OF THE CROSS

The meaning of the cross is death, and the function of the cross is to put us to death. When the Lord Jesus was on the cross, He was not just suffering; He was dying. The ultimate significance of the Lord Jesus being on the cross relates to death. The death of the cross is applied to us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and its effect is to put us to death, to kill us. Every day the Holy Spirit operates to work the cross of Christ and the death of the cross into us so that every part of our being can be brought into death.

The truth concerning death is not an easy matter. No one's death is simple and easy. In our spiritual experience, when the Holy Spirit enlightens us to see that we have been crucified, we rejoice, we are happy, and we praise the Lord. Many saints have this experience. When we first see that we have been crucified with Christ, we praise and rejoice. About twenty years ago, when I saw this light, I was in my study, and I was so joyful and exultant that I was jumping, running, praising, and giving thanks. Even though I was corrupt, full of lawlessness, offensive to God, opposed God, and incurable, I still saw that I was crucified. Even a person such as myself had been dealt with on the cross. The Lord said, "You have died," and I also said, "I have died." I believed the Lord's word. On that day I died. This caused me to rejoice in exultation; I was happier than when I was saved. However, after a short time, I realized that I was still alive and had not died. I was the same as before and had not changed at all. Consequently, I became confused. I continued to fail, and my failures were greater, more serious, and more severe than before. Although I saw that I had been crucified with Christ, I realized that I was still alive.

Then the Lord's Spirit showed me that dying with Christ involved more than just passing through the gate of death. I still needed to be led by the Spirit to walk on the way of death and to live the life of death. From that day forward, the Spirit applied and worked death into me. Death began to operate and have an effect in me. This operation put me to death daily, killing every part of my being. The first day it killed some of my emotions; the next day it put some of my opinions to death; the day after it put some of my thoughts to death; on yet another day it dealt with some of my concepts. Elements of my person were being killed every day. The Holy Spirit used the death of the cross, which I had seen, to do a killing work and to put me to death. The killing of the Spirit gradually became deeper, stronger, and more intense. The Spirit worked in me continually. In terms of my living, I lived under the cross every day; in terms of my walk, I was on the way of the cross every day.

Some people may ask, "What does it mean to apply the death of the cross to kill the natural element in us? What does it mean for the cross to put us to death every day?" As an example, a brother may see the vision that he has died with the Lord and realize that he has been crucified with Christ. He will tell himself that he has seen the matter of his death and termination on the cross. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, when he wakes up the next morning, he will have a thought of doing this or that, and he will decide what he is going to do based on his own likes and dislikes. While he is thinking and choosing, however, he marvelously will sense the Holy Spirit working in him, as if the Holy Spirit is speaking and asking, "Is this your thought or Christ's? Is this your decision or the Lord's? Are these your likes and dislikes or the Lord's?" The Holy Spirit will operate in him in this way. If he thinks and chooses according to his own choices and preferences, the Holy Spirit will fight against them strongly, and the Spirit will stop, condemn, or rebuke him. As a consequence, the brother clearly will know his choices are not of the Lord.

As the Holy Spirit operates, shines, and rebukes in this way, and as the brother confesses his sins, a killing work is being carried out invisibly in him, putting a nail into his ideas and opinions. Even though the Holy Spirit condemns him, he still may have a strong will and hold on to his opinion. Nevertheless, even though he insists on his opinion, there is now a hole in his opinion, and his opinion has changed a little. The Holy Spirit has done a little work of killing and breaking in him. As he

continues on this way, the Holy Spirit will work in him more intensely to the point that he will be conquered inwardly by the Spirit. Then he will bow and say, "O Lord, I thank and praise You. I am already on the cross, and I have been crucified." His ideas, opinions, and thoughts will be crucified, and his likes and dislikes also will be on the cross. The cross can penetrate him to a point that his preferences, will, mind, and whole being are affected. This is the Holy Spirit's operation and application of the death of the cross in him, which produces an effect of putting his thoughts, preferences, and self to death. After this experience, there will be a few more holes and cracks in this brother's being because he has been broken a little more.

Although he still lives and walks, he has seen some light of the cross and has some experience of the cross. However, most of his natural element still exists and is present in his living. His self unconsciously rises up and continues to give opinions, to make decisions, and to choose. However, the process of death also repeats itself in him. Based on his seeing of the cross, the Spirit will shine on him and the light will condemn and question: "Is this you or the Lord? Is this you or Christ?" At a certain point, he will be conquered and subdued again, and once again he will bow and say, "O Lord, I thank and praise You. My person is already on the cross." Thus, his preferences, thoughts, and opinions will be put to death on the cross, and he will receive and experience the cross once again. As the Holy Spirit furthers His work in him, the mark and the breaking of the cross in him will be deepened. There will be a further breaking in him, and more of his own element will be put to death. Consequently, little by little, day after day, and event after event, he will experience the cross in the Holy Spirit.

THE TWO-SIDED TRUTH OF THE CROSS

From his Epistles we can see that Paul speaks of the cross in two different ways. First, he speaks of our having been crucified with Christ; this was accomplished by Christ. When Christ was crucified, He took us with Him so that we died in Him. This is an accomplished fact, and we simply need to believe and receive it. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him," and Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ." Both of these verses speak of Christ's accomplished fact. Paul speaks of the cross also in 5:24, which says, "They who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." Romans 8:13 says, "By the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body."

Those who teach the truth concerning the cross make a mistake of speaking only about one side of this truth in the Bible. Some people speak only of the eternal accomplishment of Christ by His crucifixion on the cross. They say that we do not need to be crucified, because we need only to receive this accomplished fact. This is true, but this is only one side of the truth. It is not enough simply to have this side of the truth, because there is another side in Paul's Epistles. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him," but Romans 8:13 says, "If by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live." On the one hand, we have been crucified on the cross; on the other hand, we need also to put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit. To put to death the practices of the body by the Spirit involves cooperating with the Spirit to put our flesh to death, which is putting a part of our element to death. This involves putting ourselves to death and also the Spirit putting us to death.

Through the Holy Spirit we are enlightened concerning Christ's accomplished fact. This enables us to pass through the gate. Then the Spirit executes and works this fact into us inwardly so that we condemn what the Spirit condemns, we criticize what the Spirit criticizes, and we put to death what the Spirit puts to death. In this way, we experience the death of the cross.

THE WAY AND LIFE OF THE CROSS

On the day I saw the light of the cross and the fact that I have died with Christ in Romans 6, I was full of joy, thanks, and praise. Nevertheless, I was only passing through the gate; it was one side of the truth. At that time, I did not see the other side of the truth, that I needed to take the way of the

cross. I saw only that Christ's death had terminated and solved everything. Nevertheless, even before I went downstairs the next morning, I saw that I was still alive. I did not realize that I needed to walk on the way after passing through the gate. I was helped by the Holy Spirit to pass through the gate, but I still needed to be led by the Holy Spirit to walk on the way. However, since the Holy Spirit wanted to apply the cross and daily shined the light of the cross in me, the light of the cross questioned, condemned, rebuked, and showed me what was of myself whenever I had a preference or opinion. When I was willing to obey, cooperate, and work with Him, I would bow and say, "Amen, Lord, I will put this matter on the cross." I would condemn it and crucify it.

As I was daily put to death, enlightened, and led and as I was cooperating with the Holy Spirit's continuing work of killing and putting me to death, the death of the cross was constituted into me. Thus, the work of killing and of being put to death in the Spirit, according to the Spirit, by the Spirit, and through the Spirit, was accomplished in me every day. This was not about putting others to death but about killing and putting my own inward element to death. This is the way of the cross and the life of the cross; this is the leading of the Holy Spirit in us every day.

A brother who has seen the light of the cross may still quarrel with his wife at home because quarreling is according to his natural being. When he quarrels with his wife, however, the Holy Spirit will shine the light of the cross in him and question, "Is this Christ or you yourself?" When the Spirit shines and questions him in this way, he will be punctured by the cross and be unable to continue to quarrel with his wife. As long as he quarrels, the Holy Spirit will continue to ask, "Are you a crucified person? Are you hanging on the cross? Where is the light of the cross that you have seen?" As the Holy Spirit questions him, he will lose his ability to quarrel. Whenever this situation arises, the Holy Spirit will ask, "Is this from you or from Christ? Are you a crucified person? Is this what it means to see the light of the cross?" Thus, even if he is riding on a bus, he will be able to confess, and when he comes home from work, the Holy Spirit will ask, "Does a crucified person care about his face? Are you going to keep frustrating the Spirit and not apologize?" After such questioning, he will submit to the Lord and apologize to his wife. If a person wants to save his face, he does not have Christ; if he has Christ, he will be able to apologize. When we cooperate with the living Spirit, the Holy Spirit will kill our face and any effort to save our face. This is the experience and living of the cross.

THE CROSS BRINGING IN RESURRECTION LIFE

All of these Christian experiences are precious and cause us to pass through death. The more we pass through death, the more life will be expressed from us. For example, the same brother who quarrels with his wife also endeavors to express the Lord and to allow the Lord's life to flow out. However, his natural strength is insufficient to express Christ and to allow His life to flow out. Once he is under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, however, the Spirit will enable him to cooperate with and submit to the Holy Spirit. Then his wife will sense a flavor of Christ coming from him, and she will see a little of Christ's life in him because the death of the cross has been realized and is being carried out in him. The cross brings in both death and the expression of the resurrection life.

The Spirit will lead us into the death of the cross hour by hour and day by day. This is the leading of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in us wants to bring us into death every moment. The stronger the Holy Spirit's work in us is, the stronger our experience of the cross will be. Without the death of the cross, there is no work of the Holy Spirit; wherever the Holy Spirit works, there is a putting to death by the Spirit.

From morning until evening and from evening until morning, the Holy Spirit is working in us. He requires that we receive the cross, and He puts us into the death of the cross. When death operates in us, resurrection life can be manifested (2 Cor. 4:11-12). The way of life is death, and death is the way of life. When we walk on the way of life, we walk on the way of the death of the cross. The Christian life is a living of the cross and a living of death. Every day we experience death in the Holy Spirit, and we live and walk under death. Death deals with our person. As we are dealt with and

broken, the life of God in us will have a free and smooth way. May the Lord be merciful to us!
(*Knowing Life and the Church*, pp. 66-72)

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's arrangement, ordination, permission, and move in our environment are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit rules over our environment, and He moves and arranges everything to break our person. Our spouse is God's helper in breaking us. Sometimes our spouse's cooperation with God is not sufficient, so He gives us children. If our spouse, as God's chief helper, is not sufficient to deal with us, He adds more little helpers to deal with us. If these helpers are not sufficient, He can add three, four, or even five more helpers. Sometimes it is not enough to have sons, so God also gives us daughters.

Every brother and sister is created and redeemed by God, and we are all under God's grace and care. We are all led, cultivated, and perfected by God. Since we admit that this is true, we should see that every important matter in our human life, such as our husband, wife, parents, or children, did not come to us by chance. Nothing comes to us without a purpose. Everything is arranged by God; some things were arranged by God before we were born, and some things come to us through our prayer. For example, because a sister may have only daughters, she prays for a son and receives a son. However, this son should actually be named Dealing because the more he grows up, the more he brings dealings to his mother. These things are all accomplished and arranged by God.

I hope all the brothers and sisters would have a deep impression that God uses the tools of grace, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the church, the saints, the light of the truth, and especially the environment. Strictly speaking, the environment and our circumstances are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The discipline of the Holy Spirit is the greatest tool in God's ordination. Many people treasure the Bible and pay much attention to the Holy Spirit, but they do not pay attention to the environment; they do not pay attention to the people, things, and matters they encounter. A Christian who is spiritual and lives before God needs to "read" three things every day. First, he needs to read the Bible. Second, he needs to read his inward sense. Third, he needs to read his environment and circumstances, which are the people, things, and matters around him. Many people read the Bible well, and they also can read the sense in their spirit, but they are unable to read the people, things, and matters they encounter. Have we ever considered why God gave us our spouse? Why did God give us a certain kind of child? Have we ever studied them and tried to understand them? Many brothers and sisters memorize the Bible and are also keenly aware of the sense in their spirit, yet regrettably they have never studied and do not understand the environment around them. They neglect and ignore their circumstances and environment, and they miss the benefit that can be gained from them. This is a big mistake. Our circumstances and environment are a great means arranged by God for dealing with our person and subduing us.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT CONFORMING US TO THE IMAGE OF GOD'S SON AND MANIFESTING GOD'S GRACE AND POWER

Romans 8 speaks specifically about the Holy Spirit; the first half of chapter 8 speaks of the Holy Spirit, and the second half speaks of the environment, circumstances, and sufferings, including God causing all things to work together for good (v. 28). For our spiritual understanding, it is not enough only to know the Holy Spirit, we must also know the "all things" in our circumstances. The purpose of all things working together is to gain man's cooperation to conform him to the image of God's Son and to deal with man to the extent that he is exactly the same as God's Son. For this reason, the Holy Spirit raises up a yearning prayer in us, and He intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, causing us to desire God's grace within, to have Christ's image, and to be filled with Christ's life (v. 26). With this kind of desire and prayer of the Holy Spirit within us, these prayers and groanings pass through the Holy Spirit and reach God. When God hears such prayer, He prepares the

environment around us to cause all things to work together to break and deal with us and, thereby, to transform us. When our desire to be filled with Christ and to bear the image of God's Son is matched with the Holy Spirit's intercession, God hears our prayer and raises up an environment to deal with us. This environment may be our spouse or children, but everything occurs in order to break and subdue us. This is a great discipline.

Even a person like Paul, who was greatly blessed and experienced grace in such a strong and deep way, spoke of a thorn that pierced and pricked him every day. When it reached a point where he could bear it no longer, he prayed that the Lord would remove the thorn. The Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9). The thorn in Paul enabled him to enjoy the grace of God and experience God's power being perfected in weakness. Some wives may be thorns to their husbands, some husbands may be thorns to their wives, and some children may be thorns to their parents, but all of these things are allowed by the Lord in order to deal with and break us. We may pray and hope that others will change, but the more we pray in this way, the clearer we are that nothing will change. Our thorn will continue to pierce us, trouble us, and bother us. This is the environment that God has created to cause us to know the Lord's grace and to experience the Lord's power.

In the eyes of unbelievers, a Christian's circumstances often seem very strange, and they lack an understanding of what they mean. God, however, knows that He is the One who arranges everything. There is not one proper Christian who does not have some troubles and pressure in his life; there is not one proper Christian whose living is smooth and carefree. Every proper Christian has some difficulty or burden and is under some kind of oppression or affliction in all kinds of circumstances. This is the discipline of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the inward shining and calling of the Holy Spirit and of the outward pressure of the environment is simply to defeat our person. If we see this, we will bow and say, "O God, I worship You. What You arranged can never be wrong. This is what I need. Even if I make mistakes, You never make mistakes, and I still worship You." At such a moment, we will be blessed within, and the power of the Lord's life will bear us, support us, and enable us to endure the things that we cannot endure in ourselves. At such moments, we will have the Lord's inward presence and joy.

If we learn these lessons well, our spouse will produce the effect of the cross in us, and our self, preference, opinion, inclination, thought, and all that we are will be put to death. God often breaks us through our spouses. If we submit ourselves to the Lord and receive this, we will meet the Lord within, and we will be blessed by having life as the power that carries us through and enables us to endure what we could not endure.

CONCLUSION

We need to see that real growth in life does not depend only on the outward shining of the Bible and our inward cooperation with the Holy Spirit; we also need our environment and circumstances, which are the discipline of the Holy Spirit. If we really live before the Lord, we will live in the Spirit and treasure the circumstances arranged by God. We will treasure the people, things, and matters around us. When truth is released, there will be a response in us, and through our prayer the Spirit will begin to work in us. At the same time, God's hand will also arrange things in our outward environment to reinforce the light of His truth and the work of the Spirit. The purpose of this inward and outward work is to break, subdue, and deal with our person. If the Lord is merciful and gracious to us, these messages will help us see how the Lord's life has become our life and how much His life wants to have the ground to live out of us.

God's life, the revelation and light that we have seen, and the discipline of the Holy Spirit in our circumstances carry out the work of the cross in us. The cross brings in the life of Christ, and the death of the cross brings in resurrection. Those who have the expression of the death of the cross also have the expression of life. This is the way of life. (*Knowing Life and the Church*, pp. 79-82)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three
Taking the Lead to Minister Life

Scripture Reading: 1 John 5:14-17; 2 Cor. 1:9; 4:10-12; Josh. 3:17; 4:10, 17

- 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- 1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
- 1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.
- 2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
- 2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- Josh 3:17 And the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel was crossing over on dry ground, until all the nation had completely crossed over the Jordan.
- Josh 4:10 And the priests who carried the Ark stood in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that Jehovah had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed over.
- Josh 4:17 And Joshua commanded the priests, saying, Come up out of the Jordan.

I. We not only have eternal life and enjoy eternal life, but we can also minister this life to other members of the Body—1 John 5:14-17:

- 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- 1 John 5:15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
- 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
- 1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.
- A. God wants us to have life, and He wants His life to flow out of us—vv. 11-13; John 3:15; 7:37-39:
- 1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
- 1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
- 1 John 5:13 I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God.
- John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
- John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
- John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
- John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.
1. When we received the Lord's life, we were joined to the fountain of life—Psa. 36:8-9; John 3:15; 4:14.

