

**2010 Labor Day Weekend Conference
In Denver, Colorado**

Session One

**Four Great Emphases in the Lord's Recovery
for Carrying Out God's Divine Economy (1)**

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:2; John 6:57; 1 Cor. 3:6; Col. 1:28; 2:19

- I. According to the divine revelation every local church in its locality should emphasize and every believer in each church should be fully engaged in four crucial realities for carrying out God's divine economy—gaining a full knowledge and experience of the truth, growing in life unto maturity, increasing in numbers locally by bearing remaining fruit, and spreading the churches as the testimony of Jesus universally until there are local churches everywhere globally—1 Tim. 2:4; John 6:57; Col. 1:28; John 15:4–5, 16; Acts 1:8; 8:1,4:**
- A. Truth and life are for living in the divine dispensing, God's distribution of Himself into the believers in Christ, and increase and spread are for serving in the divine dispensing.
 - B. We must learn from the teachings and revelation of the Bible to pay our attention to the knowledge of the truth and the growth in life and also to the increase and spread of the church.
 - C. The Lord's recovery should follow the word of God to stress the knowledge of the truth and the growth in life (1 Tim. 2:4; 4:3; 3:15; Col. 1:28; 1 Cor. 3:6; Col. 2:19) as well as the increase and spread of the church (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 8:1,4; 13:2); both the truth and life are Christ (John 14:6, 17; Col. 3:4), and in reality the increase and spread are also Christ, because the church is Christ (John 3:30; 1 Cor. 12:12; Col. 3:10–11).
 - D. The knowledge of the truth and growth in life are for the increase and spread of the church, the Body of Christ; the increase and spread of the church are the goal of our knowing the truth and growing in life.
- II. The greatest need we must meet in the Lord's recovery is to bring the saints into the truth to carry the recovery on and also to train them in the divine revelation—1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:2, 25, 15; Titus 1:1:**
- A. The Lord's recovery has the highest truth, the truth that is the consummation of the truths recovered during the past centuries:
 - 1. To be constituted with the truth through the divine dispensing of the Triune God is to have the truth dispensed into and wrought into us to become our intrinsic being, our organic constitution—John 8:32a; 14:17, 20; 1 John 2:24, 27; 2 John 2.
 - 2. We must get into the truths and get these truths constituted into our being as our organic constitution in order to become educated in the full knowledge of the truth; the solid truth ministered to the saints can build up the church.
 - B. The truth is in the Bible (John 17:17), yet the Bible needs an opener; those of us who have read the Life-study messages can testify that these Life-studies with the *Recovery Version* and all the footnotes open the Bible to us when we touch them.
 - C. We should endeavor to use the time to learn the truths, to know the truths, to speak the truths, to experience Christ through the truths, and to minister Christ to people by the Spirit of truth.
 - D. What kind of church we build up depends upon what kind of truth we lead the saints into and teach.
 - E. The one who has been divinely appointed to be an elder is the one who knows the truth and has let the truth enter into him and become a part of him as his constituent and can unveil at least a major part of the New Testament revelation—the deeper, richer, and higher truth.
- III. The church must have two aspects, the aspect of the truth and the aspect of life; with two legs one can stand and walk normally:**
- A. The Lord's recovery is a recovery of the truth and life; the truth is reality, and life is the inward and intrinsic content and experience of the truth; we experience and enter into life by knowing the truth.
 - B. Christ today is the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit of life, indwelling us in our spirit so that we may experience Him subjectively and enjoy Him to the uttermost, thus allowing the element of Christ

- to increase in us day by day; the believers' growth is the increase of God within them; the continual dispensing of life issues in the growth of God within a believer—1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:2; 2 Tim. 1:14; John 7:38–39; 4:14; Col. 2:19.
- C. We experience and enjoy the divine life by coming to Him, being enlightened by Him and confessing our sins, shortcomings, and defects, pray-reading His word, calling upon His name, praying to Him, remaining in Him through fellowship with Him, and fellowshiping with our fellow members in His Body continually.
 - D. The intention of God in His economy is to dispense Himself as life into His chosen people, making them one with Him; to dispense, to infuse, to suffuse (gradually spread, fill, saturate, permeate, flood), to infiltrate, to transfuse, to distribute Christ with all His riches into His believers, is for the constitution of the Body of Christ in order to express the processed and consummated Triune God in the church in this age and to head up all things in Christ in the new heaven and new earth in eternity; on God's side, He is infusing and distributing Himself; on our side, we are receiving His dispensing—Eph. 5:32; 3:8-10; 1:10.
 - E. The Lord's recovery is Christ Himself as the seed of life sown into our being and moving in us to carry out His divine intention to increase the element of God in us, the believers, through our receiving and enjoying this life supply—Matt. 13:3–4, 19:
 - 1. The kingdom of God is the Triune God in His incarnation coming to be sown into His chosen people as the Spirit to grow and develop in them into a kingdom for His expression and representation—Mark 4:26-29.
 - 2. The kingdom of God is produced by the growth, enlargement, and multiplication of this seed—Luke 17:20–21; 8:5–8.
 - F. God's full and complete salvation is carried out organically, in life, and is fully accomplished through the life-giving Spirit dispensing Himself into the believers for their regeneration, dispositional sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification, consummating in the full development, enjoyment, and expression of the divine life as the New Jerusalem; ultimately through His salvation we will become God in life, nature, constitution, and expression, but not in the Godhead—Rom. 8:6, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17; 1 John 5:11-13; 2 Pet. 1:4; John 1:12-13; 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 15:16; Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:16; 3:18; Rom. 12:2; 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:47; Rom. 8:30; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2:
 - 1. All these steps are carried out in us by God's divine dispensing of Himself as the Spirit of life in us.
 - 2. This is the highest peak of God's divine truth and our experience of Him as life unveiled in the Bible.

All Outlines were compiled from the writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, published by Living Stream Ministry.

Ministry Excerpts for Message One:

THE LORD'S RECOVERY BEING THE RECOVERY OF THE TRUTH

Today the whole earth needs the truth of the Lord that is in His Word. Regrettably, however, the Bible, the divine Word, has not been fully opened to the world. Thus, it has not been possible for people to fully know the truth of the Lord. At the most, Christians are able to boast that the holy Word of God has been published into many languages and propagated over the whole earth. Yet they are not able to say that after reading the Bible, regardless of which language, they have been able to truly understand the deep mysteries within it. They have been able to understand the superficial meanings of the things revealed in the Bible according to their own culture, philosophy, tradition, customs, ethics, living, and morality but have had no way of comprehending the mysteries of the truths in it. The mysteries of the truths in the Bible are very deep and profound. We need the spiritual enlightening of the Spirit of God to understand them, and we also need to spend time to dig them out (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-14).

The truths in the holy Word of the Lord were completed approximately two thousand years ago, but over a period of a little more than one thousand years they seemed to slowly vanish. Only in the last few centuries have the truths again been released little by little through the zealous and careful study of many lovers of the Lord. This is what we refer to as the Lord's recovery. The Lord's recovery is the recovery of all the truths in the Bible that were lost. Thus, the recovery of the truth is one of the great pillars in the Lord's recovery. The Lord's recovery lies with the recovery of the knowledge of the truth.

HAVING THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH FOR THE SPREAD OF THE LORD'S RECOVERY

The New Testament says repeatedly that we should know the truth. Moreover, when referring to this matter, Paul repeatedly says that we should come to the full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1). This means that we must know not just a small part or one aspect of the truth but rather the truth in its entirety and in all of its aspects. Paul also said that the church is the pillar and base of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). This implies that the truth in the Bible is like a large building that is not one-sided but complete on all sides with a foundation and a roof. If we are going to spread the Lord's recovery today, we must know the truth and be able to expound the truth. For this reason, we must know every side of the truth without any biases or particular leanings. (*Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—the Four Great Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 43)

BRINGING THE SAINTS INTO THE TRUTH

Based upon this, I feel that for the long range for the Lord's recovery in such a top country as the United States, which is full of culture, education, scientific knowledge, and biblical knowledge, the greatest need we must meet is to bring the saints in the Lord's recovery into the truth to carry the Lord's recovery on. For a country to be strong there is the need to bring its people into the proper education. If the people are behind in education, that country is also behind. The reason why the United States is a top country is because of its highest education. When President Nixon was in office, he encouraged the young people to study at the universities because many young Americans at that time did not want to study further after high school. The trend in the United States has changed, however. Such a big country needs many more people to receive the highest, up-to-date education. Otherwise, there is no way for a country to be among the top countries in today's world.

Today we are here for the Lord's recovery. For the long run, we surely have to help the saints in the Lord's recovery to get into the top spiritual education. You must remember that we still uplift the living Christ, the life-giving Spirit, life itself and its riches, and the church in a living way. To promote these things, to carry these things out, and to bring people into these things so that they remain there, we need the Word and we need the truth. The standard of the Lord's recovery depends upon the standard of the truth we put out. The truths will be the measure and the standard. (*Elder's Training, Book 3*, pp. 104-105)

We need to lead the saints to have a foundation in the truth, the Lord's Word, and to enter into the experiences of life. Over a period of time, these will become a rich deposit within in them us. Then when we com to the meetings, whether a group meeting, home meeting, or a district meeting, our tongue will be the pen of a ready writer, because of our inward constitution; this not merely a kind of composition but a

constitution. If we are under the influence of such an atmosphere for a period of three years, the element of this atmosphere will be all the more constituted into us. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2, p. 155*)

KNOWING THE TRUTH FOR THE EXPERIENCE AND GROWTH IN LIFE

Life and truth are inseparable. When we hear the truth concerning the condition of man, we should consider whether this is our experience. In this way the truth will become our experience. The subjects that we study in school, such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, or geography, do not always relate to our living. However, the truth that we study must become our living.

We must make progress in truth, because our progress in the truth causes us to grow in life. However, if we study the truth without allowing it to work in us, we will merely be engaging in theological research. True growth in life cannot be separate from the truth. If we have no knowledge of the truth, it will be difficult for us to grow in life. Hence, we must study the truth diligently. Furthermore, what we experience must be added to our study of the truth. We should not worry about how transformed we are; rather, we should consider our experience of the truth. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, book, pp. 49-50*)

In order to get the benefit of these four purposes in full you must dive into the Recovery Version with the footnotes and the Life-study messages. It is not an easy task to be built up in the truth. You must study the text and every note. If possible, it is helpful to take care of the cross-references. Then you need to study the Life-study messages. You need to get into these messages not like you are reading a newspaper or a reference book. You must consider the text of the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study messages as a textbook. Because this is my work, I know the nature of it. I am fellowshipping this with you to let you know the way our publications were written. If you merely read them in a light way, you cannot get into them. You must study them as a textbook. (*Elders' Training, Book 3, p. 93*)

TWO ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

In the two Epistles to Timothy there are a number of unusual expressions not found elsewhere in the New Testament. First Timothy 3:15 says, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth" (Gk.). In this verse two aspects of the church are covered: the church as the house of the living God and the church as the pillar and base of the truth. According to this verse, the church is the house not of the holy God, the righteous God, or the almighty God, but of the living God. The living God is full of life. If the church is to be the house of the living God, it must be full of life; it must be a house of life. The church is also the pillar and base of the truth. The house is full of life, and the pillar bears the truth. If we are serious about knowing how to behave in the church, we must know that the church is the house of the living God and the pillar of the truth.

Throughout the years of the Lord's recovery in this country, the church has been a testimony of life. We thank the Lord that the churches in His recovery are full of life. Although the churches are a house of life, there has been a shortage in regard to the pillar in front of the house. At the front of the temple in the Old Testament were two pillars signifying strength. Without the pillars, the temple would not have given the impression of strength. Houses with pillars always convey such an impression. The church should be not only a house full of life, but also a pillar of truth. My burden in this message is to emphasize the fact that the church must have these two aspects, the aspect of life and the aspect of truth.

According to God's economy, everything has two aspects. If the church has only the aspect of life, the church is not complete. For example, if I had just one leg, it would be rather difficult for me to stand up, much less to walk. But with two legs I can stand and walk normally. (*Truth Messages, pp. 7-8*)

Session Two

Four Great Emphases in the Lord's Recovery for Carrying Out God's Divine Economy (2)

Scripture Reading: John 15:4–5, 16; Matt. 28:19–20; Gen. 1:28; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47; Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4; Dan. 11:32

IV. The truth brings us life, life produces the church, and the church is responsible for the preaching of the gospel to gain the increase locally and for spreading universally for the building of the church:

- A. Today the Lord's recovery among us mainly emphasizes two things—knowing the truth and growing in life; however, we must realize that knowing the truth and growing in life are not for truth and life themselves but for the increase and spread of the church.
- B. God's unique purpose in this age is to have the gospel preached so that the church might be built up to consummate the New Jerusalem—Matt. 24:14; Eph. 3:8–11; Rev. 6:1–2; 19:11, 13–14.
- C. God's stewardship is the dispensing of the processed God in Christ into His chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people so that He may be their life and everything to produce the unique Body of Christ in the universe to be His corporate expression; this Body is the church in this age and the New Jerusalem in eternity.
- D. Today we are branches of the true vine (Christ); according to John 15, as branches we need to bear fruit; when we bear fruit the church increases:
 - 1. In order to enjoy our organic union with the Lord, we need to abide in the Son.
 - 2. As we abide in the Lord, we absorb all the riches of the vine for the bearing of fruit through the dispensing of this life into others.
 - 3. This dispensing work is carried out through our announcing the gospel.
- E. Everyone must be mobilized to preach the gospel and bear remaining fruit; as New Testament priests of the gospel, the focus of our gospel work is contacting others through prayer and begetting them, nourishing, feeding, and cherishing them, teaching and perfecting them, and leading them to prophecy for the building up of the church; this is God's ordained way—Rom. 15:16; Acts 20:20; Rev. 10:24–25; 1 Pet. 2:2; Col. 1:28; 1 Cor. 14:31; Eph. 4:16.
- F. The basis for the increase and spread of the church is the small group meetings:
 - 1. The “defensive” function of the small groups is the upholding and restoring of all the saints; through the small gatherings the brothers and sisters are sustained in their spiritual life.
 - 2. The “offensive” function of the small groups is the preaching or announcing of the gospel from house to house; our relatives, friends, neighbors, classmates, and colleagues should be the primary target for our increasing the church locally and our spreading the Lord's testimony globally.

V. To increase is to add to or to multiply; to spread is to cover over or to extend to; the testimony of Jesus must increase in numbers in every city through the local churches, and the churches must spread throughout the entire earth:

- A. The book of Acts provides us with a good pattern; it speaks of the propagation of the resurrected Christ in His ascension through the multiplication of His witnesses, who reach the uttermost part of the earth through ten avenues:
 - 1. Through the economical Spirit whom the Lord poured out upon His Body in His ascension—1:14; 2:4, 17, 41, 47; 4:4, 31; 5:14; 6:7.
 - 2. Through the announcing of the gospel from house to house by the believers—5:42; 2:42, 46–47.
 - 3. Through the prayer and the ministry of the word by the apostles—6:4; 1:14; 2:42; 1:17; 20:24.
 - 4. Through the scattering and moving of the believers—8:1, 4; 11:19.
 - 5. Through the traveling and preaching of the evangelists—8:5, 12, 26–30, 39–40.
 - 6. Through the preaching of the believers—9:19–22, 28–29.
 - 7. Through the traveling and preaching of the apostles—8:14, 25; 9:31–32.
 - 8. Through the specific sending of the apostles for the work—13:2–3.
 - 9. Through signs and wonders—2:43; 5:12, 15–16; 13:12; 19:11–12.
 - 10. Through the preaching of the apostles—1:22; 2:24, 32–33; 3:15; 4:10–11; 5:30–32; 13:30; 17:31.
- B. The book of Acts also reveals the important means—the economical Spirit (1:8; 2:4), prayer (1:14; 6:4; 2:42), the word (6:7), the believers' homes (2:46; 5:42; 20:20), and the living witnesses, who are

- martyrs—by which this propagation took place in Jerusalem and spread to Judea, to Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth (1:8; 8:1, 4; 11:19; Matt. 28:19–20).
- C. The preaching of the gospel locally and the spreading of the gospel universally are simply to dispense Christ into others in the churches and to propagate Christ, to dispense Christ into others in places beyond localities where there are local churches.
 - D. The increase and spread of the church are the goal of our knowing the truth and growing in life, yet the first two have been neglected; thus, the Lord has been restricted, and we have not carried out the recovery in a balanced way.
 - E. We should pick up the burden to ensure not only that the churches in the Lord's recovery would increase in number but also that the recovery as a whole would spread; migration is God's heart's desire; it is God's call and needs our response.
 - F. The increase and spread build up the church in each locality as well as the Body of Christ throughout the earth.
 - G. If a local church does not spread, the nature of that church is too low, and it will lose its universal and eternal character; in principle, the church must spread, and the faster, the farther, and the more it spreads, the better.
 - H. Propagation through scattering or migration for the building of the church is the Lord's move today in His Body in this age on the earth; migration is a divine principle in the Bible—Gen. 1:28; Heb. 11:8; Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4:
 - 1. The divine policy is for man to always move on; God blesses the move of people on this earth.
 - 2. In the book of Acts it was not enough for Christ to just increase in Jerusalem; there was the need for Him to spread.
 - I. In the Bible migration is to “go from your land / And from your relatives / And from your father's house / To the land that I will show you” (Gen. 12:1; Acts 7:3); all New Testament believers are the true descendants of Abraham (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7); all should live a life of the altar and the tent.
 - J. The foremost examples to us in this matter are Abraham in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament, plus Christ Himself (Matt. 8:20; Luke 4:42–43)—Gal. 3:7; Gen. 12:1,5–9; 13:18; Heb. 11:9, 13; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:6; 1 Cor. 4:16, 11; 1 Pet. 2:11.
 - K. All believers should be heavenly sojourners, sojourning as foreigners on this earth; these sojourners are God's elect, chosen by God out of the human race, out of all the nations, according to His foreknowledge—1:1, 17; 2:11:
 - 1. If we have an established dwelling place on earth and cannot migrate, we are not up to the biblical standard; we are not normal Christians; we have a problem—we are rooted on the earth; we must not become set, settled, and occupied; we should walk on the earth, not dwell on the earth; we have a “commonwealth in the heavens”—Phil. 3:20.
 - 2. We must always be moving; even after migrating, we should not become settled; right away we should prepare to migrate again; it is not right for us as believers to be settled in one place.
 - 3. When we move, the gospel goes with us.
 - L. The saints in all the churches should be encouraged to migrate; if the saints in a certain locality do not migrate, eventually that locality will become a “Dead Sea.”
 - M. However, the migration of the saints is not a legality; the point we are making is that the churches need to follow the pattern in Acts 8:4:
 - 1. If we emphasize only the believers' knowledge of the truth and growth in life but neglect the increase and spread of the church, we will greatly restrict the Lord.
 - 2. If we emphasize the increase and spread of the church but disregard the believers' knowledge of the truth and growth in life, the result will be a great shortage.
 - 3. This word of balance in points 1 and 2 above should be applied to all of us; we need to know more of the truth and let it operate in us, and we also need to continue to grow in life more; however, at the same time, we should also not neglect the increase and spread of the church.
 - N. We must be like those in Judges 5 who made “great resolutions in heart” and had “great searchings of heart” (vv. 15-16); we must achieve something for the Lord; Daniel 11:32 says, “The people who know their God will show strength and take action”; especially in these days in the Lord's recovery, we need to be those who show strength and take action.

Ministry Excerpts for Message Two:

THE RESURRECTED CHRIST WANTING HIS WITNESSES TO REACH THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE EARTH

The Lord's recovery among us emphasizes two things: knowing the truth and growing in life. However, we must realize that knowing the truth and growing in life are not for truth and life themselves but for the increase and spread of the church. Today we pay attention to the church only in the matters of knowing the truth and growing in life; we do not pay attention to the increase and spread of the church. Therefore, we have to study the book of Acts to check our condition, because the contents of this book concern the propagation, increase, and spread of the church. In reality, the increase and spread of the church are the increase and spread of Christ, because the church is Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

The book of Acts provides us with a good pattern; it speaks of the propagation of the resurrected Christ in his ascension through the multiplication of His witnesses that reaches the uttermost part of the earth. In 1:8 the Lord said clearly to His disciples, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." To be the Lord's witnesses is actually to be the Lord's propagation. This propagation needs to reach to the uttermost part of the earth. At this moment, we do not need to talk about the uttermost part of the earth, because even India, Burma, and Arabic-speaking countries, which are quite close to us, all need the Lord's propagation to reach them. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 4, pp.19-20*)

We must be balanced. Surely, we have to pay attention to the knowledge of the truth and growth in life. At the same time, we should also not neglect the increase and spread of the church. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 4, pp. 25-26*)

THE MEANS OF THE CHURCH'S INCREASE AND SPREAD IN ACTS

The book of Acts not only records the facts related to the church's increase and spread; it also shows four important means of the church's increase and spread. The first means is the economical Spirit, the Spirit of power, descending on the lovers of the Lord (1:8; 2:2-4). The second means is prayer, which is continued steadfastly (6:4; 1:14; 2:42). The third means is God's word (6:7), which is Christ Himself. God's word has power, because the word of God is life, light, and truth. As such, it brings salvation to man. We do not preach ourselves or philosophy, and even more, not ethics or theories; we preach and release the word of God. The fourth means is the believers' homes; this is the practical means for God's increase and spread. Acts does not contain a record concerning meetings in a chapel, but there is a record of meeting from house to house (5:42). Finally, Paul spoke of teaching and admonishing the believers from house to house (20:20). (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 4, pp.29-30*)

THE BASIS FOR THE INCREASE AND SPREAD OF THE CHURCH— THE SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS

The way for the increase and spread of the church has been laid out clearly before us. The basis and means for this increase and spread is through the building up of small groups. The preaching of the gospel cannot be carried out by a spiritual "giant" or by a few great spiritual men; rather it must be carried out through groups of disciples, who gather in the cities where they live and who announce the gospel from house to house. Going from house to house is simply the gatherings of the small groups.

Although the small groups can uphold existing saints and restore dormant saints, the increase and spread of the church will not proceed in a full way if we focus only on this "defensive" function. We also must focus on the "offensive" function of preaching the gospel from house to house. Through the supply of life and the teaching of the truth, we can uphold and restore the brothers and sisters. Yet when we look around, we still see many relatives, friends, and neighbors who are unbelievers, and we surely have some feeling for them. The city of Taipei is like a fishpond. In this fishpond there are many who need the gospel. These "fish" should be the target of our work. We should not only uphold our existing brothers and sisters and restore our lost brothers and sisters, we should also go on the offensive to reach our gospel friends, that is, those who have not believed in the Lord, so that they may know the gospel and receive the blessings of the Lord's salvation. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 4, pp. 175-177*)

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE SCATTERING OF THE SAINTS

The first pattern in Acts 8 is that of the preaching of the gospel through the scattering of the saints. In Jerusalem, the gospel preaching was carried out mainly by the apostles. Although this also is a pattern, it is not the unique pattern for our gospel preaching. If it were the unique pattern, then the preaching of the gospel would be limited. Therefore, in 8:4 we have another pattern of the preaching of the gospel—the preaching of the gospel through the scattering, the migrating, of the saints.

In Acts 8 we do not have the words “migrate” or “migration.” Nevertheless, migration is implied by the word “scattered.” The scattering of the saints was actually a migration.

Before the scattering of the saints in 8:4, there were many thousands of believers in Jerusalem. Like most people, they probably did not desire to move; instead, they may have wanted to settle there. But the Lord is sovereign, for He is the Leader, the Ruler of the kings. Although Satan instigated the persecution against the church, the Lord is over Satan, and whatever Satan does is under the Lord’s sovereignty. Therefore, the persecution in chapter eight actually worked out for the spreading of the gospel, because thousands of believers were scattered throughout the lands of Judea and Samaria. Through this scattering the good news was brought to many cities. Here we have the pattern of the preaching of the gospel through the migration of the saints.

For many years in the Lord’s recovery we have been practicing the matter of migration. For example, many saints were gathered to Los Angeles from 1962 until 1970. Then in 1970 we began to migrate, and the migration was a great success. When the saints migrate, the gospel goes out with them. The migrating saints bring the gospel wherever they may go.