Psa 36:8 They are saturated with the fatness of Your house, / And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures.
 Psa 36:9 For with You is the fountain of life; / In Your light we see light.
 John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
 John 4:14 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water springing up into eternal life.

2. The living water is not only within us, but it also has become rivers of living water, flowing out of us into others and supplying them with life and satisfying their thirst—7:37-39:

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.
 John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.
 John 7:39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

a. God is seeking those into whom He can dispense Christ's life more and more so that they can supply others with His life—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
 Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
 Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
 Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

b. Life needs channels, and God wants us to be the channels through which His life can flow into others—1 John 1:1-2.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life
 1 John 1:2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);

3. The eternal life within us can overcome death both in ourselves and in other members of the church—3:14; Matt. 16:18.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.
 Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

B. First John 5:16 refers to the ministering of life, to the imparting of life; when we have a surplus of life, we can minister life to others:

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

1. In verse 16 *he shall ask* and *he will give* refer to a believer who is abiding in the Lord and who is one with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17), indicating that such a believer can become the means, the channel, by which God's life-giving Spirit can give life to others; this is a matter of the ministering of life in the fellowship of the divine life.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.

2. In order to be those who can give, impart, life to others, we must abide in the divine life and live and have our being in the divine life—1 John 1:1-7:

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life

- 1 John 1:2 (And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us);
- 1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- 1 John 1:4 And these things we write that our joy may be made full.
- 1 John 1:5 And this is the message which we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.
- 1 John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth;
- 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin.
- a. We need to experience and enjoy the eternal life within us, and we need to minister this life by being a channel through which eternal life can flow to other members of the Body—5:11-13, 16.
- 1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
- 1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
- 1 John 5:13 I have written these things to you that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe into the name of the Son of God.
- 1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.
- b. If we would be a channel for eternal life to flow out to others, we must be deep in the Lord, and we must know the Lord's heart by being in His heart—Psa. 25:14; Gen. 18:17, 22-33; Amos 3:7.
- Psa 25:14 The intimate counsel of Jehovah is to those who fear Him, / And His covenant will He make known to them.
- Gen 18:17 And Jehovah said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
- Gen 18:22 And the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before Jehovah.
- Gen 18:23 And Abraham came near and said, Will You indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?
- Gen 18:24 Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed destroy and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?
- Gen 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put to death the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked. Far be it from You! Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justly?
- Gen 18:26 And Jehovah said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place for their sake.
- Gen 18:27 And Abraham answered and said, Now behold, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes.
- Gen 18:28 Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five? And He said, I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.
- Gen 18:29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, Suppose forty are found there? And He said, I will not do it, because of the forty.
- Gen 18:30 And he said, Oh may the Lord not be angry if I speak. Suppose thirty are found there? And He said, I will not do it if I find thirty there.
- Gen 18:31 And he said, Now behold, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there? And He said, I will not destroy it, because of the twenty.
- Gen 18:32 And he said, Oh let the Lord not be angry if I speak yet once more. Suppose ten are found there? And He said, I will not destroy it, because of the ten.
- Gen 18:33 And Jehovah went away as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.
- Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord Jehovah will not do anything unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

II. The building up of the church requires the ministry of life—2 Cor. 4:12:

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

A. Throughout its history the church has been divided by gifts, but it cannot be divided by the ministry of life; if we pay our full attention to the ministry of life, we will always be kept in oneness—1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1.

1 Cor 12:4 But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit;

1 Cor 12:5 And there are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord;

1 Cor 12:6 And there are distinctions of operations, but the same God, who operates all things in all.

1 Cor 12:7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable.

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

1 Cor 12:9 To a different one faith in the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing in the one Spirit,

1 Cor 12:10 And to another operations of works of power, and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits; to a different one various kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues.

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

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Cor 4:1 Therefore having this ministry as we have been shown mercy, we do not lose heart;

B. The ministry of life is to minister as life the Christ whom we have experienced—1:3-4:

2 Cor 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassions and God of all comfort,

2 Cor 1:4 Who comforts us in all our affliction that we may be able to comfort those who are in every affliction through the comforting with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

1. The ministry comes out by the working of the cross; it is by the way of the cross that we have the riches of Christ as life to minister to others—4:12.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

2. How much life and how much reality of the riches of Christ we can minister depends upon how much revelation we have received and how much we have suffered for what has been revealed to us—Eph. 3:8.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

III. If we would minister life, we need to know, experience, and gain God as the God of resurrection—Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 1:9; John 11:25:

Rom 4:17 (As it is written, "I have appointed you a father of many nations") in the sight of God whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls the things not being as being.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;

A. God is working through the cross to terminate us, to bring us to an end, so that we will no longer trust in ourselves but in the God of resurrection—2 Cor. 1:9.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

B. When the God of resurrection works in us, His life and nature are wrought into us—4:16.

2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

C. The killing of the cross results in the manifestation of resurrection life—vv. 10-12:

2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

1. The putting to death of Jesus destroys the natural man, the outer man, and the flesh, with the result that the inner man is given the opportunity to develop and be renewed to live out the resurrection life—v. 16.
 2 Cor 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
 2. All the work that the Lord is doing on us is to destroy our outer, natural man so that we can live out the life of Christ from within us; this is the deepest thought in the New Testament concerning the life of a Christian—John 12:24-26; Phil. 1:21a.
 John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.
 John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.
 John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
 Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
 3. Remaining in the death of Christ and being conformed to His death is a profound principle of the Christian life—Rom. 6:4-5; Phil. 3:10:
 Rom 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.
 Rom 6:5 For if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection,
 Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - a. When we remain in the death of Christ, we experience the power of Christ’s resurrection—vv. 10-11; Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 1:8-10; 4:14.
 Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 Phil 3:11 If perhaps I may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead.
 Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
 2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.
 2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
 2 Cor 1:10 Who has delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver us; in whom we have hoped that He will also yet deliver us,
 2 Cor 4:14 Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will make us stand before Him with you.
 - b. The more we die with Christ in this way, the more His resurrection power will be manifested in us and the more we will be able to minister life to the Body of Christ—John 11:25.
 John 11:25 Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes into Me, even if he should die, shall live;
 4. Our natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross so that they may become useful in resurrection for the ministry of life—Phil. 3:3.
 Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,
- D. The budding, blossoming, fruit-yielding rod signifies the resurrection life of Christ for us to minister life to the Body—Num. 17:8.
 Num 17:8 And on the next day Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony, and there was the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi: it had budded; it even put forth buds and produced blossoms and bore ripe almonds.

IV. Like the apostles, we minister life by dying—2 Cor. 4:10-12; Josh. 3:17; 4:10, 17:

- 2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
- 2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
- 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- Josh 3:17 And the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel was crossing over on dry ground, until all the nation had completely crossed over the Jordan.
- Josh 4:10 And the priests who carried the Ark stood in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that Jehovah had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed over.
- Josh 4:17 And Joshua commanded the priests, saying, Come up out of the Jordan.
- A. “So then death operates in us, but life in you”—2 Cor. 4:12:
1. The work of the apostles is the work of death operating in them so that life may operate in the believers; this is the real work of the new covenant ministry—3:6; 4:10-12.

2 Cor 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
 2. In the Lord's recovery we need to die in order that life may work in others:
 - a. When we are under the killing of the Lord's death, His resurrection life is imparted through us into others—vv. 10-12; Phil. 3:10.

2 Cor 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

2 Cor 4:11 For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
 - b. The impartation of life into others is always the issue of our suffering the killing of the cross—1 John 5:16; John 12:24-26.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that.

John 12:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:25 He who loves his soul-life loses it; and he who hates his soul-life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.

John 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.
 - c. The Lord does not need us to accomplish a work for Him; He needs us to die—1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:9.

1 Cor 15:31 I protest by the boasting in you, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;
 - d. If we die, life will work in others; we minister life to others by dying—4:12.

2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
- B. “The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah stood firmly on dry ground

in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel was crossing over on dry ground, until all the nation had completely crossed over the Jordan”—Josh. 3:17:

1. God put the priests in the place of death so that all Israel would have a way into the land of life; the priests were the first ones to go into the water and the last ones to come up out of the water—vv. 11-17; 4:10, 17.
 - Josh 3:11 The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth is now crossing over before you into the Jordan.
 - Josh 3:12 Therefore now take twelve men for yourselves out of the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe.
 - Josh 3:13 And when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the Ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth, come to rest in the waters of the Jordan; the waters of the Jordan, the waters that flow down from upstream, will be cut off, and they will stand in a heap.
 - Josh 3:14 And so it happened that when the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were before the people.
 - Josh 3:15 And when those who carried the Ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who carried the Ark dipped into the edge of the water (now the Jordan overflowed all its banks throughout all the days of the harvest),
 - Josh 3:16 The waters that flowed down from upstream stood and rose up in a heap a great distance away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those that flowed down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people crossed over from opposite Jericho.
 - Josh 3:17 And the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel was crossing over on dry ground, until all the nation had completely crossed over the Jordan.
 - Josh 4:10 And the priests who carried the Ark stood in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that Jehovah had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed over.
 - Josh 4:17 And Joshua commanded the priests, saying, Come up out of the Jordan.
2. Before others can receive life, God must first put us in the place of death so that death may operate in us and life in others; this is to minister life by dying—2 Cor. 4:12.
 - 2 Cor 4:12 So then death operates in us, but life in you.
3. Today God is seeking those who are willing to stand in the place of death in order that the church may find the way of life.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE MINISTRY OF LIFE FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Throughout its history the church has always been divided by gifts. But it can never be divided by the ministry. If we focus our attention on the gifts, we will be divided within a short time. But if we forget about the gifts and pay our full attention to the ministry of life, we will always be kept in oneness. This is why we stress again and again that the gifts cannot build up a local church, but the ministry can.

If you are a Christian worker and you are always trying to argue with others, this proves that you merely have a gift. People with the ministry of life will never argue. Argument goes along with gifts and doctrinal teachings. If we pay our attention to gifts and teachings, we will argue. But if we focus our attention on the ministry of life, we will not have anything to argue about. Gifts and teachings with doctrinal debates and arguments tear down the local church. The local church can be built up only by the ministry of life. Some may not like noisy meetings, whereas others do. We should not debate about this. What we need is the life of Christ, not a certain kind of meeting. The ministry of life does not come out of the doctrinal study and teaching of the Bible. It comes out of sufferings. If you are really in the hand of the Lord, the Lord will form a ministry with you through all kinds of sufferings.

It is so strange and wonderful that there is nothing mentioned about the gifts in 2 Corinthians. Instead, there is a list of Paul's sufferings in chapter 1, chapter 4, chapter 6, and chapter 11. Then in chapter 12 he told us of such a subjective suffering—a thorn in the flesh. He asked the Lord particularly to take this away, but the Lord refused. There would be no miracle, no divine healing. Instead, there would be suffering. Through the suffering, Paul experienced the Lord as the sufficient grace, which was the perfect power in his weakness. Eventually, Paul learned to say, "I will rather boast in my weaknesses" (12:9). He also said, "I am well pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am powerful" (v. 10). This is the way to have the growth in life so that a ministry might be produced for the building up of the Body of Christ.

What is needed for the building up of a local church is the ministry of life, not the gifts. In order to illustrate this point, I would like to tell a story about Brother Watchman Nee and an elder sister by the name of Miss Barber, who helped him very much. As a young man, Brother Nee always admired good speakers. When he and Miss Barber went to hear a few speakers, Brother Nee told her how wonderful they were. But Miss Barber would say, "That is just doctrine with human eloquence. There is no life there." In other words, there was no ministry with these ones.

Brother Nee told me this at the beginning of my service in the Lord because he was trying to help me to know the difference between a ministry and a gift, that is, between the utterance of something of life and human eloquence. A person may be born with the gift of eloquence, but his speaking may be merely sounding brass. It is nice for listening, but there is no content of Christ as life. Another may be awkward in his speech, but you realize that there is something weighty with what he speaks because he has the ministry of life. This can come only out of the sufferings. The building up of the church needs this ministry of life. We all need to continue in the growth in life so that we may have more ministries among us for the building up of the church. (*The Experience of Christ as Life for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 128-129)

A MINISTRY THAT SUPPLIES LIFE

The Gospel of John is a book that is particularly devoted to life. Chapter three speaks of regeneration through water. This water is for burying the old man. In chapter four the Lord says, "But the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water gushing up into eternal life" (v. 14). This water is the gushing forth of God's life within man. When we received the Lord, His life

entered into us. This is like putting a fountain within us. When we received the Lord's life, we were joined to the fountain of life. In chapter seven the living water is not only in us, but it also has become rivers of living water. It flows out of us into others and supplies others with life and satisfies their thirst. God is not satisfied with us only having His life; He wants His life to flow out of us.

Miss Barber was such a person. As soon as others touched her, they touched life. If you sat down and fellowshiped with her for a minute or two, you would feel life flowing out of her. If a person with life sits beside you, his very presence will bring life to you. Today God is seeking people into whom He can dispense Christ's life more and more so that they can supply others with His life. Life needs channels, and God wants men to be the channels through which His life can flow to others. May the Lord gain us so that we can have a life-supplying ministry and supply others with life. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 44, p. 851)

ASKING AND GIVING LIFE

In 1 John 5:16 John comes to his point in this section: "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and he will give life to him, to those sinning not unto death. There is sin unto death; I do not say that he should make request concerning that." Literally, the Greek word rendered "unto" in this verse means toward. Here John is saying that if anyone sees his brother, someone close to him in the Lord, sinning a sin not unto death, he should ask concerning that one. The word "ask" here must refer to a prayer made when we are abiding in fellowship with God.

No doubt, "he shall ask" refers to the one who sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death. But to whom does "he will give life" refer? There is a problem with the second "he" in this verse. Some translations capitalize the second "he" and thereby make it refer to the Lord. Actually, in both cases "he" refers to the same person, that is, to the one who sees his brother sinning and who asks concerning him.

The subject of "will give life" is still he, the subject of the first predicate "shall ask." This indicates that the asker will give life to the one asked for. This does not mean that the asker has life of himself and can give life by himself to others. It means such an asker, who is abiding in the Lord, who is one with the Lord, and who is asking in one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17), becomes the means through which God's life-giving Spirit can give life to the one he asks for. This is a matter of life-impacting in the fellowship of the divine life. To be one who can give life to others, we must abide in the divine life and walk, live, and have our being in the divine life. In James 5:14-16 the prayer is for healing; here the prayer is for life-impacting.

The vital point here is that if we would pray for a brother according to what is described in verse 16, we need to be one with the Lord. We must abide in the Lord and ask in one spirit with Him. Because we are so one with the Lord, we can become the means, the channel, through which God's life-giving Spirit can impart life to the one for whom we ask. This imparting of life takes place in the fellowship of the divine life.

Undoubtedly, "life" in verse 16 refers to spiritual life imparted into the one asked for through the prayer of the asker. However, according to the context, this spiritual life will also rescue the physical body of the one asked for from the danger of suffering death because of his sinning (see James 5:15). (*Life-study of 1 John*, pp. 330-331)

LIFE-IMPACTING IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE DIVINE LIFE

What is described in 1 John 5:14-17 concerning the life-giving petition can be experienced only by those who are deep in the Lord. In verse 14 John speaks of prayer that is according to God's will. In order to pray this kind of prayer, we must be one with the Lord. If we are deeply one with Him, we shall know His will, and we shall also know the situation of the one who is sinning. Because this one is our brother, someone very close to us in the Lord, we shall know his real situation before the Lord. This matter is deep.

If you are one with the Lord and know a sinning brother's condition and situation before the Lord, you will then know the Lord's will and be able to pray according to His will. Because you know the Lord's will, you will also know whether or not this brother will die because of his sin.

These verses indicate that we who have eternal life can pass this life on to others. This means that we can be a channel through which eternal life is supplied to others. We can be a channel for eternal life to flow out of us and into others. Verse 16 refers to this. In this verse the one who asks is also the one who gives life to the sinning brother. This indicates that the one who asks will give life to the one concerning whom he asks. The asker, who is abiding in the Lord, who is one with the Lord, and who is asking in one spirit with the Lord, becomes the means through which God's life-giving Spirit can give life to the one for whom he asks. This is a matter of life-imparting in the fellowship of the divine life.

My burden in this message is to show you that the eternal life within us is real and practical. On the one hand, we can enjoy this eternal life within us. On the other hand, we can pass on this eternal life to others. We can be a channel for eternal life to flow out from us, or through us, to others. However, the experience of being a channel for eternal life to flow out to others is a deep matter. This cannot be done in a superficial way. If we would be a channel for eternal life to flow out to others, we must be deep in the Lord, and we must know the Lord's heart by being in His heart. If we have entered into the Lord to such a degree, spontaneously we shall know the Lord's will concerning a brother close to us who has sinned. Because we know the Lord's will concerning the brother's situation, we shall know how to pray for him.