All the churches should follow the pattern in 8:4 concerning migration. The saints should not stay in a certain place for too long. On the contrary, we all should be migrants, following in the footsteps of our father Abraham. Abraham was a river-crosser; he migrated from Chaldea to Canaan. Like Abraham, we should not be permanently settled. We all should learn to migrate.

MIGRATING FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

I encourage you all to pick up the burden to migrate. We should migrate not for the sake of our living but for the sake of the gospel. The Lord called Abraham, and Abraham migrated. In following the Lord, Abraham had no lack. Likewise, as we migrate for the gospel’s sake the Lord will meet our needs. To migrate for the gospel is to migrate for the Lord, since the gospel is actually the Lord Himself. The first pattern found in chapter eight of Acts is the migration of the saints for the spreading of the gospel. (*Life-Study of Acts*, pp. 181-182)

According to the New Testament, we believers should not get ourselves settled once for all. We need to make a living and we need housing. I like to see all of you have comfortable houses, but we should always be on the alert because at any time there might be the need for the Lord to move us elsewhere. We are sojourners on the earth (1 Peter 2:11a). The Lord may want us to stay in a certain place for another year or for another ten years. Only the Lord knows. On the other hand, the Lord may lead us to go to another country, to another city, or to another state.

I feel that some brothers, especially from the Orange County area of California, should pick up the burden to move to where the Lord has a need. Many of you have been under this ministry and the practice of the church life for many years. According to your consideration, you do not know much or have much. I believe, however, that when you pick up a burden from the Lord to go to another place, you will discover that actually, comparatively speaking, you know a lot and can do a lot. Some places need someone who has had some experience in the church life for a number of years. The saints who have been with us in Orange County under the ministry for over eight years have unconsciously and unknowingly had something deposited in them. If some of these saints who love the Lord enter into an environment where their experience is needed, they would be very useful.

The elders should fellowship with the saints often concerning migration. We should never command the saints to go to a certain place, but we should make them aware of the need. We believe the Lord is living. Through this kind of fellowship, the Lord will lead some to pick up the burden and they will go. When they go to a new place, they will discover that they are very useful to the Lord. (*Elders’ Training, Book 05: Fellowship Concerning the Lord’s Up-to-Date Move*, pp. 134-135)

Session Three

Loving and Contacting Men According to the Heart of the Triune God

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:4; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:8–10, 16; Luke 10:33–34; 15:4–24

- I. We need to see and enjoy God’s abundantly great love for man so that we may love others with the love of God— Eph. 2:4; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:10:**
- A. We need to see God’s love for man as revealed in the Scriptures:
 - 1. “But God being rich in mercy, because of His [abundantly] great love with which He loved us”—Eph. 2:4.
 - 2. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”—John 3:16a.
 - 3. “For God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”—Rom. 5:8.
 - 4. “He who does not love has not known God, because God is love...Herein is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins”—1 John 4:8, 10.
 - B. “God is love” indicates that love is the nature of God’s essence—1 John 4:8, note 2.
 - C. That God is love was manifested in His sending His Son to be our Savior and life (vv. 9–10, 14)—1 John 4:16, note 3.
 - D. We should not love others with our natural love, rather our natural love needs to be put on the cross.
 - E. We need the love of God to become our love so that we may love others with the love of God—1 John 2:5.
 - F. As we enjoy the love of God—His inward essence—supplied to us by His word, God’s love is perfected in us so that we love the brothers; when we keep the divine word, the divine love is perfected through the divine life by which we live.
- II. We need to see how God’s love for man was manifested in His coming to man—Luke 10:33–34; 15:1–32:**
- A. “But a certain Samaritan [a figure of the Man-Savior who was despised and slandered as a low and mean Samaritan], was a loving neighbor, who journeying, came upon the wounded and dying man; when he saw him, He was moved with compassion and came to him and bound up his wounds and poured oil and wine on them”—Luke 10:33–34a.
 - B. Three parables unveil the saving love of the Triune God toward sinners; they unveil and depict how the Divine Trinity works to bring sinners back, through the Son, by the Spirit to the Father (Luke 15:3, note 1):
 - 1. The parable of the shepherd seeking a sheep unveils how the Son came in His humanity as the Shepherd to find the sinner as a lost sheep and bring Him back home—Luke 15:1–7.
 - 2. The parable of a woman seeking a coin unveils how the Spirit seeks the sinner as a woman carefully seeks a lost coin until she finds it—vv. 8–10.
 - 3. The parable of a father receiving his son unveils how the Father receives the repenting and returning sinner as the “certain man” receives his prodigal son—vv. 11–32.
 - 4. “All three parables stress the love of the Divine Trinity more than the fallen condition and repentance of the penitent sinner. The divine love is fully expressed in the Son’s tender care as the good shepherd, in the Spirit’s fine seeking as the treasure-lover, and in the Father’s warm receiving as a loving father.”
- III. We need to become lovers of men who are genuinely interested in all men and who learn to listen to them:**
- A. We must have a love for all men, a genuine affection for men if we are to be a servant of God.
 - B. When we see man’s place in God’s plan and how the Lord humbled Himself to become a man, we will learn to appreciate all men.
 - C. “Your heart must be broadened to the extent that you love everyone and are interested in every man. As long as someone is a man, you should be interested in him. This is the only way to serve God—Watchman Nee, *The Character of the Lord’s Worker*, p. 17.”

- D. God wants to see us increased in our capacity and interest in all men; this is the only way to become a gracious person.
- E. Mark 10:45 says, “the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many;” this shows that He was truly interested in man and considered man precious and worthy of love and service.
- F. Hence, if we want to serve the Lord in a proper way, we have to cultivate an interest in man.
- G. There is no way that works if we do not have a care for and interest in people; however, if we do have a care and interest, the care itself will open up a way.
- H. We should build up the habit in our daily life of listening to others, spending a considerable time learning to listen and touch their feeling, learning to hear what they are actually saying and opening ourselves to allow the affairs of others to enter into our heart; only then can we render the proper help.

IV. We need to be the shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people by reaching them in the God-ordained way:

- A. We need to cooperate with Christ in His heavenly ministry by shepherding people; without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective—John 21:15.
- B. We should follow the pattern of Christ as the Son of Man cherishing us and as the Son of God nourishing us by first cherishing people in the humanity of Jesus (making them happy and pleasant) and then nourishing them in the divinity of Christ (feeding them with the all-inclusive Christ)—Eph. 5:29.
- C. Our shepherding of people should always be with teaching and our teaching should always be with shepherding.
- D. We must learn all the truths so that we may have something to speak and go to contact people to shepherd them.
- E. “We need to shepherd people. This is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase. If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe that there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ’s Body being shepherds who follow the steps of processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people.” (The Vital Groups, p. 40)

V. The need to learn of the Lord to shepherd people according to His heart—John 3:16; 1 John 4:10:

- A. Love covers all transgressions; covering brings in blessing but uncovering brings in a curse—Prov. 10:12; James 5:19–20.
- B. The Lord did not come to call the righteous but sinners—1 Tim. 1:15; Matt. 9:10–13.
- C. We need to have a spirit to go to the tax collectors and sinners—Luke 7:34–50.
- D. We must have the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God—Luke 15:20–24.
- E. We must have the seeking and shepherding spirit of our Savior Christ, with the goal to gain people—Luke 15:1–7.

All Outlines were compiled from the writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, published by Living Stream Ministry.

Ministry Excerpts for Session Three:

GOD'S LOVE BEING MANIFESTED THROUGH THE CROSS

We need to see how God's love is manifested. We need to see the work of His love. God is love, and He loves man. But how does He love man? Does He show His love by simply patting us on the shoulder and saying, "I love you"? What would be the use of this kind of love? We have already seen that man is a sinner and that he needs to be saved. But man has no way to save himself. Since man has no way, God provides the way. We have no way, but God's love provides the way. Romans 5:8 says, "God commends His own love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God's love was expressed by Christ coming to this world to die on man's behalf and solve the problem of perdition. Man is a sinner and cannot afford to pay the high price that is required to save himself. How does God save man? He put man's sins upon Christ; Christ received God's judgment on our behalf. When we see Christ's vicarious death on the cross, we know that God's love has been manifested. This is the third revelation in the Bible concerning God's love. There are three great revelations concerning God's love in the Bible: (1) God is love, (2) God loves man, and (3) God's love, is manifested through the cross. These three great revelations give us an assessment of God's love. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 43, p. 559-560)

THE LOVE OF GOD PERFECTED IN US

In [1 John 2:] verse 5 John tells us that in the one who keeps the Lord's word the love of God has been perfected. In this verse the Greek word for love is *agape*. This word denotes the love which is higher and nobler than *phileo* (see notes 7¹ and 7² in 2 Peter 1). Only this word with its verb forms is used in this Epistle for love. "The love of God" here denotes our love toward God, which is generated by His love within us. The love of God, the word of the Lord, and God Himself are all related to one another. If we keep the Lord's word, God's love has been perfected in us. It is altogether a matter of the divine life, which is God Himself. God's love is His inward essence, and the Lord's word supplies us with this divine essence with which we love the brothers. Hence, when we keep the divine word, the divine love is perfected through the divine life by which we live.

In our reading of verse 5 we may wonder whether the love of God here refers to God's love or to the love with which we love God. The Chinese Version speaks of our loving of God, or of the love with which we love God. But the English expression seems to indicate that John is referring to God's love.

If we consider the Greek text and also take care of the context, we shall realize that this expression in verse 5 denotes our love toward God. However, this love is generated by the love of God, which we enjoy. First we enjoy the love of God; hence, the love of God is our enjoyment. Then the love of God, which is enjoyed by us, produces in us a love with which we love God. This is the love of God becoming our enjoyment and producing within us a love for God. On the one hand, this is the love with which we love God; on the other hand, this love is produced by God's love, which is enjoyed by us. (*Life-Study of 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude*, pp. 131-133)

NOT LOVING WITH OUR NATURAL LOVE

It should not be with our natural love that we love God and His children. On the contrary, our natural love needs to be put on the cross. We should love God and His children with the divine love, the love that is conveyed to us through the word of the Lord and that becomes our experience and enjoyment.

THE LOVE OF GOD BECOMING OUR LOVE

This is the reason [1 John 2:] verse 5 says that the love of God has been perfected in us. On the one hand, this love is the love of God; on the other hand, this love, having been experienced and enjoyed by us, becomes our love for God and the brothers.

How can our love for God be called the love of God? It is because this love is not our love, but is God's love. However, this is not the love of God as it is objectively; it is the love of God experienced by us subjectively. This is the love of God becoming our love through our experience and enjoyment of Him. This love then becomes our love for God and others.

God wants us to love Him with His love. He also wants us to love His children, and even the whole world, with His love. First we need to enjoy God's love and experience His love to such an extent that it fills us, saturates us, and becomes our very essence, causing us to be permeated with the love of God. Then with

this love we shall love God, we shall love God's children, and we shall love all people. We do not love them with our natural love; we love them with the love of God we have experienced and enjoyed. Praise the Lord for such a wonderful love! This is the love revealed in the first Epistle of John.

This experience of the love of God is altogether a matter in the fellowship in the divine life. If we do not enjoy God in the fellowship of the divine life, we cannot have such a love.

LOVING OTHERS WITH THE LOVE OF GOD

If we experience the love of God, we shall have the deep realization that our natural love is one thing and that the love of God which becomes our love through experience is something very different. One difference between God's love and our natural love is that it is very easy for our natural love to be offended.

The point I am making here is that we need to be careful not to love others by our natural love. Rather, our natural love should be put on the cross. We need to love others by the love of God we have experienced and enjoyed. If we experience God's love, we shall love God with this love. We shall also love the brothers with this same love. This kind of love does not cause trouble. May we all see that we need to love God and others with the divine love that has become our experience and enjoyment. (*Life-Study of 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude*, pp. 139-142)

HAVING THE LOVING AND FORGIVING HEART OF OUR FATHER GOD AND THE SHEPHERDING AND SEEKING SPIRIT OF OUR SAVIOR CHRIST

I love Luke 15. Verse 1 says, "Now all the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to Him to hear Him." The gentlemen and righteous men were not joined to Him, but the tax collectors and sinners were. Therefore, the Pharisees murmured and complained again. Then the Lord spoke three parables. The first is concerning a shepherd seeking the one, unique, lost sheep. Of one hundred, this one was a lost one, so the shepherd came purposely for him. Why did the Lord go to a house full of sinners and tax collectors? It was because among them there was one lost sheep of His, whom He had come to seek. The second parable is concerning a woman who lit a lamp and swept the house to seek her lost coin. The third parable is about the prodigal son. The shepherd is the Son, the woman is the Spirit, and in the parable of the prodigal son there is the Father. As the prodigal son was returning, he was preparing and considering what to speak to his father. He prepared himself to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants" (vv. 18-19). While he was walking and thinking like this, the father saw him. Verse 20 says, "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately." That the father saw the son a long way off was not an accident. From the time the son left home, the father must have gone out to look and wait for his coming back every day. We do not know how many days he watched and waited. When the father saw him, he ran to him. This is the Father's heart. The father interrupted the son while he was speaking his prepared word. The son wanted to speak the word he had prepared, but the father told his servants to bring the robe, the ring, and the sandals and to prepare the fattened calf. A teacher among the Brethren told me that in the whole Bible we can see God run only one time, in Luke 15, where the father sees the returning prodigal son. He ran; he could not wait. This is the Father's heart. (*A Word of Love to the Co-workers, Elders, Lovers, and Seekers of the Lord*, pp. 27-28)

I hope that there will be a genuine revival among us by our receiving this burden of shepherding. If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery. In the past we did much speaking and teaching with very little shepherding. Shepherding and teaching should be like two feet for our move with the Lord. Our shepherding should always be with teaching, and our teaching should always be with shepherding.

Shepherding is something divine. In order to be a shepherd, we must be a witness of Christ, a member of Christ, and a brother of Christ, sharing His sonship. Then we will participate in the oracle of the sonship to become a prophet. As a prophet for God's oracle, we will speak for the Lord. Meanwhile, we need to shepherd people. This is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase. If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ's Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people. (*The Vital Groups*, p. 40)

Session Four

Contacting People Personally To Minister Christ to Them To Bear Them as Remaining Fruit

Scripture Reading: Luke 19:5–10; John 4:5–14; Acts 8:29–39; 20:20, 31; John 15:5, 16; John 21:15; 1 Thes. 2:7

- I. We need to see the pattern of the Lord Jesus in contacting people personally:**
- A. The Lord Jesus purposely visited the city of Jericho to seek a God-chosen yet fallen sinner Zaccheus and to bring salvation to his whole house—Luke 19:5–10.
 - B. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to the Jesus by night and received a personal word regarding his need to be born again—John 3:1–7.
 - C. Jesus went to Samaria and sat by Jacob’s well, and waited for an immoral Samaritan woman so that He might give her a drink of living water to quench her thirst—John 4:6–24.
 - D. The Lord Jesus purposely passed by the Sea of Galilee to visit Peter and his brother Andrew so that He might call them personally to follow Him and make them fishers of men—Mark 1:16–17.
 - E. Jesus appeared personally to Mary the Magdalene, His loving seeker, in the freshness of His resurrection so that she might obtain the personal experience of Him and go to announce to His disciples that she had seen the Lord and what He had said to her—John 20:14–18.
 - F. The Lord personally contacted many including a Roman Centurion, a blind man, a demon possessed man and an adulterous woman to heal their illnesses, cast out the demons and forgive their sins.
- II. The early disciples, led by the Spirit, followed the Lord’s pattern to contact people personally:**
- A. The Spirit led Philip along a desert route to bring the gospel personally to an Ethiopian ruler, that he might believe, be baptized and go on his way rejoicing—Acts 8:29–39.
 - B. The Lord led Ananias, a certain disciple in Damascus, to go personally to Saul of Tarsus, a chosen vessel to the Lord that Saul might receive his sight, be filled with the Holy Spirit and be baptized—Acts 9:10–19.
 - C. Paul went personally to a place of prayer in Philippi in order to bring God’s salvation to Lydia and her household—16:12–15.
 - D. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos to themselves and personally expounded to him the way of God more accurately—18:26.
 - E. Paul, went personally “from house to house” in Ephesus and testified that “for three years, night and day, I did not cease teaching and admonishing each one with tears”—Acts 20:20, 31; Col. 1:28.
 - F. The apostles contacted people one-on-one both in person and by their letters to shepherd and perfect people as Paul did with Timothy, Titus and Philemon.
- III. As New Testament priests of the gospel, we should follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus to build up the habit of contacting people personally, directly and continually to bear remaining fruit and to shepherd people in the God-ordained way—John 15:5, 16; John 21:15; 1 Thes. 2:7:**
- A. We need to see that the purpose of our contact with people is related to the God-ordained way to meet and to serve:
 - 1. To spread the gospel to get sinners saved that they may be regenerated for the increase of the kingdom of God—Matt. 28:19.
 - 2. To feed and the raise up of the new members of the Body of Christ—John 21:15; 1 Thes. 2:7.
 - 3. To perfect the saints to grow in life and develop their spiritual talents so that they may function skillfully as members of the Body—Eph. 4:12.
 - 4. To help them to learn how to speak for the Lord, to prophesy, for the building up the organic Body of Christ—1 Cor. 14:3–5, 31.
 - B. We should contact people by ourselves directly, personally, and continually to bear remaining fruit—John 15:5, 16:
 - 1. We all should desire fruit that remains and make a decision to get one person saved for the church life each year.

2. The most basic, crucial, and vital thing is for us to bring forth spiritual children and to do so we must make a serious decision to contact people directly.
- C. We should take the following simple way to bear remaining fruit:
 1. First, we should make a vow to the Lord to spend two to three hours per week to contact people for their salvation.
 2. Second, we need to be revived by the Lord, day by day; the most effective way to live the Christian life is by having a vital, living and active morning [revival] with the Lord—cf. Prov. 4:18, note 1; Lam. 3:23 note 1; 24, note 1.
 3. Third, we should make a plan with a schedule to personally contact people every week:
 - a. Pray that the Lord will lead you, teach you, and give you the wisdom in planning, in scheduling your time, in making appointments, and in talking to people.
 - b. Plan and schedule your time to contact two or three individuals per week.
 - c. Make a list of your acquaintances and study their situation; labor on them according to your study; this is the way to gain the proper persons.
 - d. Labor on those with whom you are acquainted directly or indirectly—relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates, etc.
 - e. Pray to the Lord to get a proper candidate for your labor and that He may show you the vital way to bring them to Him.
 - f. You can start by yourself and then get a companion to labor with you.
 - g. Redeem your time to pray for them, write them letters, [phone or email them], send them booklets, and make appointments to go to visit them.

III. We need to see how we should carry out our contact with people in order to fulfill our heavenly purpose:

- A. We need to be transformed, to be reconstituted, by the Lord to contact people according to such a purpose; therefore, we must present ourselves to the Lord for His reconstituting work—Rom. 12:2.
- B. We should not contact people through rebuke or condemnation with any kind of negative spirit, attitude, and tone but be happy persons with a joyful spirit, humble, mild and easy to contact, realizing that what people need is the Lord and trying to give them an “injection” of Christ—Eph. 6:4.
- C. We need to minister life to others outside of the realm of the knowledge of good and evil; the best way to do this is to sense their spirit, to discern what they say in the realm of life; to do this we must remain in our spirit, in the kingdom of life—Gen. 2:8–9.
- D. We need to be full of love, concern, and sympathy in a meek and humble spirit, with the full realization that what people need is the Lord and what can solve their problem is to meet with the Lord—Gal. 6:1.
- E. We should contact people not to convince, catch or arrest them, but to recover them by bringing them back to the Lord; we should not touch good and evil but minister Christ as life to them through the cross—Gal. 6:1; 1 John 5:16a.
- F. We should shepherd the saints by contacting them repeatedly, possibly for one or two years, and not be hasty in helping them; eventually, we will be able to minister Christ to them, help them to contact the Lord, pray with them and bring them to the Lord in prayer—Acts 20:18, 31.
- G. We should not carry out a social work, but minister Christ as life to people; if the Lord has entrusted us with many people, we should stay out of complicated involvements that will waste our time.
- H. We should minister Christ to meet the need of every kind of person—Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:28:
 1. We must seek a way to get people to open to us.
 2. We must find the proper utterance to touch people's spirit.
 3. We must catch the proper time to dispense Christ to them, either with a quotation from the Bible or a word of our inspiration.
 4. We must stir up people's hunger and thirst to seek the Lord by praying with them—John 4:15.
 5. We should not expect that our ministering Christ to others will cause them to have a rapid change, but care only to minister Christ to them, not for quick results.
 6. Eventually people will be gained by the Lord through our contact.

Ministry Excerpts for Session Four:

CONTACTING PEOPLE BY OURSELVES DIRECTLY, PERSONALLY, AND CONTINUALLY TO BEAR REMAINING FRUIT

In these recent years, we have stressed the truth concerning fruit bearing in John 15 again and again. We may have prayed, "Lord, we hate barrenness. We want to bear much fruit." But the bringing forth of fruit among us has not entered into the God-ordained, practical way. We are still mostly in the natural way. We may wonder what the God-ordained, practical way is. We need to realize that as believers, we must and we should bear fruit. We have to bring forth children. Then we must gain a certain amount of skill in bringing forth fruit. We have to learn how to bear fruit and to practice fruit bearing continually.

As believers, as members of Christ, and as branches of the vine, we must bear fruit. The Lord said that if any branch did not bear fruit, it would be cut off (John 15:2a, 6). To be cut off is not to suffer eternal perdition but to lose the enjoyment of Christ in the organic union with Him. It is serious not to bear fruit. Many of us, however, do not have a serious consideration about our barrenness.

Some brothers and sisters have been faithful in the recovery and for the recovery for many years, but I have observed that they have not borne fruit. They love the church, they are for the church, and they support the church financially, but they are not bearing fruit. They should realize that not to bear fruit is a serious thing before the Lord. The Lord wants us to have a spiritual life in the church, to go to the meetings, to worship Him, and to live Him. But what is all this for? If all the saints in the church were like this, yet no one bore any fruit, the church would eventually die out. If the people of a nation did not bear children, the nation would eventually become extinct. The most basic, crucial, and vital thing is for us to bring forth children.

By His mercy, I have found out that to bring forth spiritual children, you must make a serious decision to contact people directly. Do not trust in preachers and in preaching meetings. Just trust in your direct, personal, continual contact with people. I assure you that if you make such a decision, you will at least bring two people to the Lord yearly.

A SIMPLE WAY TO BEAR REMAINING FRUIT

I would like to present a simple way to bear fruit. First, you should make a vow to the Lord. You can pray, "Lord, as one of Your branches, I realize that I must bear fruit according to Your charge in John 15. If I cannot get one sinner saved within a year, this is a shame. Lord, every week I will spend two or three hours to contact people for their salvation." This is the principle. This does not mean that you have to spend two or three hours at one time in one day. You may spend some time in the morning to consider how to contact and save your unsaved relatives. You may spend twenty-five minutes to pray and make a record of these relatives. These twenty-five minutes should be reckoned as part of your two to three hours of labor in the gospel every week. In the evening you may write a letter to one of your relatives to find out how he is doing, opening the door for you to have further contact with him. The time spent in writing this letter is also a part of your gospel labor. Let us suppose that you have five unsaved cousins. If you labored three hours a week on these cousins in a concentrated way for one year, surely at least one of them would be brought to the Lord.

In order to be fruit-bearing branches of Christ, we need to be revived by the Lord day by day. Our publication called *The Holy Word for Morning Revival* has been a help to the saints to be revived by the Lord every morning. The most effective way to live the Christian life is by having a vital, living, active morning watch with the Lord. We should get two verses from the Scripture to live on every day and then contact people for the Lord in a definite way. In addition to this, we need to bear fruit. The reason why we do not bear fruit is because we do not practice contacting people directly, personally, and faithfully.