In 5:14-17 John shows us that eternal life is practical and can be experienced by us in a deep way. In these verses we see the need to live in the divine life to such an extent that we are absolutely one with the Lord. Then as we pray we shall know whether or not there is the anointing in our prayer. If there is the anointing, we should go on to pray for a brother according to the anointing. But if there is no anointing, we may be praying in ourselves. When we have these experiences, we know that eternal life is real and practical. (*Life-study of 1 John*, pp. 337-339)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Saturday—First Morning Session)

Message Four

Taking the Lead to Prophecy
for the Building Up of the Church as the Organic Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Deut. 18:15; Num. 11:29b; 1 Cor. 14:1, 3-6, 12, 19, 31

- Deut 18:15 A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers, like me; you shall listen to Him.
- Num 11:29b ... Oh that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!
- 1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
- 1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.
- 1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.
- 1 Cor 14:5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.
- 1 Cor 14:6 But now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching?
- 1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.
- 1 Cor 14:19 But in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.
- 1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

I. “A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers;...you shall listen to Him”—Deut. 18:15:

- Deut 18:15 A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers, like me; you shall listen to Him.
- A. A prophet is not mainly one who predicts the future but one who speaks for another, as Aaron spoke for Moses—Exo. 7:1-2.
- Exo 7:1 And Jehovah said to Moses, See, I have made you God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother will be your prophet.
- Exo 7:2 You shall speak all that I command you, and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.
- B. Acts 3:22 applies Deuteronomy 18:15-19 to Christ, who is God incarnated to be a man, indicating that Christ is the Prophet promised by God to His people, the children of Israel, to speak forth God and to prophesy many things concerning God's economy.
- Acts 3:22 Moses said, "A Prophet will the Lord your God raise up unto you from your brothers, like me; Him shall you hear in whatever things He speaks to you.
- Deut 18:15 A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers, like me; you shall listen to Him.
- Deut 18:16 This is according to all that you asked of Jehovah your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear any more of the voice of Jehovah my God, and let me not see this great fire any longer, lest I die.
- Deut 18:17 And Jehovah said to me, They have done well in what they have spoken.
- Deut 18:18 A Prophet will I raise up for them from the midst of their brothers like you; and I will put My words in His mouth, and He will speak to them all that I command Him.
- Deut 18:19 And the man who will not listen to My words which He will speak in My name, I Myself will require it from him.
- C. That the Prophet was to be from among their brothers indicates that Christ as the coming Prophet would be human as well as divine—Deut. 18:15a.
- Deut 18:15a A Prophet will Jehovah your God raise up for you from your midst, from among your brothers, like me; ...

D. God would raise up this Prophet through the incarnation of Christ to speak the word of God—John 1:45; 3:34; 7:16-17; 8:18; Heb. 1:2a:

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus, the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.

John 3:34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for He gives the Spirit not by measure.

John 7:16 Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

John 8:18 I am One who testifies concerning Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies concerning Me.

Heb 1:2a Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, ...

1. To speak God's word, that is, to prophesy, is to dispense God, to speak God forth into others; this is what the Lord Jesus did as the Prophet raised up by God—1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 24-25, 31.

1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.

1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.

1 Cor 14:5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.

1 Cor 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all;

1 Cor 14:25 The secrets of his heart become manifest; and so falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that indeed God is among you.

1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

2. The Lord Jesus lived a life of speaking God, a life of expressing God for His glory—John 7:16:

John 7:16 Jesus therefore answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

a. Instead of speaking His own words, He spoke God—12:49-50; 14:10.

John 12:49 For I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father who sent Me, He Himself has given Me commandment, what to say and what to speak.

John 12:50 And I know that His commandment is eternal life. The things therefore that I speak, even as the Father has said to Me, so I speak.

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak from Myself, but the Father who abides in Me does His works.

b. When He spoke God's word, God was expressed through His speaking; God came forth from Him through His words—1:18.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

II. "Oh that all Jehovah's people were prophets!"—Num. 11:29b:

A. Moses desired that all the people of Israel would be prophets, those who spoke for God.

B. This word was a great prophecy uttered by Moses; it was promoted by Paul and is fulfilled in God's New Testament economy—1 Cor. 14:24, 31.

1 Cor 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all;

1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

C. Three things characterize a prophet: a history before God, an inward burden, and divinely given words that express and interpret that burden.

III. "He who prophesies builds up the church"—v. 4b:

A. Prophesying is for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; 14:1, 3-4, 12; Eph. 4:16:

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the

- gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- 1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
- 1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.
- 1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.
- 1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
1. The central and divine thought of the Scriptures is that God is seeking a divine building as the mingling of Himself with humanity—a living composition of persons redeemed by and mingled with Himself—Exo. 25:8:

Exo 25:8 And let them make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell in their midst;

 - a. God’s intention is to have a group of people built up as a spiritual building to express Him and to represent Him—Gen. 1:26; Eph. 2:21-22.

Gen 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

Eph 2:21 In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.
 - b. Whatever God is doing today—in preaching the gospel, edifying the saints, or establishing churches—is part of His building work; these activities are part of God’s main work, the work of building—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:16.

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
 2. Prophesying builds up the church—1 Cor. 14:1, 12:

1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

 - a. Prophesying is not for the building up of a congregation, an organization, which is a façade.
 - b. Everyone prophesying builds up the church as the organic Body of Christ—vv. 12, 31; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 4:16.

1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.

1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- B. We need to help the saints to arrive at the goal of the practice of the church life according to the God-ordained way—prophesying in the district meetings for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 14:1, 3-5, 12, 31:
- 1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

- 1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.
- 1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.
- 1 Cor 14:5 I desire that you all speak in tongues, but especially that you would prophesy; and greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, that the church may receive building up.
- 1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.
- 1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
1. All the believers have the capacity to prophesy; this capacity is in the divine life, which the believers possess and enjoy and which needs to increase within them so that this capacity may be developed—v. 31; John 3:15.

1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.

John 3:15 That everyone who believes into Him may have eternal life.
 2. When the saints prophesy in the district meetings, supplying Christ to others, the riches in the Body of Christ are expressed—Eph. 3:8; 4:12, 16.

Eph 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- C. We should speak with the three constituting elements of prophesying:
1. A knowledge of the Word of God—the human element of learning—2 Tim. 3:16-17; Ezek. 3:1-4.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Tim 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

Ezek 3:1 Then He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.

Ezek 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and He gave me that scroll to eat.

Ezek 3:3 And He said to me, Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your inward parts with this scroll that I am giving you. And I ate it, and it was like honey in my mouth in its sweetness.

Ezek 3:4 Then He said to me, Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.
 2. The instant inspiration of the Holy Spirit—the divine element of inspiration—1 Cor. 14:32, 37a.

1 Cor 14:32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

1 Cor 14:37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him fully know the things which I write to you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.
 3. A vision concerning God's interest and economy, the church as the Body of Christ, the local churches, the world, the individual saints, and ourselves—the view through the enlightening of the divine light—Eph. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 2:11-12.

Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,

Eph 1:18 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.

1 Cor 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;
- D. The ability to prophesy, the greatest of all gifts, is produced through the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ revealed in 1 Corinthians—1:2b, 9, 24, 30; 5:7-8; 10:3-4; 15:45b:
- 1 Cor 1:2b ... to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor 1:24 But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
- 1 Cor 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
- 1 Cor 5:7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened; for our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed.
- 1 Cor 5:8 So then let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- 1 Cor 10:3 And all ate the same spiritual food,
- 1 Cor 10:4 And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ.
- 1 Cor 15:45b ... the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.
1. The enjoyment of Christ first issues in the growth in life to produce materials for the building up of the church—3:6, 9-14.
 - 1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.
 - 1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.
 - 1 Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each man take heed how he builds upon it.
 - 1 Cor 3:11 For another foundation no one is able to lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
 - 1 Cor 3:12 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,
 - 1 Cor 3:13 The work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is.
 - 1 Cor 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward;
 2. The enjoyment of Christ also issues in the development of gifts for functioning to build up the Body of Christ, prophesying being the excelling gift—14:1, 3-4, 12.
 - 1 Cor 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
 - 1 Cor 14:3 But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.
 - 1 Cor 14:4 He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.
 - 1 Cor 14:12 So also you, since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel for the building up of the church.
 3. The highest development of the gifts as an issue of the enjoyment of Christ is to prophesy—to speak for Christ, to speak forth Christ, and to speak Christ into others, supplying them with Christ by ministering, dispensing, Christ into them—vv. 19, 31.
 - 1 Cor 14:19 But in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.
 - 1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
- E. Like the apostle Paul, we should minister Christ by prophesying with clear and plain words—vv. 6, 19, 23-24, 31:
- 1 Cor 14:6 But now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching?
 - 1 Cor 14:19 But in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.
 - 1 Cor 14:23 If therefore the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak in tongues, and some unlearned in tongues or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are insane?
 - 1 Cor 14:24 But if all prophesy and some unbeliever or unlearned person enters, he is convicted by all, he is examined by all;
 - 1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
1. Paul determined not to know anything but Christ, his preaching was not with persuasive words but in demonstration of the Spirit, and he spoke in revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and teaching—2:1-2, 4; 14:6.

- 1 Cor 2:1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, came not according to excellence of speech or of wisdom, announcing to you the mystery of God.
- 1 Cor 2:2 For I did not determine to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified.
- 1 Cor 2:4 And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 1 Cor 14:6 But now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching?
2. Paul functioned in the way of ministering Christ to others by speaking in clear and plain words with the demonstration of the Spirit—2:4; 14:19.
- 1 Cor 2:4 And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- 1 Cor 14:19 But in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.
3. When we come together in a meeting, we should speak something for Christ and of Christ with the strong exercise of our spirit.
4. In prophesying for the building up of the church, we need spiritual words; these words come from God's Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 12:8:
- Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
- 1 Cor 12:8 For to one through the Spirit a word of wisdom is given, and to another a word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit;
- a. The Spirit of life will give us the words, the utterance, and the boldness to prophesy—2:11-13.
- 1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.
- 1 Cor 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;
- 1 Cor 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.
- b. When we depend on Him, we can prophesy for the Lord unto the building up of the Body of Christ—14:31; Eph. 4:12, 16.
- 1 Cor 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
5. Prophesying is the highest expression of the Christian life; in order to prophesy for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ, we need:
- a. To love the Lord, have fellowship with Him, and be one with Him—Mark 12:30; 1 Cor. 1:9; 6:17.
- Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength."
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
- b. To be saturated and constituted with the Lord's word—Col. 3:16.
- Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.
- c. To walk according to the Spirit, receiving instant inspiration—Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25.

- Rom 8:4 That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the spirit.
- Gal 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.
- Gal 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- d. To have a heavenly, divine view—the view of God—to know Christ and the church—Eph. 1:17; 3:5.
- Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,
- Eph 3:5 Which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in spirit,
- e. To speak with revelation, using fresh expressions and utterance—1 Cor. 2:11-13.
- 1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? In the same way, the things of God also no one has known except the Spirit of God.
- 1 Cor 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;
- 1 Cor 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

PROPHESYING FOR THE PRACTICAL BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH

Prophesying is for the practical building up of the church (14:3-5, 12, 26), the organic Body of Christ. Prophesying is not for the building up of a congregation, an organization. The way of one man speaking and the rest listening is the old way. The way of Christianity is to build a congregation, an organization, which is a facade. Everyone prophesying builds up a body—the Body of Christ, an organism. This organism can only be built up in the organic way by practicing 1 Corinthians 14:26 through the perfecting of the saints by the four gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-16. (*Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, p. 16)

EVERYONE PROPHESYING IN THE DISTRICT MEETING

The preaching of the gospel, the home meetings, and the group meetings are all conducted during the week. On the Lord's Day, we should bring the new ones to the district meetings. A church can be divided into a few districts. The best number for the district meeting is around fifty. When we gain some new ones through the gospel, we should nourish and establish them in the home meetings. We should also care for them and perfect them in the group meetings. In this way, when they come to the church meetings, every one of them will be able to prophesy.

In order for the saints to prophesy, they need to enjoy the Lord's word every day and be filled with the Lord's word. Every district can select its own portion of Scripture. Every week the saints can go through one chapter, and they can divide the chapter into six sections. Every morning the saints can read one section and pick out two verses for pray-reading. If we want to have an overcoming church life, we need to live this life of morning revival. For this reason, we must help the brothers and sisters to live this life of revival and overcoming every day. Every morning we need to have some enjoyment, and every morning we need to soak ourselves in the Lord's word and be filled and saturated by the Lord's word. After six days, we will surely have a rich reaping. By the weekend, we can compile our inspirations into a composition for prophesying. On the Lord's Day, we can bring this composition to the meeting. We should not read or recite it, but should speak out with our spirit what we have prepared. This is to prophesy.

In a meeting with fifty saints, at least half of them should be prepared beforehand. Everyone should be limited to three minutes of speaking, and everyone should take turns speaking. There should not be any prearranged order, but the speaking should be done in a spontaneous way. This kind of speaking in the district meeting will be very rich. We can prophesy this way week after week for fifty-two weeks in a year. The supply of the Lord's word will then be rich among us. When everyone is supplied and edified, the problems and difficulties of the saints will be solved spontaneously through the supply of the rich word, and the church will be built up. This is the way that the Lord has shown us today.

The Lord's recovery today is the recovery of the saints in the building up of the Body of Christ. For this reason, there is the need for every saint to be able to prophesy, so that the church can be built up in a genuine way. (*The Riches and Fullness of Christ and the Advanced Recovery of the Lord Today*, pp. 67-68)

PROPHESYING PRODUCED BY ENJOYING CHRIST

First Corinthians reveals the enjoyment of the all-inclusive Christ. We need to enjoy Christ every day according to what is revealed of Him in 1 Corinthians.

What we enjoy will have an issue. The enjoyment of Christ firstly issues in the growth in life to produce materials for the building up of the church (3:6, 9-14). The precious materials produced from the growth in life are signified by gold, silver, and precious stones. Our hope is that all of us will be transformed into the precious materials for God's building by enjoying Christ. First Corinthians 12

tells us that Christ is drinkable. Today we are drinking of Him, the one Spirit. He is our spiritual drink and our spiritual food. We need to be the enjoying people who enjoy Christ all day long and every day. This enjoyment spontaneously issues in the growth in life. We grow in life by enjoying Him, that is, by eating Him and drinking Him, partaking of Him.

The enjoyment of Christ also issues in the development of gifts for functioning to build up the Body of Christ, prophesying being the excelling gift (1 Cor. 14:1, 12, 39a). To build up anything you need firstly the materials and secondly the skill, the functioning. Thus, the enjoyment of Christ issues not only in the growth in life but also in the development of gifts for functioning. This development is covered in chapters twelve through fourteen of 1 Corinthians. In these three chapters, Paul gives a clear view of the development of spiritual gifts for functioning to build up the Body of Christ. Dispensing Christ by speaking Him, prophesying, is the top development of the gifts as an issue of enjoying Him. I can testify that I am still under development. All of us are growing and being developed. We are not being developed to speak in tongues or to perform miraculous things. We are being developed to prophesy, not in the sense of predicting but in the sense of speaking for the Lord.

God in His New Testament economy is after a building. Where is the building today among us? We need to forget everything and go on according to the desire of God's heart to build up the Body of Christ. First Corinthians is a book of enjoying Christ, but what is the reason for us to enjoy Christ, and what is the issue of enjoying Christ? The enjoyment of Christ is for our growth in life to produce precious materials for God's building. Our enjoyment of Christ is also for developing our gifts to speak for Christ to build up the Body of Christ organically. The unique need among us today is that we would learn to speak for the Lord. We must have something of the Lord to speak for the building up of the church. The top development of the gifts as an issue of the enjoyment of Christ is to prophesy, to speak for the Lord, to speak forth the Lord, to speak the Lord into people, ministering Christ, dispensing Christ, into people. When we are full of the enjoyment of Christ, we can share with others the Christ that we have enjoyed.

As we enjoy Christ, spontaneously we are growing in life to produce ourselves as precious materials and to develop what we have received from the Head as a gift. Little children receive certain talents by birth, but they need the development of these talents. These talents are developed by the children being fed. A child's eating helps him to grow, and his growth develops his function. First Corinthians tells us that the top development and the top function for the building up of the Body of Christ is speaking for the Lord, prophesying. We need to prophesy, not in the sense of predicting but in the sense of speaking Christ in an exhibiting way. Let us come to the meeting to exhibit Christ. We need to enjoy Christ that we may be developed in our spiritual function to speak the Christ that we have enjoyed and experienced in order to exhibit Him in the meeting for the building up of the Body organically. This is further light that I did not see in the past. I saw that the enjoyment of Christ issues in our growth in life. But I did not see so clearly that the enjoyment of Christ also issues in our being developed in our gift and function. (*Further Light concerning the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, pp. 7-10)

The Enjoyment of Christ Developing Our Gifts by the Growth in Life

The enjoyment of Christ not only solves our problems and issues in the growth in life, but it also develops our gifts by the growth in life (1 Cor. 12:1-11). The word *gifts* may be considered as a synonym for the word *talents*. By our physical birth, all of us have received some talents. We have the talent to see, to hear, to speak, to walk, and to think and understand. We have received these talents by our birth, but all of these talents need to be developed. They are developed by the growth of our physical body. As a little child grows, all of his talents, or gifts, will be developed. The more a child grows, the more he can function in seeing, hearing, speaking, and other things. It is the same in our spiritual life. The initial gifts were given to the believers at their spiritual birth (1:7). The divine life and the divine Spirit were the two main gifts we received at our spiritual birth. Each one who has been

regenerated has received these two great gifts. Within the divine life there are many talents, gifts, which need development. We have to enjoy Christ so that we may grow. As we grow, the gifts that we received by our spiritual birth are developed.