You must go to contact people one by one by yourself directly through planning. You do not necessarily need to go out to knock on doors. We have found that going out to knock on doors is good, but it does not work that definitely. We must take a way so that we can bear fruit in a definite way. Just plan how to contact your acquaintances. Every week you should spend two to three hours on the gospel in this way. Do not send others. You must make a vow with the Lord that you would plan, schedule your time, and find a way to contact your acquaintances directly, at least once a week. If you take any other way, the result will not be that definite. The definite result only comes out of your plan and out of your schedule. Otherwise, you will waste your time.

As branches of the Lord, we should give Him three hours a week for the gospel. Then we can pray, "Lord, lead me, teach me, and give me the wisdom in planning, in scheduling my time, in making appointments, and in talking to people." Then we should practice this directly and definitely. Surely we will gain people for the Lord's kingdom. (*Elders' Training, Book 10*, pp. 143-148)

CONTACTING PEOPLE IN ORDER TO GAIN THEM FOR THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY

As we have seen, the purpose of the elders' contact with people is to gain them for the increase of the kingdom of God, for the feeding and raising up, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the building up of the Body of Christ through prophesying. Our gaining of people, however, should not be through rebuke or condemnation with any kind of negative spirit, attitude, and tone. To be a good elder, the first thing one must learn is not to rebuke people. Through many mistakes, we have learned that rebuking never works. For this reason, Paul said, "And the fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). If we do not rebuke our children when we discipline them, we will not provoke them. Provoking comes from rebuking. If a child misbehaves and we rebuke him, he will be provoked. Instead, we should spend a pleasant time with him, and in this time we will be able to pass on the proper knowledge of how to behave.

The elders must be happy persons with a joyful spirit, always humble, mild, and easy to contact. No one on earth is perfect. Everyone needs the Lord. Therefore, regardless of what someone says, the elders should not be bothered by that person. They must realize that this person needs the Lord, and they must be happy with him and try to give him an "injection" of Christ. This is to dispense Christ into this person.

In their contact with people, the elders should minister Christ to meet the need of every kind of person (Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:28). They must seek a way to get people to open to them. They must also find the proper utterance to touch people's spirit and catch the proper time to dispense Christ, either with a quotation from the Bible or a word of their inspiration. Lastly, they must stir up people's hunger and thirst to seek the Lord by praying with them (John 4:15).

Brother Nee told us that the best way to contact people is to sense their spirit. However, he also told us that our way of understanding this was still in the realm of good and evil. We were still discerning people's spirit in the realm of good and evil. When people come to contact us, we should not remain in the realm, sphere, or kingdom of good and evil. We should remain in our spirit, in the kingdom of life. When a person speaks, we must discern what he says, not in the realm of who is right or wrong, good or evil, but in the realm of life. If we remain in the realm of good and evil, we cannot properly sense people's spirit.

In their contact with people, the elders must be full of love, concern, and sympathy in a meek and humble spirit (Gal. 6:1). Only a reconstituted person can be like this. Any negative case in the church life is an exhausting matter. Visiting the persons involved in an issue and determining who is right and who is wrong exhausts the elders' time and energy. In such a situation, natural love, natural concern, natural kindness, and natural sympathy cannot last. The saints cannot be helped by us unless we have a real love, concern, and sympathy for them in the Lord. Otherwise, a small issue may be built into a major case in the church, like a small hill becoming a great mountain. Regardless of who comes to us, we should wait for a chance to minister Christ to them. Whether they are right or wrong, they are short of Christ. In the elders' contact with people, they must have the full realization that what the people need is the Lord and what can solve the people's problem is to meet with the Lord.

The elders' contact with people is not to convince, to catch, or to arrest, but to recover, to bring people back to the Lord (Gal. 6:1). The elders are not policemen sent by the Lord to catch people and arrest them. Rather, they are sent to recover, to bring people back to the Lord. Sometimes the elders catch and arrest people by convincing them that they are wrong. This is to care for a case in the realm of good and evil. To do this is to fall into Satan's snare as Eve did. Once the elders are snared in this way, they cannot solve the case at hand. Rather, they become negatively involved. Whereas there were only two or three parties involved in the problem at first, now the elders have become parties involved in the problem. The reason for this trouble is that everyone was snared in the realm of good and evil.

We are not sent to carry out a social work. In the church the only effective way to contact people is to minister Christ as life. No one can solve all the problems of society. The Lord Jesus worked on the earth for three and a half years, but He did not change the Jewish society. We should not touch certain matters. We must learn to be wise and not get into the realm of good and evil. If we get involved in a case in the way of carrying out a social work, we will not be able to help people. Rather, we may offend them. (*Elders' Training, Book 11*, pp. 141-151)

Session Five

Contacting People in Twos and Threes In the Reality of the Vital Groups To Gain Increase for the Church

Scripture Reading: Matt. 18:19–20; Luke 10:1; 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Thes. 2:7; Eph. 4:12; Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 14:26

- I. “[Matt. 18:] 20 says, ‘For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.’ This is the reality of the vital groups. These two or three are gathered into the Lord’s name for His purpose, not into their names for their purposes” (*The Vital Groups*, p. 5).
- II. **To be vital means to be living and active; vital groups are composed of vital persons who are living and active to gain the increase for the church.**
 - A. If a group of people are meeting together and are a real vital group—living and active—whoever comes in and sees this will be convinced; vitality is the most convincing factor.
 - B. The truth has an amount of influence with people, but it depends upon who passes on the truth; if we are vital persons, the truth will be effective.
 - C. Since we love the Lord and we are for the Lord’s recovery, we have to be vital at any cost; we must learn diligently and practice absolutely to be vital; then there is much possibility for us to gain a good number of the seeking ones.
- III. **On the foundation of intimate and thorough fellowship, we need to be blended by much and thorough prayer with the release of our spirit:**
 - A. We need to practice the fellowship to lay the foundation for the blending:
 - B. Then we must be blended by thorough and much prayer:
 1. Our prayer must come out of a burden; what the vital groups should have a burden to pray is this: “Lord, the church needs the proper increase.”
 2. We need to pray desperately, “Lord, we ask You, when the season comes, to give each one of us two people who are remaining fruit. Otherwise, we cannot go on.” We should pray and pray until the Lord answers our prayer.
 3. Whether or not the vital groups work depends upon how much prayer you offer to the Lord.
 4. For the building up of the vital groups, we need to pray much and thoroughly for the four steps of the God-ordained way.
 - C. In order to be blended together in our prayer, we should not merely exercise our spirit but also release our spirit:
 1. Praying is the unique way for us to exercise our spirit and even the more to release our spirit.
 2. When our spirit is released, we can be blended together in this released spirit; the released spirits are a kind of blending.
 3. When we come together to pray, we need to release our spirit by praying short prayers; long prayers kill, but short prayers stir us up; short prayers fan our spirit into flame.
 4. We should pray short prayers, simply telling the Lord what we want Him to do for us—cf. Mark 10:51.
- VI. **The way to carry out the four steps of the God-ordained way is by the vital groups:**
 - A. The God-ordained way revealed in the Scriptures is of four steps: begetting, feeding, perfecting, and building:
 1. *Begetting*—the vital group begets, produces, new believers—1 Cor. 4:15.
 2. *Feeding*—the vital group feeds them that they may grow in life—1 Thes. 2:7.
 3. *Perfecting*—the vital group perfects them, not by one teacher but through the mutual teaching in the groups—Eph. 4:12; Heb. 10:25.
 4. *Building*—the vital group makes the new ones qualified to prophesy, to speak for the Lord, for the building up of the church—1 Cor. 14:26, 31, 4b.
 - B. Our vital groups should reach the standard of making everyone function according to the God-ordained way with its four steps.

V. We need a weekly time to pray for our work of contacting people, studying their cases, and fellowshiping about them:

- A. Each week we should meet with our group to pray for the purpose of contacting people; then we should fellowship about the situation with our contacts, so that we can study their cases, and receive the mutual help:
 - 1. We should not pray and study by ourselves but should study with our group as a unit; if we will pray, the Lord will lead us first to study all the acquaintances of each group member.
 - 2. We should make a list of people we know who need to be saved.
 - 3. We should pray, "Lord, who are the best two or three right now for me to work on?"; when we read this list prayerfully, we will have some inner registration of the two or three whom we should labor on.
- B. We need to consider all our acquaintances, and we need the proper discernment in our consideration of whom we should labor on; we should spend our time to labor on those whom we consider to be promising and not waste our time on others who are not open.
- C. After our study, we should pray again; this kind of practice will be very practical, useful, and vital; then we can decide whom we should contact and by what way.
- D. The guidance and burden comes from our fellowship; we have to fellowship fully and completely; to fellowship in this way, we must come together without too much regard for time.

VIII. We also need to have a second weekly time with our vital companions for the purpose of contacting people:

- A. As the constituents of the vital groups we should bear fruit for God's multiplication and spreading through contacting people by shepherding them according to God's love toward the fallen human race, following the steps of the processed Triune God in gaining the fallen people:
 - 1. As those in the vital groups we should go out to seek the lost sinners; we should preach the gospel to make the saved sinners spiritual sacrifices to be offered to God for His acceptance; preaching the gospel is the top shepherding of sinners—Luke 15:4–7; Rom. 15:16.
 - 2. As members of the vital groups we should be like Christ who is the door to God's elect; we should be a door to people for their salvation and nourishment so that they can feed on Christ as their pasture to have His divine life abundantly—John 10:9–15, 17–18.
 - 3. Then we should flock them together as one flock, one church—John 10:16.
- B. We should go back to visit the new ones again and again until we realize that they are settled in the Christian faith:
- C. We should not leave the raising up of our children to others; the work of raising up the new ones must be under our direct care.
- D. We should fall in love with our children and be willing to sacrifice ourselves for them; without the sacrifices of its mother, no child could be raised properly.
- E. We need to build up the habit of contacting people by—Luke 19:10:
 - 1. Inviting people to our home for meals—Acts 2:46; Gen. 18:1-8; Ruth 2:14; Mark 2:14-17; John 21:12-14.
 - 2. Going out to visit people weekly.
 - 3. Contacting people by using the telephone as much as possible.
 - 4. Contacting people before and after the church meetings.
 - 5. Contacting people by passing out gospel tracts in our daily life.

IX. We need to labor according to a schedule endeavoring with faithfulness, endurance and much prayer in order to reach a definite goal—Col. 1:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:58:

- A. We should go to visit people according to a regular schedule, without care for our "climate"— whether we are happy or full of anxiety, whether we are victorious or defeated.
- B. We must set a goal for our fruit-bearing; then, according to the goal, we should stretch forth with our full strength and pray before the Lord.

All Outlines were compiled from the writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, published by Living Stream Ministry.

Ministry Excerpts for Session Five:

PAYING THE PRICE TO BE VITAL

In light of the present situation we are in, what shall we do?...To be vital means to be living and active. If a group of people are meeting together and are a real vital group—living and active—whoever comes in and sees this will be convinced. If we are so vital and some seeking ones come in among us, they will be caught by the Lord. Vitality is the most convincing factor.

The truth has an amount of influence with people, but it depends upon who passes on the truth. If you are a vital person, the truth will be effective. If you are not a vital person, others will not be convinced. They will think that you just have some good talk but are really no different than they are. If we bring some new ones to our meeting, and our meeting is dormant, we will not convince them.

Since we love the Lord and we are for the Lord's recovery, what shall we do? We have to be vital at any cost. We have no choice. We must learn diligently and practice absolutely to be vital; then there is much possibility for us to gain a good number of the seeking ones. These seeking ones caught by us will spread the news. They will say, "I am now meeting in a group full of vitality. Come and see." This kind of news will not be appreciated by the general Christians, but some real seeking ones will be attracted. Through this fellowship, I hope we realize where we are and what we need to be. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 240-241)

PRAYING MUCH AND THOROUGHLY FOR THE FOUR STEPS OF THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY

For the building up of the vital groups, we need to pray much and thoroughly for the four steps of the God-ordained way. When we come together in the groups, we need to forget the old way and the old things in our prayer. We need to learn the new way and the new things, which are the four steps of the God-ordained way. The first step of the God-ordained way is to fulfill the New Testament priesthood of the gospel to seek, visit, and contact sinners for God's salvation to make the sinners organic members of the Body of Christ and offer them to God as the New Testament sacrifice (Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). The second step is to nourish and cherish the newborn babes in Christ in home meetings as nursing mothers (1 Thes. 2:7). The third step is to perfect the saints by mutual teaching in group meetings for the work of the ministry to build up the organic Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-13). Finally, the fourth step of the God-ordained way is the prophesying by all the saints in the church meetings for the direct and organic building up of the Body of Christ as the organism of the processed Triune God (1 Cor. 14:1-5, 23-26, 31, 39a).

PRACTICING THE FELLOWSHIP TO LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR THE BLENDING

If we would practice the blending, we should not forget the matter of fellowship. Fellowship is the basis for blending. Thus, we must practice the fellowship. By so doing we will lay the foundation for the blending. However, instead of practicing the fellowship, we have practiced hypocrisy for years; we have all been hiding ourselves under a mask. Without the foundation of intimate and thorough fellowship, there can be no blending.

Without the blending, the Lord has no way to go on with us. Blending is the Body, blending is the oneness, and blending is the one accord—it is all these things. But we prefer to remain untouched and unknown by others. Because we do not like people to know us, we have become very sensitive, and our being sensitive causes us to be very touchy. Such a condition has forced us to be very cautious in our speaking, for fear of offending one another. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 86-88)

The way to be blended is by much and thorough prayer, as fine flour of the wheat, with all the members of our group, with the Spirit as the oil, through the death of Christ as the salt, and in the resurrection of Christ as the frankincense. We need to pray over all these points with much and thorough prayer. We need to be blended into a dough for the Lord. Our becoming dough implies our being broken, our being ground, and our being blended.... (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, p. 81)

We should not compose a prayer in which we really have not prayed for anything. Our prayer must not come out of any kind of composition but out of a burden. In this message my burden is much, much heavier than what I can speak. My only burden is for the groups. If I pray, I will pray only for one thing—the vital groups. The Lord does not need us to train Him, teach Him, or explain to Him in our prayer. He knows everything already. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, p. 92)

Then we may ask, "How can we be burdened for prayer?" This is a matter of the Lord's mercy. I cannot forget the vital groups, because that is my real burden. I cannot forget the Lord's recovery, because His

recovery is my burden. I always have to pray to the Lord for His recovery. When I pray and cry, “O Lord, the recovery,” this is out of some burden. Once we begin to pray for the recovery, we realize that we cannot finish our prayer. There are many places and persons for which we have to pray. We need to be vital, and to be vital is to have the real burden for prayer. There is the need of the real prayer among us. What the vital groups should have a burden to pray is this: “Lord, the church needs the proper increase.” . (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, p. 221)

HAVING THE GROUP MEETINGS AND PRAYING FOR OUR WORK OF CONTACTING PEOPLE

Each week you need to have a group meeting, and you also need to set aside a day or an evening for the purpose of contacting people. You need these two times weekly. These are additional to the prayer meeting of the church and the Lord’s table meeting. In our group meeting in these days, we have to pray for our work of contacting people. Then we should fellowship about the situation with our contacts, so that we can study their cases, fellowship about them, and receive the mutual help. After your study, we should pray again. This kind of practice will be very practical, useful, and vital. Then you can decide whom you should contact and by what way. We have to believe that what we are doing by the vital groups will not be in vain, because this is a very practical sowing. Surely there will be the real reaping. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 243-244)

Before going out, we must have some preparation. First, we must prepare some candidates for us to go to visit. We need to consider all of our relatives, neighbors, classmates, colleagues, and friends. Out of these ones whom we know, we need to choose some to labor on for the gospel. Of course, we have to do this by prayer. We should pray, “Lord, who are the best two or three right now for me to work on?” I shared in a previous message that we all should make a list of the people we know who need to be saved. When we read this list prayerfully, we will have some kind of inner registration of the two or three whom we should labor on now. We have to consider their situation and labor on them appropriately.

We need to consider all of our acquaintances, and we need the proper discernment in our consideration of whom we should labor on. We should spend our time to labor on those whom we consider to be promising and not waste our time on others who are not open. In our group meetings we should pray and study our candidates for the gospel together. We need to consider people’s condition, especially spiritually, and then act appropriately to meet their need in the gospel. We need to decide how we should visit a certain person and who would be the right one or ones to go. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 206-207)

PRACTICING TO CONTACT PEOPLE

From now on we all have to run the race by practicing to contact people. This is not an easy thing, because we do not have this habit and practice. We need to have a change in our natural being. We should not excuse ourselves by saying that we were born to be a certain way. We may have been born to be a certain way, but we have been born again. We have had a second birth. We have been regenerated. Our being generated made us an old creation, but in regeneration God has made us a new creation, so we must be new persons.

We need to be trained to contact people. If a brother is very cold toward the Lord, how can we make him burning? We can invite him to our home or go to visit him. One day the Lord washed His disciples’ feet to show them that He loved them to the uttermost (John 13:1), and He charged His disciples to do the same to one another in love (vv. 14, 34). Today, the world is dirty, and we, the saints, are easily contaminated. For us to maintain pleasant fellowship with the Lord and with one another, we need spiritual foot-washing with the washing Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and the washing word (Eph. 5:26). This can be carried out when we contact one another in love. Our contact with people should not be formal and official but normal and living in every way.

If certain saints are not coming to the church meetings, we can begin to visit them once a week or once a month in a regular way according to what their situation allows. We can give them some copies of the gospel tracts we have published. We can read a phrase or a paragraph to them. Maybe this will stir them up and give them a desire to come to the meetings. There are many ways to shepherd people. My point is this—we need to build up a habit of contacting others. We should not be limited in our contact. If we have the burden to visit our relatives and acquaintances who are unbelievers, we should do this. We need to practice this one lesson—to contact people. (*Training and Practice of the Vital Groups*, pp. 71-74)

APPENDIX – MINISTRY EXCERPTS ON BEING LOVERS OF MEN

A LOVER OF MEN

ONE

Every worker of the Lord must have not only a love for the brothers but also a love for all men. Solomon once said, “Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker” (Prov. 17:5). God is the Creator of all men; therefore, every man is worthy of our love. A servant or worker of the Lord is not fit to serve Him if he is lacking in brotherly love or if he only has brotherly love but is lacking in love for all men. He must have a love for all men, a genuine affection for men, before he can serve God. All those who find men to be wearisome, troublesome, or contemptible are unqualified to be God’s servants. We must see that in God’s eyes man was created by Him. Man certainly has fallen, but he has become the object of the Lord’s redemption. Although by nature man is stubborn, the Holy Spirit has chosen to touch man. Even the Lord Jesus became a man when He came to earth—a man like other men, gradually growing from infancy to full maturity. God’s intention is to set up a “standard” man, a representative man, in whom all the plans of God are realized. After the Lord Jesus’ ascension, the church was brought into being, which is the “one new man.” The whole plan of redemption involves the uplifting and glorification of man. When we really come to understand the Word of God, we will realize that the term *children of God* is not so weighty as the term *man*, and we also will realize that God’s plan, selection, and predestination have a glorified man as their objective. When we see the place that man occupies in the purpose of God, when we see man as the focus of all His plans, and when we see how the Lord humbled Himself to become a man, we will learn to appreciate all men. When our Lord was on earth, He said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The Lord’s word is clear. The Son of Man came to serve many. *Many* does not refer to the church or to God’s children, but to all men. Furthermore, He did not say that the Son of God came to serve, but the Son of *Man*. Here we see the Lord’s attitude toward man.

A serious problem with many who are engaged in God’s work is their total lack of love and respect for man, and their total failure to realize the value of man in God’s sight. Today we feel as if we have attained great heights when we begin to love God’s children. Formerly we did not love anyone. Now that we can love the brothers a little, we feel as if we have done a tremendous thing. But, brothers and sisters, this is not enough. We need to be enlarged by God; we need to see that all men are precious to God. Whether or not we will build up a good spiritual work depends on how much we love man and how much interest we have in man. What I want to know is not whether we are interested in a few particularly intelligent men, a few who in one way or another are outstanding, but whether we are interested in man in general. This is a matter of great importance. The Son of Man’s coming firstly implies that the Lord was intensely interested in man; He was so interested in man that He became a man. The Lord was very interested in man, but what is the extent of our interest? We may not think much of this or that individual. But how does our Lord look on those people? The Lord said that the Son of Man came. This means that He came into the midst of men as the Son of Man. It also means that He is interested in man, that He has a feeling for man, and that He has a high regard for man. He so values man that He took the place of a man in order to serve men. It is amazing that many of God’s children have little concern for men. We cannot help but be somewhat indignant about this apathy. Brothers and sisters, do we know the meaning of the phrase *the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve*? We should ponder these words before the Lord. They tell us that Christ cared for man. Brothers and sisters, it is absolutely wrong for anyone to say, “I am among men, yet I have no interest in them whatsoever.”

An interest in man is a basic requirement in the life of every worker. This does not mean that one picks out certain individuals and develops an interest only in them. It does not mean that one can be exclusively interested in and affectionate towards certain men. It means an interest in all men. We must pay attention to the Lord Jesus, whose outstanding characteristic is a feeling and a love for all men. He was so interested in man that He could say, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” If we go to a certain place and insist on not being served by the men there but instead serve them, we are not far from the attitude we are talking about. This would put us on the right track with the right stand. Brothers and sisters, God’s servants cannot reserve their love just for their brothers. A worker of the Lord is a total failure if he selfishly reserves his love for his brothers. Brotherly love is not the first thing on our list. It is

something in addition to our love for all men. We have to have a love for all men. John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world.” What does *the world* refer to? It refers to everyone in this world, including unsaved ones and those who have no knowledge of God. God loves the world; He loves everyone in this world. This is the meaning of *God so loved the world*. If God loves everyone yet you do not, or if you extend your love only after a person has become a brother, your heart is different than the Lord’s, and you are not qualified to serve God. Your heart must be broadened to the extent that you love everyone and are interested in every man. As long as someone is a man, you should be interested in him. This is the only way to serve God.

TWO

The Lord Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). In other words, the Lord never asked for anything from men. We should be interested in men, and we should find men lovable. Moreover, we should not take advantage of men or be served by men. We should not embarrass them or hurt them. We should not even accept service from them. Brothers and sisters, years of instruction have accustomed us to address all men as our “*fellow men*”; however, this is not a matter of words but a matter of feeling. For example, we have a certain feeling for our brothers. We feel that certain ones are our brothers and that we are “*fellow brothers*” to them. But may I ask if we have the feeling with all men that we are their “*fellow men*”? Do we have a feeling that they are our fellows? If we do not have such a feeling, we cannot serve God. All servants of the Lord should have a broad heart. Their heart should be so broad that they can include and embrace all men. They should be able to embrace the whole human race into their bosom. The biggest problem among many workers is that they lack this love for men. Their love for the brothers is already short. Their love for all men is almost nonexistent. Perhaps they can pick out one from among a hundred or even from ten thousand that they can love! If this is our condition, we do not have a love for all men. We must remember that God is our Creator and we are all fellow creatures; we are fellow human beings. We must enlarge our heart’s capacity to love every person created by God, every fellow human being. We should not allow them to suffer, we should not take advantage of them, and we should not seek for any service from them. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

Brothers and sisters, we should not take advantage of others in any way. A Christian should realize that it is shameful for him to take advantage of his fellow men while on earth. It is wrong to take advantage of the brothers, but it is equally wrong to take advantage of anyone at all. As far as receiving from others is concerned, our Lord’s basic attitude is that He would never allow Himself to be served by men. He did not have the slightest intention of receiving anything from anyone. We must remember that we should never selfishly receive the services and ministrations of others at the expense of their sacrifice and loss.

God’s children should not take advantage of others, not only because the Lord has forbidden it, but because we are fellow human beings. We should not seek for profit from our fellow men. We must realize that all men are lovable in the eyes of God. If we have no interest in man, our work will be of very limited value in the sight of God, no matter how great it may be outwardly. God wants to see His servants increased in their capacity and interested in all man. This is the only way to become a gracious person; this is the only way to serve the Lord.