If our enjoyment of Christ is real and without problems, the spontaneous result will be the development of our gifts. A brother who has been saved for ten years may claim that he has been enjoying Christ every day. After ten years, however, we cannot see him functioning by speaking something concerning the Lord and for the Lord. After ten years, he still comes to the church meetings to sit and be silent. He may feel that to speak in the meetings is not his business but the business of other brothers. This means that his enjoyment of Christ has some problems. As a child eats every day, his talents should be developed by his growth in his physical life. If he eats much without such development, there are some problems. It is the same with our spiritual life. We should not be deceived. If we are enjoying Christ, there should be the development of the gifts by the growth in life. The initial gifts need to be developed by the believers' seeking (indicated by "earnestly desire" in 12:31a) through the growth in life. To desire something earnestly means that you are seeking after something.

THE EXCELLING GIFT PRODUCED IN THE GROWTH IN LIFE THROUGH THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

Prophesying for the Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ

The excelling gift produced in the growth in life through the enjoyment of Christ is prophesying (14:12). First Corinthians 14 stresses that the top gift, the gift that excels all the other gifts, developed by our enjoyment of Christ is prophesying. Prophesying in chapter fourteen does not mean predicting. This is proven by verse 3 which according to the Greek says, "He who prophesies speaks to men building up and encouragement and consolation." If a brother is speaking building up, encouragement, and consolation to others, this proves that his prophesying is not predicting. To prophesy in 1 Corinthians 14 is to speak for the Lord, speak forth the Lord, and speak the Lord into others, ministering (dispensing) the Lord to others (14:3-5). As proper, growing believers whose spiritual gifts are being developed, we must speak the Lord into others every day. If we practice this every day, we will all have something to share when we come together for fellowship. This will be the fulfillment of 1 Corinthians 14:26—whenever we come together, each one has.

Speaking for the Lord, speaking forth the Lord, and speaking the Lord into others is for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ...To build up the organic Body of Christ, all of us need to speak...All the members need to speak for the Body of Christ to be built up...To build every part of the Body of Christ, we all need to rise up to speak for the Lord.

Our church meetings should be a feast of the riches of Christ. When we are invited to a feast, we do not partake of only one dish. A feast is full of many different kinds of food. Some Chinese feasts are composed of twenty-four courses of food. If we had many kinds of dishes in a meeting, how wonderful that would be! None of us would get bored of such a meeting. Our meetings need to be feasts full of enjoyment.

A meeting in which all the saints are speaking for the Lord is full of nourishing, cherishing, adjusting, and correcting...Because many portions are presented in the meeting, many things can be touched. In such a meeting, the saints get corrected without anyone knowing. Furthermore, the saints get built up, supplied, furnished, and equipped. This is why the Apostle Paul had the burden to stress prophesying. (*The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 12-15)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five
Taking the Lead to Be a Man of Prayer

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:9-13; 14:19, 22-23; 6:6

Matt 6:9	You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified;
Matt 6:10	Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
Matt 6:11	Give us today our daily bread.
Matt 6:12	And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Matt 6:13	And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.
Matt 14:19	And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.
Matt 14:22	And immediately He compelled the disciples to step into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.
Matt 14:23	And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.
Matt 6:6	But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

I. The example of prayer given as a pattern by the Lord increases our seeking of the kingdom of the heavens as the Father's heart's desire and affords us our need of the divine supply of grace to fulfill all the supreme and strict requirements of the kingdom of the heavens for the Father's good pleasure—Matt. 6:9-13:

Matt 6:9	You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified;
Matt 6:10	Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.
Matt 6:11	Give us today our daily bread.
Matt 6:12	And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
Matt 6:13	And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

A. We need to pray for the Father's name to be sanctified—v. 9:

Matt 6:9	You then pray in this way: Our Father who is in the heavens, Your name be sanctified;
1.	To be sanctified means to be separated and distinct from all that is common—cf. Eph. 1:4. Eph 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,
2.	For His name to be sanctified, we should express Him in our living a sanctified life, a daily life that is separated from being common and is saturated with His holy nature—1 Pet. 3:15-16; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:4; cf. Ezek. 36:21. 1 Pet 3:15 But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, being always ready for a defense to everyone who asks of you an account concerning the hope which is in you, 1 Pet 3:16 Yet with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, so that in the matter in which you are spoken against, those who revile your good manner of life in Christ may be put to shame. Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word, Heb 12:10 For they disciplined for a few days as it seemed good to them; but He, for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness. 2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the

corruption which is in the world by lust.

Ezek 36:21 But I had regard for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

B. We need to pray for the Father's heavenly kingdom to come—Matt. 6:10a:

Matt 6:10a Your kingdom come; ...

1. Before his fall, Satan as the archangel was appointed by God to be the ruler of the world (Ezek. 28:13-14); hence, he is called the ruler of this world (John 12:31) and holds all the kingdoms of this world and their glory in his hand (Luke 4:6).

Ezek 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald, with gold. The workmanship of your tambourines and your pipes was prepared with you on the day that you were created.

Ezek 28:14 You were the anointed cherub who covered the Ark; indeed I set you, so that you were upon the holy mountain of God; you walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.

Luke 4:6 And the devil said to Him, To You I will give all this authority and their glory, because to me it has been delivered, and to whomever I want I give it.

2. In order for God's kingdom to come in its manifestation, we must live in the reality of His kingdom today, allowing Christ as the life-giving Spirit to rule within us so that we may have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—Rom. 14:17.

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

C. We need to pray for the Father's divine will to be done on earth—Matt. 6:10b:

Matt 6:10b ... Your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

1. For the divine will to be done on earth is to bring the heavenly ruling, the kingdom of the heavens, to this earth—cf. 8:9a; Rom. 5:17.

Matt 8:9a For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. ...

Rom 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

2. The will of God is to have Christ as the replacement for all the offerings in the Old Testament so that we may enjoy Him as everything in living and practicing the Body life for the building up of the Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God—Heb. 10:5-10; Rom. 12:2, 5; Eph. 1:5, 9-11.

Heb 10:5 Therefore, coming into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not delight.

Heb 10:7 Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your will, O God."

Heb 10:8 Saying above, "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not desire nor delight in" (which are offered according to the law),

Heb 10:9 He then has said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He takes away the first that He may establish the second,

Heb 10:10 By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Eph 1:9 Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself,

Eph 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;

Eph 1:11 In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

D. This prayer, as a pattern, cares first for God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will, and second, for our need—Matt. 6:11:

Matt 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

1. These three things—the name, the kingdom, and the will—are the attributes of the one Triune God:
 - a. The name is of the Father, because the Father is the source; the kingdom is of the Son; and the will is of the Spirit.
 - b. To pray in this way is to pray that the Triune God will be prevailing on the earth as He is prevailing in the heavens.
2. The Lord as our King does not want His people to worry about tomorrow (v. 34); He wants them to pray only for today's needs, for their daily bread, which indicates a living that is by faith.

Matt 6:34 Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself; sufficient for the day is its own evil.
3. The kingdom people should not live on what they have stored; rather, they should live by faith on the Father's daily supply.

E. In this prayer as a pattern we need to take care of our failures before God and of our relationship with others, asking the Father to forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors—v. 12.

Matt 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

F. This prayer, as a pattern, cares for the kingdom people's deliverance from the evil one and from evil things—v. 13a:

Matt 6:13a And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ...

1. The kingdom people should ask the Father not to bring them into temptation but to deliver them from the evil one, the devil, and from the evil that is out of him.
2. To ask the Lord not to bring us into temptation indicates our knowledge of our weakness—cf. 26:41; 1 Cor. 10:13.

Matt 26:41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has taken you except that which is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow that you be tempted beyond what you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make the way out, that you may be able to endure it.

G. This prayer, as a pattern, concludes with the kingdom people's recognizing and praising reverently that the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to the Father forever—Matt. 6:13b:

Matt 6:13b ... For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

1. The kingdom is of the Son, which is the realm in which God exercises His power; the power is of the Spirit, which carries out God's intention so that the Father can express His glory—cf. 12:28.

Matt 12:28 But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
2. This indicates that the prayer the Lord teaches us to pray begins with the Triune God, in the sequence of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and ends also with the Triune God, but in the sequence of the Son, the Spirit, and the Father.
3. Thus, the prayer taught by the Lord in His supreme teaching begins with God the Father and ends also with God the Father; God the Father is both the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega—cf. Eph. 4:6; 1 Cor. 15:28.

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

1 Cor 15:28 And when all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to Him who has subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.

II. In the performing of the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, the Lord trained His disciples to learn from Him—Matt. 14:19; 11:29:

Matt 14:19 And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.

Matt 11:29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

A. To see the miracle of feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish is easy, but to know the deep and great lessons of life that we have to learn from the Performer of this great miracle requires revelation—cf. v. 25.

Matt 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I extol You, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

B. Matthew 14:19 says that He took the five loaves and two fish, and when He was going to bless them, He looked up to heaven:

Matt 14:19 And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.

1. *Looking up to heaven* indicates that He was looking up to His source, His Father in heaven:

a. This indicates that He realized the source of the blessing was not Him; the Father as the sending One, not the sent One, should be the source of blessing—cf. Rom. 11:36.

Rom 11:36 Because out from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

b. Regardless of how much we can do or how much we know what to do, we must realize that we need the Sender's blessing upon our doing so that we can be channels of supply by trusting in Him, not in ourselves—cf. Matt. 14:19b; Num. 6:22-27.

Matt 14:19b ... He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.

Num 6:22 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 6:23 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the children of Israel; you shall say to them,

Num 6:24 Jehovah bless you and keep you;

Num 6:25 Jehovah make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

Num 6:26 Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Num 6:27 So shall they put My name upon the children of Israel, that I Myself may bless them.

2. His looking up to the Father in heaven indicates that as the Son on earth sent by the Father in heaven, He was one with the Father, trusting in the Father—John 10:30:

John 10:30 I and the Father are one.

a. What we know and what we can do mean nothing; being one with the Lord and trusting in Him mean everything in our ministry—cf. 1 Cor. 2:3-4.

1 Cor 2:3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling;

1 Cor 2:4 And my speech and my proclamation were not in persuasive words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

b. The blessing comes only by our being one with the Lord and trusting in Him—cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-9.

2 Cor 1:8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, of our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were excessively burdened, beyond our power, so that we despaired even of living.

2 Cor 1:9 Indeed we ourselves had the response of death in ourselves, that we should not base our confidence on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead;

3. The Lord did not do anything from Himself—John 5:19; cf. Matt. 16:24:

John 5:19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, The Son can do nothing from Himself except what He sees the Father doing, for whatever that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

a. We should deny ourselves and not have the intention of doing anything from ourselves but have the intention of doing everything from Him.

b. We need to continually exercise our spirit to reject the self and live by another life, by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a.

Phil 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.

Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...

4. The Lord did not seek His own will but the will of Him who sent Him—John 5:30b; 6:38; Matt. 26:39, 42:

John 5:30b ... as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.

Matt 26:39 And going forward a little, He fell on His face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.

Matt 26:42 Again, going away a second time, He prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.

a. The Lord rejected His idea, His intention, and His purpose.

b. All of us should be on the alert for this one thing—when we are sent to do some work, we should not take that chance to seek our own goal; we should go only seeking the idea, purpose, aim, goal, and intention of our sending Lord.

5. The Lord did not seek His own glory but the glory of the Father who sent Him—John 7:18; 5:41; cf. 12:43:

John 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.

John 5:41 I do not receive glory from men.

John 12:43 For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

a. To be ambitious is to seek our own glory—cf. 3 John 9.

3 John 9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive us.

b. We need to see that our self, our purpose, and our ambition are three big destroying “worms” in our work; we must learn to hate them.

c. If we are always going to be used for the Lord in His recovery, our self has to be denied, our purpose has to be rejected, and our ambition must be given up—Matt. 16:24.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

C. After performing the miracle, the Lord went up to the mountain privately to pray—14:23; cf. Luke 6:12:

Matt 14:23 And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.

Luke 6:12 And in these days He went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

1. The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds but went away

from them privately to be with the Father on the mountain in prayer:

- a. The word *privately* is very meaningful; this means that He did not let people know He was going to pray.
 - b. The Lord compelled the disciples to leave Him in order that He might have more time to pray privately to the Father—Matt. 14:22-23.
Matt 14:22 And immediately He compelled the disciples to step into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.
Matt 14:23 And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.
 - c. He needed to pray privately to His Father who was in the heavens, that He might be one with the Father and have the Father with Him in whatever He did on earth for the establishing of the kingdom of the heavens.
2. The Lord told us, “When you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you”—6:6:
- Matt 6:6 But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.
- a. When we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately; the kingdom people must have some experience of prayer in their private room, contacting their heavenly Father in secret, experiencing some secret enjoyment of Him, and receiving some secret answer from Him.
 - b. The self enjoys doing things in a public way, in the presence of man; the self loves to be glorified, and the flesh loves to be gazed upon.
 - c. If we pray every day without telling others or letting them know about it, this means that we are healthy and that we are growing; if we always tell others how much we pray, we will not only lose our reward but also not grow in life or be healthy—cf. 13:6.
Matt 13:6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered.
3. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a “high mountain,” separated from the crowds, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him.
4. The Lord’s going up to the mountain privately to pray indicates His asking the Father to bless all those who had participated in the enjoyment of the issue of the miracle so that they would not be satisfied with the food which perishes but that they should seek for the food which abides unto eternal life—John 6:27.
John 6:27 Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for Him has the Father, even God, sealed.
5. His going up to the mountain privately to pray also indicates that He wanted to receive of the Father some instruction concerning how to take care of the five thousand people who were fed by His miracle.
6. These lessons are intrinsic, deeper, and of life; we need to learn these living lessons from the Lord so that we can enter into the God-man living.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

TRAINING HIS DISCIPLES TO LEARN FROM HIM IN THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE

Taking the Five Loaves and Two Fish, Looking Up to Heaven, and Blessing Them

In the performing of the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, He trained His disciples to learn from Him. In Matthew 11:29 the Lord told the disciples that they needed to learn from Him, indicating that He was their pattern.

Matthew 14:19 says that He took the five loaves and two fish and when He was going to bless them, He looked up to heaven. In other words, He blessed the food by looking up to heaven. *Looking up to heaven* indicates that He was looking up to His Father in heaven. This indicates that He realized the source of the blessing was not Him. He was the sent One. The sent One should not be the source of blessing. The sending One, the Father, should be the source of blessing.

Here is a great lesson for us to learn. Most readers of the Bible would pay attention to the miracle of creating something from nothing performed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 14. But we need to see the pattern which the Lord set up for us here. We need to remember that He looked up to the Father in heaven and blessed the five loaves and two fish in front of His disciples. After His blessing in this way, He told the disciples what to do. No doubt, what He did was a pattern for the disciples to learn from Him. According to this pattern, we have to realize that we are not the Sender, but the ones sent by the Sender. Regardless of how much we can do, we should realize that we still need the blessing from the source, from our Sender, that we can pass on to the benefited ones. This is a big lesson which I want to stress.

A co-worker who is invited to speak somewhere may think that since he has been speaking for the Lord for many years, he knows how to speak. All of us need to drop this kind of attitude and realize that we are not the source. No blessing is of us. Regardless of how much we can do or how much we know what to do, we must realize that we need the Sender's blessing upon our doing by trusting in Him, not in ourselves. Even when we take our meals, we should learn of the Lord to look up to the Father as the source. When we bless our food, we should bless it by looking up to the source of blessing.

Being One with the Father

His looking up to the Father in heaven indicated that as the Son on earth sent by the Father in heaven, He was one with the Father, trusting in the Father (John 10:30). This is a very important principle. Whenever I speak for the Lord, I must have the sensation that I am one with the Lord, trusting in Him. What I know and what I can do mean nothing. Being one with the Lord and trusting in Him mean everything in our ministry. We should never go to minister the word by remaining in ourselves and by trusting in what we can do. If we trust in what we can do, we are finished. The blessing comes only by our being one with the Lord and trusting in Him.

Not Doing Anything from Himself

The Lord did not do anything from Himself (John 5:19). This was also a pattern to the disciples. He was the One through whom the entire universe was created, but He would not do anything from Himself. This is the denying of our self, which He taught so much. He said that anyone who follows Him must take up his cross and deny himself (Matt. 16:24). He lived a life of denying Himself.

The learned professors in the universities do many things in order to attract people's attention, displaying what they know and can do. But we are not today's professors; we are today's God-men, the duplication of Jesus. We should deny ourselves and not have the intention of doing anything from

ourselves but have the intention of doing everything from Him. This is to practice the teaching of denying the self by doing things with the Lord.

Not Seeking His Own Will

The Lord did not seek His own will but the will of Him who sent Him (John 5:30b). First, He denied Himself; second, He rejected His idea, His intention, and His purpose. He would only seek the will of the One who sent Him. All of us should be on the alert for this one thing—when we are sent to do some work, we should not take that chance to seek our own goal. When we go to perform God’s work, do we go by seeking our purpose or God’s purpose? Brother Watchman Nee was always concerned that when he sent a brother out for the Lord’s work, that brother would take the chance to perform his own purpose.

One day I was preparing to go from Shanghai to Hangchow. Then Brother Nee asked me, “Witness, for what purpose are you going to Hangchow?” I responded that I was going to visit the brothers there. He said that this was a wrong answer. Instead, I should say that I am going to perform the Lord’s purpose. If you merely go to visit the brothers, you can do many things for yourself. You may take your visit to them as a chance for you to accomplish your purpose instead of seeking the Lord’s will. It is not easy to have a pure heart, without having our purpose, our goal, and our idea. We should just go seeking the idea, purpose, goal, and intention of the sending Lord. This requires much learning on our part.

At times certain brothers may ask me how I feel about their accepting the invitation to a certain place. My basic consideration is, “Are you going just to fulfill the Lord’s purpose, the Lord’s aim, the Lord’s goal, the Lord’s idea, the Lord’s intention, that is, the Lord’s will, or would you take the chance to accomplish your intention, your will?” To seek our intention is absolutely impure. We need to be purified by the cross. We should pray, “Lord, save me from going out to accomplish something according to my intention and idea.” The Lord Jesus never sought His own idea, His own purpose, His own concept, or His own intention. He purely sought only the Father’s will.

Not Seeking His Own Glory

The first God-man did not seek His own glory but the glory of the Father who sent Him (John 7:18). I was with Brother Nee for about twenty years. What bothered him the most about the co-workers was that it was hard to see one who was not ambitious. To be ambitious is to seek your own glory. In the service we render to the Lord in the church life, there is always our ambition. A brother may have the ambition to be an elder. In order to become an elder, he feels that he must first become a deacon. To him being a deacon is a step toward being uplifted to the eldership. We should not think that we are absolutely not ambitious in this way. We are all fallen descendants of Adam and sick of the same disease, the same sin. The rebellion that occurred among us seven years ago was altogether due to ambition. Through the years I have seen a number of co-workers among us spoiled by ambition. By the Lord’s mercy, I have learned the secret of dealing with my self and my intention, and this has helped me to deal with my self-glorification.

In John 7:18 the Lord told the Pharisees, “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.” The Pharisees were seeking their own glory. According to the context of this verse, the Lord indicated to them that if they were not seeking their own glory, they would know that He was sent by His Father.

We need to see that our self, our purpose, and our ambition are three big destroying “worms” in our work. If we are going to be used for the Lord always in His recovery, our self has to be denied, our purpose has to be rejected, and our ambition must be given up. We should not have our own purpose; instead, we should have only the Lord’s will. We all have to learn of these three things: no self, no purpose, and no ambition. We should only know to labor, to work for Him, by denying our

self, rejecting our purpose, and giving up our ambition. Self, purpose, and ambition are like three snakes or scorpions in us. We must learn to hate them.

Going Up to the Mountain Privately to Pray

After performing the miracle, the Lord went up to the mountain privately to pray (Matt. 14:23; cf. Luke 6:12).

Not Remaining in the Issue of the Miracle with the Crowds

The Lord did not remain in the issue of the miracle with the crowds but went away from them privately to be with the Father on the mountain in prayer. If we go to a certain place and have a great success, would we leave right away or would we remain in this big success to enjoy it? We need to see and follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus. He did not remain in the issue of the great miracle which He performed. Instead, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. The word *privately* is very meaningful. This means He did not let the people know He was going to pray. Otherwise, they would have followed Him. He went away from them privately to be with the Father in prayer. I like these three phrases: *to be with the Father, on the mountain, and in prayer*. We should learn from the Lord's pattern here by exercising to be with Him on the mountain in prayer. His looking up to heaven means that He had no trust in Himself. His going up to the mountain means that He wanted to be with the Father in prayer.

To pray with others is good, but often we need to pray by ourselves. When we pray with others, we cannot enjoy the Lord as deeply as when we pray to the Lord privately. Even the Lord Jesus told us that when we pray we should shut our door privately and pray secretly to the Father who sees in secret (Matt. 6:6). Then we have the sensation of how intimate He is to us and how close we are to Him. We have to learn to leave the crowds, our family, our friends, and the saints in the church to go to a higher level on a "high mountain." We have to go higher, far away from the earthly things on a lower level. We need to get to a higher level, separated from the crowd, to be with the Father privately and secretly to have intimate fellowship with Him. This is the significance of being *on the mountain in prayer*.

Asking the Father to Bless All Those Who Participated in the Enjoyment of the Issue of the Miracle

We need to consider why the Lord Jesus went to the mountain right after this miracle. John 6:27 gives us the reason. This verse says that after performing the miracle, the Lord said: "Work not for the food which perishes, but for the food which abides unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you; for Him has the Father, even God, sealed." The Lord told the ones whom He fed not to seek the food that perishes, but to seek the food that abides unto eternal life. I believe the Lord Jesus went to the mountain to pray in this way: "Father, I pray to You under Your blessing. Through Your blessing You fed the five thousand, but Father, they are just seeking for the food that perishes. I do look unto You that You would bless them that they would seek the food that abides unto eternal life. Father, You know that I am Your sent One. Only I can give them the food that abides unto eternal life, but they do not know Me in this way. They know only that I can perform a miracle to feed them with physical food. But they do not know that it is only I who can give them food that is of the eternal life." I believe that the Lord prayed to bless them further in this way.

His going up to the mountain privately to pray indicated His asking the Father to bless all those who had participated in the enjoyment of the issue of the miracle that they would not be satisfied with the food which perishes, but that they should seek for the food which abides unto eternal life and recognize that He was not only the Son of Man but also the Son of God who was sent and sealed by the Father and who could give them eternal life. When the five thousand were being fed by Him, they recognized that He was the capable Son of Man, but they did not realize that He was actually the Son of God who was not only sent but also sealed by the Father. He was the One who could give them the

very bread that is related to the eternal life. For this reason, He had another teaching in John 6. In John 6 the Lord revealed that He is the bread out of heaven, the bread of life. Eventually, He told us that this bread is just His word. “The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (v. 63). John 3:34 says that He is the One who speaks the word and gives the Spirit not by measure. To know Him in this way requires a revelation, so He prayed for them privately on the mountain.

Receiving Some Instruction from the Father

His going up to the mountain privately to pray also indicated that He wanted to receive of the Father some instruction concerning how to take care of the five thousand people fed by His miracle.

In this crystallization-study of Matthew 14, we can see how much we need revelation from the Lord to see the intrinsic significance of His word. To see the miracle of feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish is easy, but to know the deeper lessons which we have to learn from the Performer of this big miracle requires revelation. These lessons are intrinsic, deeper, and of life. To know the great miracle the Lord performed does not give us any life. We can only admire the Lord’s outward doing. But to see all the detailed points concerning the lessons of life to learn from the Lord in His way of performing the miracle imparts life to us. We need to learn these living lessons from the Lord so that we can enter into the God-man living. (*The God-man Living*, pp. 123-129)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Saturday—Evening Session)

Message Six

**Taking the Lead to Know the Body
and to Keep the Principles of the Body**

Scripture Reading: Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 23-27; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4, 16

- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

**I. The elders and responsible ones should take the lead to know the Body—
Rom. 12:4-5; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6, 16:**

- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- A. All the problems of the church today are due to ignorance concerning the Body of Christ—
1:17-23:
- Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him,
Eph 1:18 The eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
Eph 1:19 And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the operation of the might of His strength,
Eph 1:20 Which He caused to operate in Christ in raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies,
Eph 1:21 Far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come;
Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
1. The biggest problem is not knowing the Body and not caring for the Body—4:4, 16.
 - Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
 - Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
 2. The way we behave ourselves in the church depends upon the degree of our seeing the Body—Acts 22:10; 26:18-19.
 - Acts 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up and go into Damascus, and there it will be told to you concerning all the things which have been appointed to you to do.
 - Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
 - Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- B. We need to know the Body in life—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 2:19; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:4-5:
- 1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
 - 1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
 - Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
 - Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
 - Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.
 - Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.
 - Rom 8:10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness.
 - Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
 - Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
 - Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
1. The Body of Christ is formed by Christ as life in us; this life mingles with us to become the Body of Christ—1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4; 1:18; 2:19:
 - 1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave to us eternal life and this life is in His Son.
 - 1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
 - Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
 - Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
 - Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
 - a. The life in us is not a *member* life—it is a *Body* life.
 - b. We are all one in this life; this oneness in life is the mystical Body of Christ—Eph. 5:30.
 - Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.
 2. Knowing the Body in life is the result of our experience of life and spiritual growth—1 John 2:12-14:
 - 1 John 2:12 I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you because of His name.
 - 1 John 2:13 I write to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, young children, because you know the Father.
 - 1 John 2:14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one.

- a. In order to know the Body and touch the reality of the Body, we must progress in the experience of life and the growth of life—1 Cor. 3:1-2; 14:20.
- 1 Cor 3:1 And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to fleshy, as to infants in Christ.
- 1 Cor 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. But neither yet now are you able,
- 1 Cor 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your understanding, but in malice be babes and in your understanding be full-grown.
- b. Only after we have reached the fourth stage in the spiritual life can we know the mystery of the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12-13, 15-16.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- c. In order to know the Body and live in the Body, we need to deal with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution—Gal. 2:20; 5:24; Matt. 16:24:
- Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Gal 5:24 But they who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- (1) If we still live according to the flesh and in ourselves and serve in our natural ability, the life of the Body, which is Christ Himself in us, cannot be manifested, and we cannot know the Body.
- (2) Only when the flesh has been dealt with, the self has been abandoned, and the natural constitution has been broken can we touch the reality of the Body—1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:4-6.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
- Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
3. Knowing the Body is a dealing with individualism; all those who do not know the Body are individualists—1 Cor. 12:14-22.
- 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.
- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
- 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
- 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
- 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
- 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

4. The proofs that we know the Body are that we are unable to be individualistic, we can discern those who are not in the Body, and we recognize the authority of Christ the Head revealed in the order of the Body—v. 18.
1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
 5. “We have to help the brothers and sisters to know that the life within the Body, the church, is Christ. This requires some who have a special ministry to do this work...It is a special work to help the brothers and sisters to know the life in the Body” (*The Elders’ Management of the Church*, pp. 223-224).
- C. We need to know the Body in practice—vv. 20, 27; 15:58:
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
1. A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a particular locality—1:2; 10:32b; 12:12-13, 20, 27:

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

1 Cor 10:32b ... both to Jews and to Greeks and to the church of God;

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

1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

 - a. The one universal church—the Body of Christ—becomes the many local churches—the local expressions of the Body of Christ—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,
 - b. The unique Body of Christ is expressed as the local churches—Eph. 4:4; Rev. 1:4, 11.

Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
 - c. Every local church is part of the unique, universal Body of Christ, a local expression of the Body—1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27.

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
 2. If we know the Body in life and in practice, then in our consideration the Body will be first and the local churches will be second—Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4, 16.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Rom 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,

Rom 16:4 Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles;

Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

II. The elders and the leading ones should take the lead to keep the principles of the Body—12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6:

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

A. The Body is one—Rom. 12:4-5:

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1. The Body can exist and survive only in oneness—Eph. 4:3-4.

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

2. The oneness of the Body is the oneness of the Divine Trinity—John 17:21, 23.

John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.

John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

3. The keeping of the oneness is the primary virtue of our Christian walk—Eph. 4:1-3.

Eph 4:1 I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called,

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love,

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

B. The Body of Christ is Christ; thus, if we would be in the Body, we must be made Christ—1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 3:10-11:

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

Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.

1. The church as the Body of Christ comes out of Christ and is one with Christ—Gen. 2:22-23; Eph. 5:23-32.

Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

Gen 2:23 And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones / And flesh of my flesh; / This one shall be called Woman / Because out of Man this one was taken.

Eph 5:23 For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is Head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the Body.

Eph 5:24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,

Eph 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

Eph 5:28 In the same way the husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his own wife loves himself.

- Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.
- Eph 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.
- Eph 5:32 This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.
2. There is only one thing in a believer that forms a part of the Body of Christ—Christ—Col. 1:18; 2:19; 3:4, 10-11, 15.
- Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Col 3:4 When Christ our life is manifested, then you also will be manifested with Him in glory.
- Col 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- Col 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.
3. The Body is the corporate Christ; Christ and the church are one corporate Christ, the Body-Christ—1 Cor. 12:12.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- C. The function of the Body is to express Christ—Eph. 1:22-23:
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
1. The universally great Christ needs a Body to be His fullness, His expression—vv. 22-23.
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
2. The purpose of the believers being members one of another in the Body of Christ is that we would live Christ and express Him together—Rom. 12:5.
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- D. The work of the cross consummates with the Body and ushers us into the Body—Eph. 2:16:
- Eph 2:16 And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it.
1. The cross leads us to the Body and operates in the sphere of the Body.
2. The self is the enemy of the Body; only when our self has been utterly dealt with by the cross are we able to touch the life of the Body and come to know the Body—Matt. 16:24-25; Rom. 8:13; 12:4-5.
- Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
- Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
- Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- E. In the Body only Christ is the Head—Col. 1:18; 2:19; Eph. 1:22; 4:15:
- Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
- Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
- Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,

- Eph 4:15 But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ,
1. For Christ to be the Head means that only He has the authority in the Body—Col. 1:18; 2:19.
 - Col 1:18 And He is the Head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that He Himself might have the first place in all things;
 - Col 2:19 And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.
 2. Whatever we think, feel, and do must be under the authority of the Head.
- F. The divine fellowship is the reality of living in the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 1:9; 12:13, 27:
- 1 Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
 - 1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
 - 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
1. The divine fellowship is the flow of the divine life among and through all the members of the Body; the Body in a practical way is in the fellowship—1 John 1:3; Rev. 22:1.
 - 1 John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
 - Rev 22:1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
 2. Fellowship tempers us, adjusts us, harmonizes us, and mingles us—1 Cor. 12:24.
 - 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- G. We should always consider the Body, care for the Body, honor the Body, and do what is best for the Body—vv. 23-27:
- 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
 - 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
 - 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
 - 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
 - 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
1. Whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration for the Body and care for how the Body would feel about what we are doing.
 2. We should be concerned not for our individual profit but for the Body and the building up of the Body—Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:23-27.
 - Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
 - 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
 - 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
 - 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
 - 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
 - 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

KNOWING THE BODY

Why must we wait until the fourth stage to speak of knowing the Body? Because the Body referred to here is the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. This Body is formed by Christ as life in each of us, mingled with us. During the second and third stages of our experience of life, we are still living in our own life; therefore, we cannot know this life which mingles with us to form a Body. Only when our self life has been utterly dealt with and we have the experience of passing through the Jordan and entering into the fourth stage shall we be able to touch the reality of this life of the Body and come to know the Body.

Everyone who is saved is a member of the Body of Christ. Is the life in each one of us, then, a life pertaining to the *members* or to the *Body*? The Bible and our experience prove that though each one of us is a member of Christ, yet the life in each one of us is not a *member* life, but a *Body* life. All the members of our body are sharing one life. Each member shares in common the same life together with all the other members, that is, the life of the entire body. For example, an ear, unless it has been cut off, shares the same blood which flows through the eye, the nose, and the whole body. Similarly, in the Body of Christ, when one member is joined to the Body or having fellowship with the Body, his life is the life of the Body, and the life of the Body is his life. It would not do for him to be separated from the other members, or vice versa, because the life both in him and in the other members is of the same Body; it can neither be distinguished nor separated. It is this life which joins us together to become the Body of Christ; or, to say it more precisely and emphatically, it is this life which mingles with us to become the Body of Christ.

We cannot, however, experience this before the difficulties of the self have been entirely dealt with. If we are still living according to the flesh, in ourselves, and serving the Lord in our natural ability, the life of the Body, which is Christ Himself in us, has no way of being manifested, and there is no way for us to know the Body. The more we live by the flesh, the less we feel the need for the support of the Body. If we live by our self-opinion, we find no need for the sustaining of the church. If we serve with our natural ability, we sense no need for the coordination of the members. Only when our flesh has been dealt with, the self-opinion has been broken, and the natural life has been smashed, shall the life within cause us to realize that we are simply members of the Body and that the life in us cannot be independent. Hence, this life requires us to have fellowship with all other members and be joined to them, and it also brings us into that fellowship and the experience of being joined together. It is at this time that we begin to know a little concerning the Body and become qualified to engage in spiritual warfare.

On one hand, we say that if we want to fight the spiritual warfare and deal with God's difficulty, we must first deal with our flesh, self, and soul life, thus solving our own difficulties; on the other hand, we say that in order to fight the battle, we must first know the Body, and in order to know the Body and live in the Body, we must first deal with our flesh, self, and soul life. Whether, therefore, we speak from the standpoint of fighting the warfare or knowing the Body, we all must first pass through the preceding three stages—coming out of the flesh, the self, and the soul life—in order to attain to the fourth stage of the experience of life.

Knowing the Body is not a doctrine which by speaking and hearing you may understand. Knowing the Body is the result of many past experiences. Having passed through all these experiences, we come at length to know the Body. When we go to visit a place of fame, we travel a certain distance; at length we arrive at our destination and see the object of our journey. So it is with knowing the Body. If we wish to know the Body and touch the reality of the Body in experience, we must walk a certain distance and climb certain slopes in the spiritual life. We must start from the experience of the clearance of the past and pass through the experiences of dealing with sin, the world, and the conscience, climbing diligently from one stage to the next. We must be severe with ourselves

in learning the lessons one by one, especially in dealing with the flesh, the self, and the natural constitution. Only when we have experienced the first three stages of our spiritual life and attained to the fourth stage do we naturally arrive at the place where we can know the mystery of the Body of Christ.