THREE

Mark 10:45 says, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Luke 19:10 says, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost.” John 10:10 says, “I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.” The Lord Jesus came to the earth for man. According to Mark 10, He came to serve men even to the point of giving His life as a ransom. The purpose for His coming was to serve men. In His service to men, there was the need for Him to give His life as a ransom, and that is what He did. His becoming a ransom was the highest and consummate act of His service to men. The Lord did not say that the Son of Man came only to be a ransom. He said that the Son of Man came “to serve.” The goal was service. He was interested in man, and He considered man precious and worthy of love and service. He served men to such an extent that He met their need by becoming their Savior. This is why He gave His life as a ransom. If we preach the gospel of the Lord’s sacrifice of His life as a ransom without having the Lord’s heart of service, we are not qualified to be called His workers. Man is lovable. Because he is lovable, the Lord did not say that it was “the Son of God” who came to serve, but “the Son of Man” who came. The Lord Jesus first loved and served men, and then He gave His life for them. Love comes first; the sacrifice of life comes afterwards. When we work among men, we

cannot preach the Lord's sacrifice without first having the proper love. We should not think that we can first preach His sacrifice and then love the listener after he has received the Lord. If we have no interest in man and do not find him precious, and if we have no awareness that we are all fellow creatures of God, we cannot preach about sacrifice. If we have never been touched by the expression *God created man* or have very little feeling for it, we are unfit to preach Christ's sacrifice. Brothers and sisters, we must first love all men before we can lead them to the Lord. We cannot hold back our love until they receive the Lord or until they become our brothers. Unfortunately, this is a problem with many people; they come short in this matter. Many people hold back their love for a person until he or she has become a brother or a sister. Brothers and sisters, this is not the way our Lord works. He first loved, and then He gave His life. We who preach His redemption also should love first and then preach redemption. Our Lord first served and showed mercy to others before giving His life as a ransom. In the same way, we should be interested in men, counting them worthy of our love and grace, before we present the Lord's redemption to them.

If God opens our heart to see that we are fellow men among all men, our attitude towards them will drastically change. We will find man lovable and precious. Brothers and sisters, it needs to dawn on us that man is precious in God's eyes because He created man in His likeness. Even today, man is still in the likeness of his Creator. Unless man becomes the object of our affection we cannot possibly become a servant of men. We must find man lovable and valuable in the sight of God. Many brothers and sisters have an altogether wrong attitude, temperament, and sentiment toward their fellow men. They consider them a burden, trouble, nuisance, or an annoyance. This is totally wrong. We must learn to see man as God's creation with God's image. Although man has become fallen, his future remains bright. If we regarded man as lovable, we would not feel that man is a burden, trouble, nuisance, or an annoyance to us. The Lord went to the cross for man. Can our love be anything less than this? If a man is touched by the Lord in a genuine way, and if he really sees the Lord's goal in coming to the earth, he will spontaneously conclude that man is lovable. It is impossible for anyone who has a genuine knowledge of the Lord to despise man.

Man is worthy of our love. All sins can be forgiven; we can sympathize with all weaknesses and activities of the flesh. We are sinners, and we know what sinners are like. Yet, at the same time, we know that man is precious. Brothers and sisters, the Lord did not die for men because there was a great number of them. He said that the Good Shepherd forsook all to seek one lost sheep. He did not come to seek to save the lost sheep because there were ninety-nine of them. The Good Shepherd came for one lost sheep. In other words, even if only one person in the whole world were lost, the Lord would still have come to the earth. Of course, historically, all men needed to be saved. But as far as the love in His heart is concerned, He was ready to come for one man, for one lost sheep. The Holy Spirit did not begin searching because ten coins were lost; He searched because one coin was lost. The Father did not wait for His prodigal because all of His sons had become prodigal; He opened His arms to one prodigal who returned. In the parables in Luke 15, we see that in His work of redemption, the Lord was willing to spend Himself freely to meet the need of even one soul. He did not wait for the needs of many to arise before He would work. This shows us the intense love that the Lord has for man.

Brothers and sisters, if we want to serve the Lord in a proper way, we have to cultivate an interest in man. If we cannot cultivate this interest, we will not be able to do much. Even if we do something, our work will be very limited. When we are limited as a person, we will not have the capacity to embrace many people. We will not fathom the full significance of redemption until we become interested in man and our hearts are enlarged to see his worth in God's eyes and in His plan. Without this, it is vain for puny creatures such as we to try to have a share in the great work of God. How can anyone be used to save souls if they do not love souls? How can anyone try to save man without loving man? If this fundamental lack of love for men is removed, many other difficulties in relation to men will vanish. We think that some people are too ignorant and others are too hard, but these problems should not stop us from loving them. If there is love, there will not be any disdain for man, and God will bring us to the point that we take our place as men among our fellow men.

When some Christian workers in urban areas go out into the country to work among farmers, they have an inordinate sense of superiority toward them. This is a despicable attitude. Our Lord did not say that the *Son of God* would not be served by men. He said that the *Son of Man* would not be served by men. If we go anywhere to preach the gospel, we have to go as a son of man. Many times, however, workers consider working among some people as a humbling experience! It is right to humble oneself, but it is wrong to consciously think that we are humbling ourselves by walking among certain kinds of people. If we feel that we are humbling ourselves when we walk among less educated ones, this is proof that we are not humble enough. Such humility is manmade; it is unnatural. When our Lord came to earth, men only recognized Him

as the son of Mary or as the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. They only knew Him as a son of man. Brothers and sisters, we have to be real men. When we are among our fellow men, we should not give them the flavor that we are above them in any way. This is not how a Christian should behave. When we are among men, we should be one of them. We should not give others the impression that we are condescending ourselves. If we do, we are not qualified to serve anyone, and our way is totally wrong. We can only serve men by being a man ourselves. We should never give others the impression that we are always humbling ourselves. We should not give others the impression that we are different. If others have that kind of impression about us, it proves that we are not God's servants. In order to serve the Lord, we must be genuinely emptied of self. When we talk with those who have less education than we have and we stand aloof from them, we are telling them that we are not one of them.

Unless we can humble ourselves to the lowest level, we cannot serve God. We must be brought to the lowest point; we must never feel that we are better than others. No brother or sister can despise a man of little knowledge. Such a person has a place in God's creation; he has a place in God's redemption and plan just as you and I have. The only difference between us and an unsaved man is that we know the Lord. Brothers and sisters, we are wrong in our attitude in many ways. We must turn away completely from such an attitude. We must see that all men are equal in the sight of God. Our Lord came to earth for all men. Therefore, we should humble ourselves for them as well. We should never categorize men based on the amount of education they possess.

You may say, "The ignorance of men presents no problem to me; my difficulty arises when I come in contact with men who are deceitful, sinful, and wild. What should be my attitude toward them?" You only need to take a retrospective look at your own life. Were you better than they are now before the grace of God reached out? How much better would you be today but for the grace of God? Who has made you holier than they? When you look at yourself outside the realm of grace, you cannot find any difference between you and them. Except for grace alone, what makes you any different than them? You can only bow before God and say, "I am the same as they are, nothing more than a poor sinner." Only grace can teach you to prostrate yourself in the dust and say, "Lord, You are the One who has saved me." Grace will never cause you to uplift yourself; it will always cause you to see that you are the same as the wicked and the sinners. It is God's grace that sets you apart from them, not you yourself. If what you have is yours through receiving, what is there for you to boast of? If grace is the only thing that makes you different, you have no ground to exalt yourself with such grace. You should give more thanks for grace; you should spend more time thanking the Lord for grace instead of giving glory to yourself. You should realize that you are the same as all other men in the eyes of God. You should love them. Their sins should cause you to recoil, but you should still go out in love for them. With such an enlarged heart, you will bring them to the Lord.

FOUR

In remembering that every servant of God has his own special characteristic and function to God, we should not forget that, no matter how different one's function may be, all true servants of God are alike in this respect: They are interested, intensely interested, in men. If a brother has an enlarged heart and is interested in men, his usefulness in the hand of God will be greatly enhanced. Brothers and sisters, we have to be interested in men. If we are indifferent to and disinterested in men, how can we preach the gospel to them? We are here to deal with men, to gain them, and to save them. If we have no interest in men, how can we accomplish our task? No doctor should shrink away from sick patients, and no teacher should shrink away from students. It is strange indeed for us to be preachers of the gospel and to be afraid of meeting people at the same time! In order to work for the Lord, we must be interested in men. This must not be something out of compulsion. We must have an interest in contacting people, in communicating with them. There should not be the need for anyone to tell us to contact or communicate with men. A worker should feel in his heart that man is lovable and precious. Brothers and sisters, we have to realize that all men were created by God and are loved by Him. God wants them, and He gave His only begotten Son for them with the expectation that they would receive His life through believing into Him. The only difference we have with unbelievers is that we have believed. This is why we have to help them to believe. We must cultivate a great interest in them. If we do this, we will find a boundless field of service opening up to us, and under the mercy of God we will become servants who are of some account to Him.

Brothers and sisters, in order to serve the Lord in a proper way, we have to take the straight pathway. Please remember that in the eyes of God, everyone has a spirit. In this respect everyone is equal. Everyone ranks the same because everyone has a soul and a spirit. As soon as we touch a person with a soul and a

spirit, we should love him and strive to serve him. If we do this, our attitude will be different every time we meet a person on the street. When a man is enlightened by God to see that he is begotten by the same Father as his brothers, he develops a special taste for them. A worker similarly has to be enlightened to see that he is created by the same God as his fellow men. This light will cause him to have a different taste every time he meets someone. Among the saints, we do have the feeling that we are brothers and sisters. Now we need a further enlightening to see that among all men, we are fellow men. Everyone is precious and lovable, and everyone is worthy of our service. If we have this attitude, we will touch the things of God while living on earth today, because God's attention is always directed towards man. Men were created by God, and from such God-created men, we can rescue some into His church. God's goal is the church, but God's attention is still on man. He wants to gain man. No worker of the Lord can despise any person with a soul and a spirit. If we despise any man in attitude or in conduct, we are unworthy to be called servants of God. If we want to serve the Lord in a proper way, we must not despise any soul. In fact, we have to learn to be servants to all men. We have to learn to render others service in all things and to serve them with a willing heart.

Many people have the habit of despising those who seemingly are inferior to themselves while flattering those who seemingly are better than themselves. It is shameful for such things to be found among God's workers. We should not despise those who seemingly are under us in any way. We should consider a man's position according to God's worth. If we do not deal with this matter, we cannot serve God. It is a great and joyful thing for us to realize man's worth. If we see how the Lord has died for men, we will echo that very character that led Him to suffer such a death for men; we will feel what the Lord feels and conclude that man does deserve all of our love and interest. Unless we can do this, we will not be able to identify with the Lord's feeling, and we will not be able to work for the Lord. (*The Character of the Lord's Worker*, pp. 15–25)

APPENDIX – MINISTRY EXCERPTS ON CONTACTING PEOPLE

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEED TO CONTACT PEOPLE

HAVING AN INTEREST IN PEOPLE

In the next three chapters we will cover some practical points regarding our service. These points are not doctrinal issues but practical matters. The first point concerns our contact with people. To serve the Lord, we must serve people. The primary thing we do in our service is to contact and take care of people. We may have the thought that we can love the Lord and serve Him without serving people and that we can pray to the Lord without praying for people. However, if we do this, we will realize that without people we have no means to serve the Lord and no burden to pray. Thus, we all need to learn to be interested in people.

People may be divided into two categories: those who are social and those who are introverted. Social people are friendly and find it easy to make friends and talk with others. Introverted people, on the other hand, are somewhat closed and do not like to contact others; they prefer to be by themselves. They may be timid and bashful, making it difficult for them to make friends. We may think that social people are more useful to the Lord than introverted people, but actually, we need to realize that although being introverted is not an asset in the Lord's work, neither is being social. Whether a person's disposition is social or introverted, it is natural. We need to be delivered from our natural disposition in order to contact people and genuinely serve the Lord.

We need the Lord's feeling to be wrought into us so that we may have His concern for others (Phil. 1:8). God loves man and is interested in man (John 3:16). God's desire and purpose in creating man in His own image was that He would be completely mingled with man to be one with man (Gen. 1:26). Apart from man God has no delight or interest. Because man was made in God's image, man also has an ability to be interested in things other than himself. Many people are interested in their children or in clothing. Some are interested in collecting stamps or decorating their home. Some may be so interested in a certain matter that they think about nothing else. They may make their interest their business. Those who have been dealt with by the Lord, however, are interested in people. The more the Lord is wrought into a person, the more that person will be interested in mankind. This can be seen in the accounts of the lives of people such as the

apostle Paul, who was concerned for the saints and the churches (Rom. 1:9-11; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:15; Phil. 2:19-20).