PROOFS THAT WE KNOW THE BODY

Since knowing the Body is such a practical thing, how may we ascertain whether or not one knows the Body as yet? We can prove it in at least three ways.

Being Unable to Be Individualistic

The first proof of knowing the Body is that we cannot be individualistic. In all the seven points we have mentioned—in God’s plan, in God’s creation, in God’s redemption, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in life, and in fellowship—all is oneness, inseparable and non-individualistic. If we really know the Body and realize the oneness contained in these seven matters, there can be no individualism. Before one knows the Body, he is an individualist and can be individualistic. His life, his actions, his work, and his service are all individualistic. Outwardly he appears to be one with the brethren, but there is no real coordination nor knitting together. Not until he grows deeper in life and knows the Body to a certain extent does he see that being a Christian is a corporate matter and that he cannot go on without fellowship in the Body, nor can he depart from the coordination of the members. The Body of Christ becomes a practical matter to him. In the church life he can no longer serve alone. In the innermost part of his being, he feels that he needs to be a Christian together with others. Not only in great and important actions and work does he need the brothers and sisters, but even in Bible reading and prayer as well, he cannot do without other members. He cannot work without the coordination of the brothers and sisters, and he cannot live without the support of the church. It is at this stage that he is being knit together spontaneously with all the saints to become one Body, no more to be separated. All those, therefore, who can still be individualistic do not know the Body, and all those with a true knowledge of the Body definitely cannot be individualistic.

Discerning Those Not in the Body

The second proof of our knowing the Body is the ability to discern whether others are in the Body or not. One who has come to know the Body not only lives in the Body in a very practical way, but also can clearly discern whether or not others are living in the Body.

This discerning ability after one knows the Body is absolutely due to the extent of the deep degree of fellowship he has in the Lord. Our fellowship with the Lord grows in depth in proportion to our experience of life, beginning with the initial stage of our spiritual life and continuing through the fourth stage. The degree of depth of fellowship differs greatly as we progress in the experience of life. When two people in different degrees of fellowship in the Lord come together, the one having the deeper experience can go on with the one who has the shallower experience and have fellowship with him, but that fellowship is limited in proportion to the experience of the latter. Should this fellowship go beyond the limit, it will become rather incongruous and incomprehensible to the latter. The one having deeper experience, therefore, can go on with the one who has the shallower experience, but the shallower one cannot go along with the deeper one. This is a great principle in spiritual fellowship.

It is because of this principle that those who are deep in the Lord recognize those who are shallow, but those who are shallow in the Lord do not discern those who are deep. If we have been brought by the Lord to the fourth stage and are having a deep fellowship in this stage, we can by fellowship know whether others also have been brought to this stage and as yet know the Body. But if we have not reached the fourth stage and do not know the Body, we then have no way of discerning others.

Recognizing Authority

The third proof of our knowing the Body is the recognition of authority. Whether or not one knows the Body depends upon whether or not he recognizes authority. Those who do not recognize authority do not know the Body. Knowing the Body and recognizing authority are inseparable. Recognition of authority is related to what we have mentioned regarding individualism in the first proof. If one recognizes authority, he cannot be an individualist. If one wants to determine whether or not he recognizes authority, he simply needs to determine whether or not he is still able to be an individualist. If he is still able to live as an individualist and feels that he can serve God alone without being coordinated with others, he demonstrates that he does not recognize authority, nor has he come to know the Body. Authority can only be manifested in the Body and in the coordination. If one member is individualistic and isolated, he has no relationship with others as far as authority is concerned. But if we have seen that God wants a Body, and that we, being members of this Body, can never go on alone (for once we are alone we are disjointed), we will learn to recognize authority, keep our position in the Body, and coordinate with all the brothers and sisters.

What is authority? Authority is simply the authority of Christ the Head, which is revealed in the order of the Body... All those who have learned their lessons can recognize the authority of the Head over the Body and can rest in their own order in a very natural and satisfactory manner. This has nothing to do with either humility or pride. Coming under authority is a natural procedure, far removed from forcing oneself to submit. This kind of people recognize authority and know the Body, because recognizing authority is equal to knowing the Body. Therefore, this matter of knowing the Body can also be called knowing the authority.

If we do not know our order in the Body, we demonstrate that in our experience of life we have not reached the fourth stage. If in the first three stages we have passed through various kinds of dealings, being earnest and thorough, especially in dealing with the flesh, the self-opinion, and the natural constitution, then the Holy Spirit within will lead us in a very natural manner to know our respective order in the Body of Christ, causing our life and service to be full of the flavor of the coordination of the Body. Thus the Body of Christ will gradually become manifest among us.

Therefore, if one has a real knowing of the Body, sooner or later he will demonstrate the three proofs which we have mentioned. First, he can no longer be an individualist. Second, he can tell when others are not in the Body. Third, among brothers and sisters he knows clearly, without any special effort, his own order in the Body—who has authority over him, and over whom he has authority, that is, in whom rests the authority of the Head. These three points are proofs of our knowing the Body. (*The Experience of Life*, pp. 317-318, 326-333)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Lord's Day—First Morning Session)

Message Seven

**Taking the Lead to Stand on the Unique Ground of the Church,
to Be under the Limitation of the Body of Christ,
and to Be Body-conscious in One Accord**

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:12-27

- 1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:
- Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.
- Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
- 2 Cor 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
- 1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
- 1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.
- 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
- 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
- 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
- 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
- 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
- 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
- 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
- 1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.
- 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

I. We must take the lead to stand on the unique ground of the church, the genuine ground of oneness:

- A. First Corinthians 1:2 speaks of the church at Corinth—this shows the locality of Corinth for the existence, expression, and practice of the church; such a locality becomes the local ground of the local churches on which they are built respectively; thus, the church in

Corinth was built on the ground of the city of Corinth.

1 Cor 1:2 To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

- B. The practice of the church life in the early days was the practice of having one church for one city, one city with only one church; in no city was there more than one church—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:11:

Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Rev 1:11 Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

1. This is the local church with the city, not the street or area, as the unit.
2. The jurisdiction of a local church should cover the whole city in which the church is located; it should not be greater or lesser than the boundary of the city.
3. All the believers within that boundary should constitute the one unique local church within that city.
4. There are four characteristics of our meeting on the genuine ground of oneness, the place that God has chosen—cf. Deut. 12:5:

Deut 12:5 But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.

- a. First, the people of God should always be one; there should be no divisions among them—Psa. 133; John 17:11, 21-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3-4a.

Psa 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is / For brothers to dwell in unity!

Psa 133:2 It is like the fine oil upon the head / That ran down upon the beard, / Upon Aaron's beard, / That ran down upon the hem of his garments;

Psa 133:3 Like the dew of Hermon / That came down upon the mountains of Zion. / For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: / Life forever.

John 17:11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are.

John 17:21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.

John 17:22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

1 Cor 1:10 Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

Eph 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace:

Eph 4:4a One Body and one Spirit, ...

- b. Second, the unique name into which God's people should gather is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the reality of which name is the Spirit; to be designated by any other name is to be denominating, divided; this is spiritual fornication—Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 1:12; 12:3b.

Matt 18:20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

1 Cor 1:12 Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

1 Cor 12:3b ... and no one can say, Jesus is Lord! except in the Holy Spirit.

- c. Third, in the New Testament God's habitation, His dwelling place, is

particularly located in our spirit, that is, in our mingled spirit, our human spirit regenerated and indwelt by the divine Spirit; in our meeting for the worship of God, we must exercise our spirit and do everything in the spirit—John 3:6b; Rom. 8:16; 2 Tim. 4:22; Eph. 2:22; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:15.

John 3:6b ... and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.

2 Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Eph 2:22 In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

John 4:24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

1 Cor 14:15 What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray also with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing also with the mind.

- d. Fourth, in our worship of God we must have a genuine application of the cross of Christ, signified by the altar (Deut. 12:5-6, 27), by rejecting the flesh, the self, and the natural life and by worshipping God with Christ and Christ alone (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 2:20).

Deut 12:5 But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.

Deut 12:6 And there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and your tithes and the heave offering of your hand and your vows and your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock;

Deut 12:27 And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of Jehovah your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of Jehovah your God, and you shall eat the flesh.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

II. As members of the Body of Christ standing on the genuine ground of oneness, we must take the lead to be limited by the other members, not going beyond our measure:

- A. God has placed all the members of the Body, even as He willed—1 Cor. 12:18:

1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

1. The Head sets us in our special place in the Body and points us to our special function—Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:15-17.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?

2. Each one of us members has our own place in the Body of Christ; it is assigned by God and should be accepted by us.

3. Since such an assignment is according to God's will, every member is necessary—vv. 19-22.

1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?

1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.

1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

4. Every member has a definite place, a definite assignment, and a particular portion with which he serves the Body of Christ.

5. Each member has his own characteristics, and each has his own capability; these characteristics constitute the place, position, or ministry of each member—Rom. 12:4-8.
- Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,
- Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Rom 12:6 And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
- Rom 12:7 Or service, let us be faithful in that service; or he who teaches, in that teaching;
- Rom 12:8 Or he who exhorts, in that exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence; he who shows mercy, in cheerfulness.
- B. A basic requirement for the growth and development of the Body is that we recognize our measure and do not go beyond it—Eph. 4:7, 16:
- Eph 4:7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
1. We must be willing to be limited by our measure—Rom. 12:3, 6.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.

Rom 12:6 And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
 2. As soon as we go beyond our measure, we go beyond the authority of the Head and move out from under the anointing.
 3. When we go beyond our measure, we interfere with the order of the Body.
 4. To think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think without a sober mind is to annul the proper order of the Body life—v. 3.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
- C. Like Paul we should move and act according to how much God has measured to us, staying within the limits of God's ruling, God's measuring—2 Cor. 10:13:
- 2 Cor 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.
1. When we give a testimony about our work, experience, or enjoyment of the Lord, we must testify within measure, that is, within a certain limit.
 2. Although we expect the work to spread, we must learn how to be under God's restriction; we should not expect a spread that is without measure—vv. 13-15:

2 Cor 10:13 But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.

2 Cor 10:14 For we are not extending ourselves beyond our bounds, as if we did not reach you, for we were the first to come even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ.

2 Cor 10:15 We are not boasting beyond our measure in others' labors, but have the hope, as your faith is increasing, to be magnified in you according to our rule unto abundance,

 - a. If we spread the work according to the Spirit, there will always be a certain limit—cf. 2:12-14.

2 Cor 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and a door was open to me in the Lord,

2 Cor 2:13 I had no rest in my spirit, for I did not find Titus my brother; but taking leave of them, I went forth into Macedonia.

2 Cor 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ and manifests the savor of the knowledge of Him through us in every place.
 - b. Inwardly, we shall have the consciousness that the Lord intends to spread the work only to a certain extent; inwardly, we do not have the peace to spread the work beyond a certain point.

- c. Outwardly, in the environment the Lord may cause certain matters to restrict the spread of the work; the environment does not allow us to go beyond a particular boundary line—cf. Rom. 15:24.

Rom 15:24 Whenever I may go to Spain, for I hope to see you in passing and be sent forward there by you, if first I am filled, at least in part, by your company.

- 3. In the church service, we need to realize that God has measured out only so much to us, and we should not overstretch ourselves—12:3-4, 6a.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.

Rom 12:4 For just as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function,

Rom 12:6a And having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, ...

III. For the Lord's move in His recovery both locally and universally, we must take the lead to be Body-conscious in one accord—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 15:25; Rom. 15:6:

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

Acts 4:24 And when they heard this, they lifted up their voice with one accord to God and said, Sovereign Master, You are the One who has made heaven and earth and the sea and all things in them,

Acts 15:25 It seemed good to us, having become of one accord, to choose men to send to you together with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Rom 15:6 That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. We should always consider the Body, care for the Body, honor the Body, and do what is best for the Body—1 Cor. 12:12-27.

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

1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

1 Cor 12:14 For the body is not one member but many.

1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor 12:16 And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?

1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?

1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.

1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,

1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,

1 Cor 12:25 That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.

1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.

1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

- B. "When Brother Nee taught about the Body he said that whatever we do, we have to consider how the churches would feel about it"—*The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church*

Life, pp. 28-29.

- C. In the Body there can be no independence or individualism, for we are members, and members cannot live in detachment from the Body—1 Cor. 12:27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:30:
- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
Rom 12:5 So we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
Eph 5:30 Because we are members of His Body.
1. Those who see that they are members of the Body treasure the Body and honor the other members, each of whom is indispensable—1 Cor. 12:15, 21, 23-24; Rom. 12:3; Phil. 2:29; 1 Cor. 16:18; Judg. 9:9:
 - 1 Cor 12:15 If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.
 - 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
 - 1 Cor 12:23 And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,
 - 1 Cor 12:24 But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,
 - Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.
 - Phil 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor,
 - 1 Cor 16:18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Acknowledge therefore such ones.
 - Judg 9:9 But the olive tree said to them, Shall I leave my fatness, because of which God and men are honored by me, and go to wave over the trees?
 - a. Since we are members of the Body of Christ, we should have a feeling for the Body, taking the feeling of the Head as our own feeling—Phil. 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:25b-26.
 - Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.
 - 1 Cor 12:25b ... but that the members would have the same care for one another.
 - 1 Cor 12:26 And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.
 - b. We need to be like-souled in the Body life, genuinely caring for the things of Christ Jesus, the things concerning the church with all the saints—Phil. 2:2, 20-21; 1:8.
 - Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,
 - Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;
 - Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.
 - Phil 1:8 For God is my witness how I long after you all in the inward parts of Christ Jesus.
 2. Wherever there is Body-revelation, there is Body-consciousness, and wherever there is Body-consciousness, individualistic thought and action are ruled out:
 - a. If we want to know the Body, we need deliverance not only from our sinful life and our natural life but also from our individualistic life.
 - b. Just as the Father is versus the world (1 John 2:15), the Spirit is versus the flesh (Gal. 5:17), and the Lord is versus the devil (1 John 3:8), so also the Body is versus the individual.
 - 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him;
 - Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these oppose each other that you would not do the things that you desire.
 - 1 John 3:8 He who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

- c. Just as we cannot be independent from the Head, we cannot be independent from the Body.
- d. Individualism is hateful in the sight of God:
- (1) The enemy of the Body is the self, the independent “I,” the independent “me”; if we would be built up in the Body, the self must be condemned, denied, rejected, and renounced—Matt. 16:21-26.
 - Matt 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised.
 - Matt 16:22 And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, God be merciful to You, Lord! This shall by no means happen to You!
 - Matt 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of men.
 - Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
 - Matt 16:25 For whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it; but whoever loses his soul-life for My sake shall find it.
 - Matt 16:26 For what shall a man be profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul-life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul-life?
 - (2) We should be dependent not only on God but also on the Body, on the brothers and sisters—Exo. 17:11-13; Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33.
 - Exo 17:11 And when Moses lifted his hand up, Israel prevailed; and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.
 - Exo 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.
 - Exo 17:13 And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.
 - Acts 9:25 But his disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket.
 - 2 Cor 11:33 And in a basket I was lowered through a window, through the wall, and escaped his hands.
- e. What I do not know, another member of the Body will know; what I cannot see, another member of the Body will see; what I cannot do, another member of the Body will do—1 Cor. 12:17-22.
- 1 Cor 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?
 - 1 Cor 12:18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.
 - 1 Cor 12:19 And if all were one member, where would the body be?
 - 1 Cor 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.
 - 1 Cor 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
 - 1 Cor 12:22 But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.
- f. If we refuse the help of our fellow members, we are refusing the help of Christ; sooner or later all individualistic Christians will dry up—v. 12.
- 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

NOT BOASTING WITHOUT MEASURE

Second Corinthians 10:13 says, “But we will not boast without measure, but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.” The apostle is bold, but he is not bold without limit. This shows that he is under the restriction of the Lord. His boasting is according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure, the ruling God, has apportioned to him. Paul’s ministry to the Gentile world, including Corinth, was according to the measure of God (Eph. 3:1-2, 8; Gal. 2:8). Hence, his boast is also within this limit, not without measure, as that of the Judaistic teachers. The word rule in verse 13 literally means a measuring rod, as a rule used by a carpenter.

We should never boast without measure. In giving a testimony of what we have learned of the Lord, we should have a limit, a measure. The word measure in verse 13 indicates being ruled by God. God has allotted us just so much for our work and experience. Furthermore, He has given us just so much to enjoy. Therefore, when we give a testimony about our work, experience, or enjoyment of the Lord, we must testify within measure, that is, within a certain limit.

In giving a testimony or a report we should never exaggerate. However, the reports in certain Christian publications are exaggerations; those reports go beyond measure, beyond limit, without restriction. Thus, in testifying of our experience, we must stay within the measure God has given us. We should not boast without measure, beyond measure, but according to the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us. There is One who is ruling and measuring. This One is the God of measure, the God who rules. Therefore, we must stay within the limits of God’s ruling, of God’s measuring. Paul’s words “reach even as far as you” indicate that his coming to the Corinthians was under God’s ruling and measuring.

Verse 14 continues, “For we do not, as not reaching to you, overstretch ourselves, for we were the first to come even as far as unto you in the gospel of Christ.” In contrast to the Judaistic teachers, Paul and the other apostles did not overstretch themselves. They were the first to go to Europe, and hence to the Corinthians, with the gospel. If the Judaizers had gone there first, probably the apostles would not have gone, and that would have been the sign that Europe had not been measured to them under God’s ruling. This is related to Paul’s point in arguing with the Judaizers.

In verses 15 and 16 Paul says, “Not boasting without measure in others’ labors, but having hope, your faith growing, to be magnified among you according to our rule unto abundance, to preach the gospel unto the parts beyond you, not to boast in another’s rule in things made ready.” Here we see that the apostles have hope that through the growth of the faith of the Corinthian believers, their ministry will be magnified (in the sense of praise), by being enlarged and increased abundantly, yet still according to the rule, the measure, that God has apportioned to them. Paul hoped to be magnified among the Corinthians according to the limit of God’s measuring.

GOD’S RESTRICTION

From verses 13, 14, and 15 we see that although we expect the Lord’s work to spread, we must learn how to be under God’s restriction. Do not expect a spread that is without measure. That kind of spread would certainly not be within the limit of a walk according to Spirit. From experience we can testify that if we spread the work according to the Spirit, there will always be a certain limit. Inwardly we shall have the consciousness that the Lord intends to spread the work only to a certain extent. Furthermore, outwardly, in the environment, the Lord may cause matters to restrict the spread of the work. Therefore, inwardly we do not have the peace to spread the work beyond a certain point, and outwardly the environment does not allow us to go beyond a particular boundary line.

The young people are not yet very much into the Lord’s work. Nevertheless, I would encourage them to keep this word within them, for one day they will experience it. We all need to learn that in

-serving the Lord and in working with God, there is always a limit. This is also true in the service of the church.

The Lord is especially interested in restricting the young people. If the young ones do not have a heart to serve the Lord, He will stir them up to serve Him. But once they have been stirred up, He will limit them. Human nature does not like this kind of limitation. For example, both in our sleeping and in our activity we may not like limitations. When, spiritually speaking, we are asleep, God will stir us up. But when we become too active, He will restrict us. I know some young people who have been offended because God has done this to them. A young brother may want to be a leader among the young people. If he becomes a leader, he may then want to be a deacon or an elder in the church. In these matters he may expect to make swift progress. God's way, however, is first to speed us up and then to slow us down, first to raise us up and then to lower us down. When we are down, He will lift us up. But when we get too far up, He will lower us down. Hence, God's way of dealing with us is up and down, down and up. If we can take God's ups and downs, we shall eventually become useful in His work.

Many young people cannot tolerate God's ups and downs. After a few of these ups and downs, they want to quit. Their attitude may be, "If God wants me up, then let me go up to the heavens and stay there until the Lord Jesus comes back. But if God wants me down, let me stay down. But I don't like going up and down, down and up." This unhappiness with God's ups and downs is an expression of the disposition of many young people.

God does not want us to be always up or to be always down. Even in nature the alternating of day and night testifies of this. There is no such thing as an unending day or night. Rather, there is the alternating of day and night, night and day. God did not create us so that we would have a day or night that would last for many years. This may be according to our way, but it is not according to God's way.

LEARNING TO TAKE THE LORD'S RESTRICTION

God has many ways to bring us down. Some young people have been brought down by their married life. Before a particular brother was married, he may have been like an eagle soaring in the air. He could easily talk about the wonderful, glorious church life. But not long after his wedding, it seems that the church life is no longer glorious. God is using his marriage to calm down such an excited brother. In some cases, such a brother may stay down for a long period of time after his marriage. But eventually he is up again, although not in the same excited way as before. This is a sign of improvement.

Sometimes God may use one of the elders to bring you down. If such a thing happens to you, you should realize that God is the one who is putting you down, not the elder. He does it by means of the elder. Without having any intention, that elder may speak a certain word to you, and that word lowers you down. God deals with us in this way because He is a God of measure, apportioning to us a certain measure.

I realize that it is a serious matter to be down. Some brothers may be down for such a long time that it seems that they will never rise up again. But perhaps after another period of time, they will once again be up. None of us should presume to say what another brother's situation will be. It seems that this being up and down is beyond our control or management. Yes, we do not control this or manage it. Therefore, we all must realize that God is in control and that this is His way to keep us within our measure.

In this country the Lord's recovery has spread to a certain degree. Yet it seems that there has been a limit to this spread. However, this does not mean that the Lord will permanently stop the spread of the recovery. The point here is that, in our concept, once the Lord's recovery begins to spread, it should spread farther and farther without restriction. However, this is not God's concept.

We should not think that Paul was so spiritual that he was altogether different from us. Even he

had to learn to take the Lord's restriction. For example, Paul wanted to go to Rome, but he did not expect to go there in bonds. Furthermore, he told the believers at Rome that he expected to go to Spain by way of them (Rom. 15:24). Paul never went to Spain, and he arrived in Rome in bonds. Those bonds were the Lord's measure, His limitation. God did not measure out Rome to Paul in a free way. Instead, God led him there as a prisoner. Yes, Paul was in Rome, but he was there in prison. That imprisonment was a restriction. Rome was not Paul's territory in a way without restriction. God is sovereign, and whatever happened to Paul was under God's sovereignty. This means that Paul's bonds and imprisonment were God's sovereign restriction. Paul was willing to be subject to God's measuring. He neither transgressed this restriction nor rebelled against it. In this matter, he did not kick against the pricks.

ACTING WITHIN HIS JURISDICTION

Based on this principle of God's measuring, Paul told the Corinthians that whatever he did and spoke was not beyond his measure. Paul always acted and behaved within his measure. Using today's terminology, he acted within his jurisdiction. In contrast to the Judaizers, he never reached beyond his jurisdiction.

In 2 Corinthians 10:13 through 15 Paul seems to be saying, "Corinthians, as a church you have suffered a great deal because of the coming of the Judaistic preachers. These preachers, although Christians, are not willing to give up Judaism. On the one hand, they preach Christ; on the other hand, they still teach the Mosaic law. Therefore, they cause trouble and damage the church life. You Corinthians have been influenced by them. Therefore, you must realize that these Judaizers should never have come to Corinth. God did not measure the city of Corinth to them; Corinth is not in their jurisdiction. To be honest about it, Corinth is my jurisdiction, my territory." This is Paul's concept in these verses. However, it was difficult for him to speak about this in a direct, frank manner. But there is the implication here that Paul condemned the Judaizers for coming to Corinth. Thus, Paul seems to be saying, "We do not overreach ourselves, as the Judaizers do. We were the first to come to you with the gospel of Christ. That was a sign that Corinth has been measured to us. We came according to God's ruling. God has apportioned Corinth to us, not to the Judaizers. Actually, God has not apportioned anything to the Judaizers. They should not go anywhere. Their movements are altogether illegal before God and without the proper jurisdiction." This is the basic thought in these verses, and this was the feeling in Paul's spirit as he was writing.

The apostles always moved according to God's ruling. Whatever God measured out to them became their jurisdiction, and others should not interfere with it. If God had apportioned a certain territory to the Judaizers, the apostles would not have gone to that territory, for in so doing they would have overreached themselves. This is what Paul is saying here.

Today many preachers and teachers overreach themselves and interfere with the jurisdiction of others. This overreaching and interference always causes trouble.

STAYING WITHIN THE MEASURE APPORTIONED BY GOD

In the church service we need to realize that God has only measured out so much to us, and we should not overstretch ourselves. We need to know our limitation, our jurisdiction, and not go beyond it into others' territory. Like Paul, we should move and act according to our rule, that is, according to how much God has measured to us.

Paul knew from the Macedonian call he received that Corinth was under his rule, his measure. We know from Acts 16 that Paul became clear that God had called him to Europe. He came to Achaia with the gospel of Christ according to God's ruling. Both Macedonia and Achaia were under Paul's rule. Thus, the Judaizers should not have come into this territory to cause trouble. This was the feeling deep within Paul as he was writing these verses.

In this section of 2 Corinthians Paul is vindicating his apostolic authority. This authority is

related to jurisdiction. If Paul did not have any jurisdiction, what would be his authority? In his vindication of his apostolic authority, Paul conducted himself so as not to overstep the boundary of his measure. He is a good example of a person fully under God's restriction.

I encourage the young people especially to study this portion of the Word and learn from it how to conduct themselves in the church service and how to move in the Lord's recovery. Young people, you must know your rule, your limit. This means that you must know how much God has measured to you, how much He has apportioned to you. This restriction, this limitation, is a very practical dealing with our flesh. Our natural man wants to be without limitation. However, God knows our problem. Therefore, He sets up boundaries and restrictions so that we may stay within the measure He has apportioned to us. (*Life-study of 2 Corinthians*, pp. 447-453)

International Training for Elders and Responsible Ones
Spring 2012

TAKING THE LEAD AS ELDERS AND RESPONSIBLE ONES
(Lord's Day—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

Taking the Lead to Work with the Lord for the Body

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12, 16; S. S. 6:13; 7:1-13

- 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- S.S. 6:13 Return, return, O Shulammitte; / Return, return, that we may gaze at you. / Why should you gaze at the Shulammitte, / As upon the dance of two camps?
- S.S. 7:1 How beautiful are your footsteps in sandals, / O prince's daughter! / Your rounded thighs are like jewels, / The work of the hands of a skilled artist.
- S.S. 7:2 Your navel is a round goblet / That never lacks mixed wine; / Your belly is a heap of wheat, / Fenced in by lilies.
- S.S. 7:3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, / Twins of a gazelle.
- S.S. 7:4 Your neck is like a tower of ivory; / Your eyes, like the pools in Heshbon / By the gate of Bath-rabbim; / Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, / Which faces Damascus.
- S.S. 7:5 Your head upon you is like Carmel, / And the locks of your head like purple. / The king is fettered by your tresses.
- S.S. 7:6 How beautiful and how pleasant in delights / You are, O love!
- S.S. 7:7 This your stature is like a palm tree, / And your breasts are like the clusters.
- S.S. 7:8 I said, I will climb the palm tree; / I will take hold of its branches; / And let your breasts be like clusters of the vine, / And the fragrance of your nose like apples,
- S.S. 7:9 And the roof of your mouth like the best wine - Going down smoothly for my beloved, / Gliding through the lips of those who sleep.
- S.S. 7:10 I am my beloved's, / And his desire is for me.
- S.S. 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages.
- S.S. 7:12 Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love.
- S.S. 7:13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance, / And over our doors are all choice fruits, / New as well as old. / These, my beloved, I have stored up for you.

I. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, we need to realize that in the Lord's recovery there is only one work—the work of the Body; what we are doing today is not our personal work but the work of the economy of God—the building up of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:12.

- 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

II. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, we must know the central work of God—3:17a; Phil. 2:13:

- Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith...
- Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.
- A. God's central work, His unique work, is to work Himself in Christ into His chosen people, making Himself one with them for the Body of Christ—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17a; 4:16.
- Gal 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,

Eph 3:17a That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, ...
Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

B. The principle in God's work is to gain persons and by gaining them to have a way to go on for the carrying out of His economy—Acts 9:15; 13:1-2:

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

Acts 13:1 Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

1. The right priority is not for us to work for God but for God to work Himself into us—Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13.

Eph 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.

Phil 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure.

2. It is not that we work for the Lord but that He works on us; therefore, we should not be merely the Lord's workers but the Lord's work—Eph. 2:10.

Eph 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.

C. The kind of person we are determines the kind of fruit we produce; if our person is wrong, we may build up something by what we do but tear down more by what we are—Matt. 7:17-18.

Matt 7:17 Even so every good tree produces good fruit, but the corrupt tree produces bad fruit.

Matt 7:18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit.

III. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, we need to realize that God's work has certain essential features:

A. The initiation of God's work must be according to His will—15:13; 1 Cor. 8:6.

Matt 15:13 And He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.

1 Cor 8:6 Yet to us there is one God, the Father, out from whom are all things, and we are unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we are through Him.

B. The advance of God's work is according to His power—2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 3:10.

2 Cor 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God,

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

C. The result of God's work must be for His glory—John 7:17-18; Eph. 3:21.

John 7:17 If anyone resolves to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

John 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, this One is true, and unrighteousness is not in Him.

Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

D. No work should be initiated by ourselves, no work should be carried out by our own power, and no work should result in our own glory.

IV. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, there should be no difference between life, work, and move—Mark 1:14-45:

Mark 1:14 And after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

Mark 1:15 And saying, The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Repent and believe in the gospel.

- Mark 1:16 And passing beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting a net in the sea, for they were fishermen.
- Mark 1:17 And Jesus said to them, Come after Me, and I will cause you to become fishers of men.
- Mark 1:18 And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him.
- Mark 1:19 And going on a little, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in their boat, mending the nets.
- Mark 1:20 And immediately He called them, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, they went after Him.
- Mark 1:21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately, on the Sabbath, He entered into the synagogue and taught.
- Mark 1:22 And they were astounded at His teaching, for He taught them as One having authority and not like the scribes.
- Mark 1:23 And immediately, there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying,
- Mark 1:24 What have we to do with You, Jesus, Nazarene? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God.
- Mark 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be quiet and come out of him!
- Mark 1:26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and shouting with a loud voice, came out of him.
- Mark 1:27 And they were all amazed, so that they discussed among themselves, saying, What is this? A new teaching! With authority He orders even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.
- Mark 1:28 And immediately the report concerning Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding region of Galilee.
- Mark 1:29 And immediately, going out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.
- Mark 1:30 And Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever, and immediately they told Him about her.
- Mark 1:31 And He came to her and raised her up, holding her hand, and the fever left her, and she served them.
- Mark 1:32 And when evening fell and the sun had set, they brought to Him all those who were ill and those who were demon-possessed.
- Mark 1:33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door.
- Mark 1:34 And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and He cast out many demons and did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.
- Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.
- Mark 1:36 And Simon and those with him hunted for Him,
- Mark 1:37 And they found Him and said to Him, All are seeking You.
- Mark 1:38 And He said to them, Let us go elsewhere into the nearby towns that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I came out.
- Mark 1:39 And He went preaching in their synagogues in the whole of Galilee and casting out the demons.
- Mark 1:40 And a leper came to Him, entreating Him and falling on his knees and saying to Him, If You are willing, You can cleanse me.
- Mark 1:41 And He was moved with compassion, and stretching out His hand, He touched him and said to him, I am willing; be cleansed!
- Mark 1:42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.
- Mark 1:43 And sternly charging him, immediately He thrust him out,
- Mark 1:44 And said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.
- Mark 1:45 But he went out and began to proclaim it much and to spread the matter abroad, so that He could no longer enter openly into a city, but He stayed outside in deserted places. And they came to Him from everywhere.
- A. With the Lord Jesus there was no difference between life, work, and move:
1. The Lord worked everywhere and all the time because His life, His work, and His move were all the same; He lived His work, His ministry.
 2. With the Lord Jesus every aspect of His life was the same; there was no distinction between life and work.
- B. Just as the Lord's life was His work, so our living should be our working—Phil. 1:20-21a.
- Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...

V. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, we need to work by a life that is all-sufficient and all-mature, able to fit all situations, that is, able to endure any kind of treatment, to accept any kind of environment, to work in any kind of condition, and to take any kind of opportunity, for the carrying out of the ministry—John 14:6a; Acts 27:22-25; 2 Cor. 6:1-13.

- John 14:6a Jesus said to him, I am the way and the reality and the life; ...
- Acts 27:22 And now I advise you to cheer up, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.
- Acts 27:23 For this very night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood by me,
- Acts 27:24 Saying, Do not fear, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.
- Acts 27:25 Therefore, cheer up, men, for I believe God that it shall be so, even in the way in which it has been spoken to me.
- 2 Cor 6:1 And working together with Him, we also entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain;
- 2 Cor 6:2 For He says, "In an acceptable time I listened to you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is the well-acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.
- 2 Cor 6:3 We give no occasion of stumbling in anything that the ministry may not be faulted,
- 2 Cor 6:4 But in everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,
- 2 Cor 6:5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;
- 2 Cor 6:6 In pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love,
- 2 Cor 6:7 In the word of truth, in the power of God; through the weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left,
- 2 Cor 6:8 Through glory and dishonor, through evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true;
- 2 Cor 6:9 As unknown and yet well known; as dying and yet behold we live; as being disciplined and yet not being put to death;
- 2 Cor 6:10 As made sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor yet enriching many; as having nothing and yet possessing all things.
- 2 Cor 6:11 Our mouth is opened to you, Corinthians; our heart is enlarged.
- 2 Cor 6:12 You are not constricted in us, but you are constricted in your inward parts.
- 2 Cor 6:13 But for a recompense in kind, I speak as to children, you also be enlarged.

VI. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, we must be willing to make up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His Body, the church—Col. 1:24.

- Col 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church;

VII. If we would work with the Lord for the Body, we need to become the Shulammitte, one who is qualified to work with the Beloved—S. S. 6:13; 7:1-13:

- S.S. 6:13 Return, return, O Shulammitte; / Return, return, that we may gaze at you. / Why should you gaze at the Shulammitte, / As upon the dance of two camps?
- S.S. 7:1 How beautiful are your footsteps in sandals, / O prince's daughter! / Your rounded thighs are like jewels, / The work of the hands of a skilled artist.
- S.S. 7:2 Your navel is a round goblet / That never lacks mixed wine; / Your belly is a heap of wheat, / Fenced in by lilies.
- S.S. 7:3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, / Twins of a gazelle.
- S.S. 7:4 Your neck is like a tower of ivory; / Your eyes, like the pools in Heshbon / By the gate of Bath-rabbim; / Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, / Which faces Damascus.
- S.S. 7:5 Your head upon you is like Carmel, / And the locks of your head like purple. / The king is fettered by your tresses.
- S.S. 7:6 How beautiful and how pleasant in delights / You are, O love!
- S.S. 7:7 This your stature is like a palm tree, / And your breasts are like the clusters.
- S.S. 7:8 I said, I will climb the palm tree; / I will take hold of its branches; / And let your breasts be like clusters of the vine, / And the fragrance of your nose like apples,
- S.S. 7:9 And the roof of your mouth like the best wine - Going down smoothly for my beloved, / Gliding

- through the lips of those who sleep.
- S.S. 7:10 I am my beloved's, / And his desire is for me.
- S.S. 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages.
- S.S. 7:12 Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love.
- S.S. 7:13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance, / And over our doors are all choice fruits, / New as well as old. / These, my beloved, I have stored up for you.
- A. In Song of Songs 6:13 the lover, having passed through various stages of transformation, has become the Shulammitte, Solomon's duplication:
- S.S. 6:13 Return, return, O Shulammitte; / Return, return, that we may gaze at you. / Why should you gaze at the Shulammitte, / As upon the dance of two camps?
1. She is the same as Solomon in life, nature, expression, and function, as Eve was to Adam—Gen. 2:20-23.

Gen 2:20 And the man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of heaven and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper as his counterpart.

Gen 2:21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place.

Gen 2:22 And Jehovah God built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

Gen 2:23 And the man said, This time this is bone of my bones / And flesh of my flesh; / This one shall be called Woman / Because out of Man this one was taken.
 2. This signifies that in the maturity of Christ's life the lover of Christ becomes the same as He is in life, nature, expression, and function but not in the Godhead—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
- B. In Song of Songs 7:1-9a the Shulammitte is qualified to be Solomon's co-worker; this indicates that eventually Christ's lovers need to share in the work of the Lord—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:12.
- S.S. 7:1 How beautiful are your footsteps in sandals, / O prince's daughter! / Your rounded thighs are like jewels, / The work of the hands of a skilled artist.
- S.S. 7:2 Your navel is a round goblet / That never lacks mixed wine; / Your belly is a heap of wheat, / Fenced in by lilies.
- S.S. 7:3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, / Twins of a gazelle.
- S.S. 7:4 Your neck is like a tower of ivory; / Your eyes, like the pools in Heshbon / By the gate of Bath-rabbim; / Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon, / Which faces Damascus.
- S.S. 7:5 Your head upon you is like Carmel, / And the locks of your head like purple. / The king is fettered by your tresses.
- S.S. 7:6 How beautiful and how pleasant in delights / You are, O love!
- S.S. 7:7 This your stature is like a palm tree, / And your breasts are like the clusters.
- S.S. 7:8 I said, I will climb the palm tree; / I will take hold of its branches; / And let your breasts be like clusters of the vine, / And the fragrance of your nose like apples,
- S.S. 7:9a And the roof of your mouth like the best wine - Going down smoothly for my beloved, / ...
- 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- C. Song of Songs 7:9b-13 reveals that the lover works with the Lord, the Beloved, for the Body:
- S.S. 7:9b ... Gliding through the lips of those who sleep.
- S.S. 7:10 I am my beloved's, / And his desire is for me.
- S.S. 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages.

- S.S. 7:12 Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love.
- S.S. 7:13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance, / And over our doors are all choice fruits, / New as well as old. / These, my beloved, I have stored up for you.
1. To share in the work of the Lord is not to work *for* the Lord but to work *with* the Lord—1 Cor. 3:9a; 2 Cor. 6:1a.
 - 1 Cor 3:9a For we are God's fellow workers; ...
 - 2 Cor 6:1a And working together with Him, ...
 2. To work with the Lord we need to be one with Him; actually, to work with Christ we must become Christ—1 Cor. 6:17; John 15:4-5; Phil. 1:21a.
 - 1 Cor 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
 - John 15:4 Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.
 - John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.
 - Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
 3. To work with the Lord for the Body we need the maturity in life—Eph. 4:13-14:
 - Eph 4:13 Until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,
 - Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
 - a. To enter into God's New Testament economy requires that we grow and mature in the life of God—1 Cor. 2:6; Col. 1:28.
 - 1 Cor 2:6 But we do speak wisdom among those who are full-grown, yet a wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are being brought to nought;
 - Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;
 - b. Maturity is a matter of having the divine life imparted into us again and again until we have the fullness of life—John 10:10b; 2 Cor. 5:4b.
 - John 10:10b ... I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.
 - 2 Cor 5:4b ... in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
 4. To work with the Lord our work must be for His Body—Eph. 4:4, 16:
 - Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
 - Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
 - a. The Body is the governing law of the life and work of the children of God today—1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 12-13, 27.
 - Eph 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
 - Eph 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
 - 1 Cor 12:4 But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit;
 - 1 Cor 12:5 And there are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord;
 - 1 Cor 12:6 And there are distinctions of operations, but the same God, who operates all things in all.
 - 1 Cor 12:12 For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.
 - 1 Cor 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
 - 1 Cor 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.
 - b. The work of the Triune God in us is to produce and build up the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:16-21; 4:4-6, 12, 16.
 - Eph 3:16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man,
 - Eph 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being

- rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph 3:18 May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are
- Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.
- Eph 3:20 But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us,
- Eph 3:21 To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.
- Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
- Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- c. Our work in the Lord's recovery is the work of the Body of Christ—1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Eph. 4:12.
- 1 Cor 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- d. All the co-workers should do the same one work universally for the one unique Body; the starting point of the work is the oneness of the Body—v. 4; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- Eph 4:4 One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;
- 1 Cor 16:10 Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without fear; for he is working the work of the Lord, even as I am.
- e. According to Song of Songs 7:11, Christ's lover wants to carry out with her Beloved the work that is for the entire world (fields) by sojourning from one place to another (lodging in the villages); this indicates that our work must be for the Body—Eph. 4:12.
- S.S. 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages.
- Eph 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,
- f. "Whenever God's children see the oneness of the Body, they will also see the oneness of the work, and they will be delivered out of individualistic work into the work of the Body" (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 37, p. 244).
5. In the churches (vineyards) Christ's lover renders her love to her Beloved—S. S. 7:12:
- S.S. 7:12 Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love.
- a. At the place of His work, she expresses her love to the Lord; in the midst of the Lord's work, we give Him our love—Mark 12:30.
- Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and from your whole soul and from your whole mind and from your whole strength."
- b. Here we see the relationship between the first love and the first works—Rev. 2:4-5:
- Rev 2:4 But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

- (1) The first works are works that issue from and express the first love.
- (2) When we are filled with the first love of the Lord, everything we do issues from and expresses our love for Him, and we will work with the Lord, the Beloved, for the Body—Eph. 3:19; 4:16.

Eph 3:19 And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Eph 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

LIVING AND WORKING ACCORDING TO THE CRYSTALLIZED SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

The essential, crystallized significance of the Body of Christ is that the Triune God is constituted with His chosen and redeemed people to become a constitution, a constituted entity. Unless we see this crystallized, essential significance of the Body of Christ, there will be no way to carry out what we are trying to do in the church today. If we see this essential significance, there will be no problem whatever.

In the New Testament it is not a matter of the oneness of the church; oneness is not something of the church but of the Body. The Lord's prayer for the believers in John 17 was concerning the Body. He prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are.... That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us" (vv. 11b, 21). The believers can have this oneness only by being in the Holy Father, in the Holy Son, and in the Holy Trinity.

The oneness that the Lord aspired for and prayed for in John 17 corresponds with the oneness of the Spirit in Ephesians 4:3-6. We must see that the church is the Body of Christ, which is a constitution, an entity constituted with the Triune God and His chosen and redeemed ones. In this Body there is the reality of oneness. The genuine oneness is not of the church but of the Body; the real oneness is the organic oneness of the Body. In a locality, this oneness is called *one accord*. Without the oneness of the Body, there is no possibility to have one accord in the church.

Brother Nee truly knew Christ and the Body. His work was not for himself at all; he did not have his own work. He never put any church he established "in his pocket." Brother Nee was the pioneer, and I am a follower. Thank the Lord, he truly was an excellent pattern to me that enabled me to still be ministering here today... Today you can also testify that I have never put the churches in Taiwan "in my pocket." Neither Brother Nee nor I carried out our own work; rather, we carried out the work of the Lord's recovery. The Lord's recovery is for the building of the Body of Christ.

Doing Only the Work of the Lord's Recovery

Anyone who has a vision today can be clear at a glance that neither Brother Nee nor I carried out our own personal work; our work is the work of the Lord's recovery for the building of the Body of Christ. I say this with the hope that you will be influenced by me. I was greatly influenced by Brother Nee, and I hope that you will also be influenced by him.

The co-workers should go out, but they should never do the work of building fortresses, the work of the feudal princes; they should only do the work of the Lord's recovery. If we all do the work of the Lord's recovery, there will be the one Body.

If we look back, what did Brother Nee accomplish, and what have I accomplished? All that we have done is left here for the Lord to show grace to His children; the work that we have done is the Lord's recovery. I hope that we all can see this. We must see the Body of Christ and be very clear concerning this vision. This vision must become our governing and controlling vision. We must do the work of the Lord's recovery under this vision. The work of the Lord's recovery is the work of His economy, the work of the Body of Christ.

If a local church does not care for other local churches, that is a fortress under a feudal prince. Anyone who does the work of the fortress and the feudal prince will not have a long-lasting spiritual life. Although Brother Nee passed away over twenty years ago, today we still see his ministry remaining here to minister to the churches for their going on. We all must see the Body and do the work of the Body. All our problems, whether in the church or in our personal life, are due to our lack of seeing the Body. Even our wrong attitude toward our wife is due to our not knowing the Body. Knowing the Body changes not only our church life but also our attitude toward our spouse.

Whether you are doing the work of the fortress or the work of the Lord's recovery does not depend on me but on you. Do you work in your locality merely to guard your hall, merely to work on your district meeting, or merely for the locality where you are? We should not have feudal princes among us; we should have only one Head, who is Christ, the Head of the Body. What we are doing today is the work of the Body of Christ. Christianity is full of fortresses: the Catholic Church is a big fortress; the Presbyterian Church and the Baptist Church are also fortresses. Every small free group is a small fortress. We cannot see the Body of Christ among them.

We need to see that the Body of Christ is not the oneness in a locality but the oneness of the Body, the oneness of the Spirit. There are thousands of local churches, but the Spirit is one. In the Body we need to keep the oneness of the Spirit; in the church and among the churches we need to be in one accord. This is the genuine oneness. (*The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible*, pp. 29, 31-34)

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

We have seen that the seeking one in the Song of Songs reached several attainments. First, she attained full satisfaction for herself. Then as a crown, she satisfied the Lord. Finally, she became a garden to satisfy the Lord and the Lord's people. In today's Christianity, nearly everyone would say that nothing else is needed. Our own need is taken care of, and we are taking care of others' needs. Seemingly, nothing else is required, but where is the fulfillment of God's purpose, the building up of the Body, the building up of the city?

Today, nearly all Christians care only for their own needs, while some of the more improved Christians care for the needs of others. This might be considered the highest goal of today's Christian work. But all of this cannot reach God's goal, the building up of the Body. Almost no one cares for God's building. In these last ten years, many have begun to talk about the Body life and the Body ministry, but hardly anyone really understands what the Body is. The Body is a building; it is not a heaping up of materials.

Regardless of how much we undertake for our own satisfaction and how much we help others to be satisfied, we can only reach so far. God's purpose still is not fulfilled. This is why, after all the attainments of the seeking one, yet another step remains: that is, to care for God's eternal purpose, the building up of the Body, which is the building up of the city. It is not simply a matter of our being satisfied or of satisfying others, but of the completing of the eternal purpose of God.

TWO ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S SUFFERING

How could the building up of the Body be accomplished? With the Lord's suffering, there are two aspects. One is for the accomplishment of redemption. The Lord Jesus suffered on the cross to accomplish redemption for us. This has been easily seen by all Christians. But there is another aspect of the Lord's suffering: His suffering for the formation and the building up of the Body. Most Christians today are completely ignorant regarding this very important aspect of the Lord's suffering. This is why Paul in Colossians 1:24 says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh *for his body's sake*, which is the church." Paul says that he fills up the lack of the sufferings of Christ. The Lord's suffering for redemption has no lack. To say that would be heresy. For redemption, the Lord's suffering has been completed and is altogether sufficient. But His suffering for the producing, forming, and building up of the Body has a big lack. This is why Paul told us that his suffering was a filling up of the lack of the Lord's suffering. We cannot suffer for the accomplishment of redemption, but we all must suffer for the building up of the Body.

If you are one who is simply seeking spirituality for your personal satisfaction, you will not suffer much. Rather, all the people of God will appreciate you and speak well of you because you are seeking spirituality. If you would go further to meet the need of others, you would be even more

admired. All the religious people would never give you any trouble. But once you begin to see the need for the building up of the Body and to give yourself to this, you will suffer. Most of the suffering will not come from the world, but from Christianity.

The Lord Jesus suffered for the producing of the Body, not from the Gentile world, but from the Jewish religious world. Paul and the other apostles suffered very little from the Gentiles, but they suffered very much from the Jewish religion and even to some extent from the Christian religion. Philippians chapter 1 shows us that even some Christian preachers persecuted him. That was simply because Paul was for the building up of the Body.

Today it is exactly the same. If we would seek just to be spiritual and to care for others, not seeking to care for the Body, all Christianity would be happy with us. They would welcome us, invite us, and make a great name for us. We could become a famous preacher, pastor, or missionary. But once we see the vision of the Body and forget about all our individual seeking and caring for others in order to build up the Body, all Christianity will rise up against us. We must suffer to fill up what is lacking of the suffering of Christ for His Body's sake.

Even after the seeking one in the Song of Songs has reached the fourth attainment of being a garden, the Body still has not been attended to. There has been no building up of the city. She needs a further step to fulfill God's eternal purpose of building up the Body. If we would take this further step, surely we must share in the sufferings of Christ. This is why the Apostle Paul used the term "the fellowship of His sufferings" in Philippians 3:10. We must share and participate in His sufferings, not for redemption, for that has already been accomplished, but for the building up of the Body, which has not yet been fully accomplished. We all must participate in the fellowship of His sufferings that we may be conformed to His death for His Body's sake. (*Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs*, pp. 129-131)

WORKING TOGETHER WITH HER BELOVED

We have seen the portrait of [the lover's] qualifications. Now we will see that she works together with her Beloved (S. S. 7:9b-13).

"Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; / Let us lodge in the villages" (v. 11). This reveals that she wants to carry out with her Beloved the work that is for the entire world by sojourning from one place to another. This indicates that she is not sectarian. In the Lord's work it is not easy to keep our work open, to not keep our work "in our pocket." We must learn to keep the work open, so that others can come to sojourn there and we can go to sojourn elsewhere. This is to keep one work in one Body.

"Let us rise up early for the vineyards; / Let us see if the vine has budded, / If the blossom is open, / If the pomegranates are in bloom; / There I will give you my love" (v. 12). She and her Beloved work diligently not for herself but in the churches, for others to bud, blossom, and bloom, in which she renders her love to her Beloved. If we work in this way, others will receive much help.

"The mandrakes give forth fragrance, / And over our doors are all choice fruits, / New as well as old. / These, my beloved, I have stored up for you" (v. 13). In her working together with her Beloved there is a mutual love (signified by the mandrakes—Gen. 30:14) giving forth its fragrance between them as a couple loving each other, signifying the bridal love between the lover of Christ and Christ, and in their working places there are plenty of fragrant and choice fruits, new and old, which she stores up for her Beloved in love.

We need to learn to work for the Lord in a way that the Lord will enjoy. If in our working we care only for our own joy, we have already failed. We must work for His joy, bearing many fruits of love with much fragrance of love.

To share in the work of the Lord is not to work for the Lord but to work together with the Lord. This requires a matured life.

Through our experience we have learned that to work together with the Lord we must be mature

in life and we must teach the high truths. Song of Songs does not emphasize truth, mentioning it only once (*Amana* means “truth”—4:8). However, in Song of Songs we see that to work with the Lord we need the maturity in life, we need to be one with the Lord, and our work must be for His Body. Our Lord is Solomon and we must be the Shulammitte; that is, we must be one with the Lord. Actually, to work with Christ we must be Christ. Paul was a real Shulammitte because he lived Christ (Phil. 1:21).

The Shulammitte works as Solomon’s counterpart, taking care of all the vineyards (S. S. 8:11). This indicates that our work should be for the Body, not just one city. We must have a work that is for the entire world. This is what Paul did by establishing local churches and then working to bring them into the full realization of the Body of Christ. (*Life-study of Song of Songs*, pp. 58-61)