If we do not have an interest in people, we cannot serve the Lord. The Lord must impart His divine disposition into us so that we may be concerned about people and fellowship with and love people. The Spirit within us is always yearning to reach people, and if we learn to love people, we will find it easy to contact others for the gospel. However, if we do not have an interest in people, contacting others for the gospel will seem difficult to us. The more the Lord is wrought into us, the more we will love others, serve others, and minister Christ to them. Death will operate in us, but life in them (2 Cor. 4:12).

Although all the saints need to have an interest in people, the elders and deacons especially need this. Brother Nee said that this was one of the qualifications of being an elder. How useful we are in our service depends on our interest in people and our love for people. Before I was saved, I was closed toward people, and after the Lord saved and called me, I found it difficult to be interested in people. I had to go to the Lord and pray, "Lord, break my natural disposition and give me Your divine disposition?" We need to allow the Lord to break us in every way. Even if we are social by nature, we should allow the Lord to break our natural disposition so that we may have a genuine love and concern for others. Then our joy will be to contact people. We will have a hunger to minister Christ to others (Rom. 1:9-15), and our ministering of Christ to others will become our food (John 4:32). We need to pray until the Lord gives us this kind of hunger.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO CONTACT PEOPLE

There are many practical ways to contact people. First, whenever we come to a church meeting, we should contact at least one person either before or after the meeting. We should not do this in a light way. Rather, we should have a definite purpose in our contact. Also, we should not contact the same person week after week. Instead, we should contact a different person each time so that we can meet the unfamiliar ones. It is good to write down the names and addresses of the new ones in a notebook so that we can visit them later.

A second way we can contact others is by inviting them to our home to eat a meal with us. We should do this at least once or twice a month, preferably once a week. One sister I knew shepherded many people in this way. Every week she prayed and looked to the Lord to choose whom to invite to her home on the Lord's Day. According to the Lord's leading, she called and invited certain people. Every Lord's Day she had at least five people in her home. This was a great blessing to her and caused her to grow in the Lord. If we invited one or two people once every two weeks, we would begin to be related to the saints. After a few years there would be much relatedness and building among us.

Third, at least once every two weeks we should visit others in order to shepherd them. Whether or not we are invited, we should go and visit others, not with the intention of gossiping but with the intention of praying and caring for one another and sharing our needs with one another. We should even sacrifice some of our time in prayer and the study of the Bible for this. If we do this, others will be helped, the church will increase, and we ourselves will grow. We need to do this in order to be built up and related to one another.

Fourth, we should contact at least one unbeliever every week. We should simply make a decision to preach the gospel and then do it. We may do this by visiting our unbelieving acquaintances, knocking on doors from house to house, or even standing on a street corner to distribute tracts. The great evangelist D. L. Moody made an agreement with the Lord to preach the gospel to at least one person each day. One evening he awoke in bed with the sudden realization that he had not contacted anyone that day. Although it was the middle of the night, he got out of bed and went out to the street, where he found a policeman and shared Christ with him. The policeman did not have a favorable reaction and wondered who that crazy man was. However, the next day the policeman inquired about Mr. Moody and was eventually saved. If we make a decision to contact a certain number of people within a year, we will see how easy it is to bring at least one person to the Lord in a year. If every Christian did this, in a short time the entire earth would be evangelized.

To summarize the four ways of contacting people, we need to meet people at the meetings, invite people to our homes, visit others, and preach the gospel to others. We should do this on a regular basis. Then we will be built up, others will be built up, and the church will increase. Although these are not rules for us to follow, we should in a sense be legal in these matters, just as we are legal in our daily eating habits.

THE WAY TO RELATE TO PEOPLE

We need to know how to relate to different kinds of people. If we do not know how to relate to people, our contact with them will be unprofitable to the Lord, to the ones we contact, and to ourselves.

Knowing Whether to Help or Receive Help from Others

The first thing we need to know in our contact with others is whether we should help them or receive help from them. Often we do not accomplish anything in our contact with people because we do not know our spiritual position and condition in relation to theirs. When we contact people, we must be keen and alert in our spirit so that we may immediately know others' spiritual condition in relation to ours and thus know whether we should help them or receive help from them.

Being Neither Proud nor Too Humble

We should not be proud and intend to help others every time. Rather, we should learn to be humble and receive help from others. However, we should not be too humble, thinking that we know nothing, can do nothing, and can only receive from others. To be proud in the natural disposition is ugly, but to be too humble in the natural disposition also is ugly. We should be neither proud nor humble; we should simply be what we are. The more spiritual a person is, the more genuine he is. When you meet a spiritual person, it is difficult to say whether he is proud or humble. True spirituality is not a matter of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but a matter of the tree of life. Thus, we need to learn to be genuine so that we may help others and receive help from others.

Needing Certain Experiences in the Christian Life

In order to discern whether we should help a person or receive help from that person, we need certain experiences in the Christian life. For example, if we have not had the experience of salvation, we will not be able to discern whether or not others have been saved. If, however, we have had a clear, definite experience of salvation, we will immediately be able to recognize whether or not another person has been saved. Real discernment is based on experience. Concerning this, we need to go to the Lord and check how much we have experienced of Him. The reason we often cannot help others or receive help from others is that we do not have enough experience. We may have much teaching and knowledge but little experience and thus little discernment.

There are many basic experiences we need to have. First, we must experience salvation, which is the first step of the Christian life. Then we need to have the experience of dealing with our sins. We must deal with all our sins and evil, dark habits and have a full clearance of our past (Luke 19:8; Acts 19:18-19). In order to be right with God and right with others, we should confess our sins to God (1 John 1:9) and also make restitution with those whom we have wronged. This will cause our conscience to be pure and transparent. Our conscience may be compared to a window. If a window is not cleaned for a long time, it will become dirty and opaque. But the more a window is cleaned, the more transparent it becomes. Similarly, the more we deal with our sins and wrongdoings before God and man, the more our conscience will be purified and transparent. Then whenever we contact a person, we will be able to tell whether or not he is transparent in his conscience.

We also need to learn to follow the Lord according to our inner sense (2 Cor. 2:13). We need to have the experience of constantly living in the Lord's presence, taking care of our inner sense to go along with the Lord, and keeping ourselves in fellowship with the Lord. After this, we need to consecrate ourselves to the Lord and to live to Him, being constrained by His love (5:14). We need to pray and fellowship, bring our problems to the Lord, look to the Lord for His help, and believe in the Lord to receive His answer. In all things we must deal with the Lord and seek His mind. Then we need to learn to read and study the Word, not in a natural way but in a spiritual way. We should read the Word to receive light and life in order to be nourished by the word as our food (Psa. 119:130; John 5:39-40; 1 Tim. 4:6). These are only a few of the basic, initial experiences of the Christian life. If we have all these experiences and we contact a person, we will immediately realize where he is and what he needs.

As living members of the church, we should learn and practice these matters. If we say that this is too difficult for us to do, we will become like the "pew members" of Christianity who merely sit in their pews,

relax, and listen to pastors that they have hired to serve the Lord for them. This is the situation in degraded Christianity. We did not take the way of the Lord's recovery to live this kind of Christian life. We took the way of the Lord's recovery to be living and functioning members in the church. Therefore, we must pay a price to learn and experience these basic matters so that we may be useful to the Lord.

In the service of the Lord we should not be general but specific and definite. I know many brothers and sisters who are experts in certain matters. For instance, one brother is an expert in the matter of helping people to be saved. Whenever there is a person who needs to be saved, I can bring him to this brother, and after ten minutes, he will be saved, because this brother is an expert in dealing with unbelievers. Another brother is an expert in the matter of consecration. If someone is struggling with the matter of consecration, we can bring him to this brother, and after a short time, he will be brought through in the matter of consecration.

We should not think that learning and experiencing these things is easy. They require learning. If we merely come to the meetings and listen to messages, we will have much knowledge but no experience. As a result, when someone comes to us for help, we will not know how to help him. We will be useless in the service of the church. From this we see that we need to learn and experience these matters in a definite way so that we may be useful in a definite way.

When I first met Brother Nee, he gave me some instructions along this line, and my eyes were opened. I saw that I had been a Christian without real understanding. I had learned much about the Scriptures, but I had little real understanding of spiritual matters. Not until I was instructed in this way did I begin to know how to discern people and situations.

Classifying People

We need to learn how to classify people. Although there are billions of people on earth and millions of Christians, most people can be classified into one of several categories. If we know how to classify people and we contact a person, we will immediately know what kind of person he is, and we will be able to meet his need.

We all need to know how to preach the gospel in order to help people be saved. In order to save people, we should first love them. Then we need to be able to classify them and discern their needs in order to help them be saved. If we come across a person who refuses to be saved, we should bring this case to the brothers. When I was in China, we had a session every week in which we discussed and studied these kinds of cases. We would pray together, and a brother or sister would bring up a certain case. Then we would discuss and make a decision on how to deal with this case.

In a certain city in China there was a large hospital in which nearly all the employees became brothers and sisters in the Lord's recovery. However, the head of the hospital, who was a famous doctor and also a Christian, did not join the brothers and sisters in the churches. Thus, the brothers and sisters became burdened for him and prayed for him. Then in one of our meetings a brother told us that he had a burden to visit this doctor. We considered for a while, and then someone suggested that we wait. After a few days, the matter was brought up again, but again we had the feeling to wait. The third time the matter was raised, we all felt that it was the right time to visit the doctor. We sent two brothers to visit him, and when these brothers arrived at the doctor's house, they discovered that the doctor had been waiting for them because he had seen them in a dream the previous night. After the visitation, the doctor began to attend the meetings and eventually became a leading brother. Some might have wondered why we waited. This was due to our discernment of the situation and of the person and his needs. In this case the doctor would not have been open if we had visited him earlier. We had to wait until something happened to him, and then we could visit him.

If we are willing to learn to contact others, it will be easy for us to contact them and bring them to the Lord. Furthermore, the more we contact people, the more we will be encouraged to contact them. If we are serious about living the church life and serving as living members of the Body, we will learn and practice this. Suppose we have a hundred brothers and sisters in a locality, and all of them learn and practice to contact people in a proper way. The issue will be wonderful. The church will increase and be built up not only in number but also in its measure of life through the functioning of every member in a proper way. The church in that locality will be a living church, a living expression of the Body with all the members functioning. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1964, Volume 1, pp. 337–344*)

CHAPTER SEVEN

CULTIVATING A CHARACTER TO CONTACT PEOPLE

THE NEED TO DEAL WITH OUR CHARACTER

A person's work or service is absolutely related to his character. As his character is, so will be his way of doing things and his work. Many difficulties which we have as serving ones stem from our character. Of course, some of our problems are spiritual and some are emotional. Most problems, however, are caused by our character. Therefore, while learning to serve the Lord, we need to be in constant fellowship with Him and rely on His grace; on the other hand, we also must deal severely with our character.

We ourselves bear the responsibility for dealing with our own character. It seems that it is not easy for the Holy Spirit to do this for us. We cannot say that the Holy Spirit does not touch or interfere with the matters of our character, such as the way we conduct ourselves and the way we do things, but we are wrong if we expect the Holy Spirit to build a good character for us. The Holy Spirit does not do much in this area. Even when He does, He needs our full cooperation.

Some brothers have problems with their character. They never finish thoroughly any task which is put into their hands. After all their efforts, a "tail" always remains. This is a problem of character. Some term this a problem of habit, but we do not think that is a fitting description; rather, we like to call it a problem of character.

LOVING TO CONTACT PEOPLE

One who serves the Lord must have a good character that loves to contact people. Some people by nature like to meet others, but this is natural. It is not in resurrection and is therefore useless. In our service we need to be dealt with by God to the extent that we love to contact people. To speak in non-spiritual terms, we need to deal with ourselves, to force ourselves to contact people.

I asked one of the brothers to tell me how many saints have come from overseas to attend this conference, and I asked him whether he had contacted them. He said that he had contacted only two brothers from Hong Kong and another from Indonesia. Moreover, he did not know their names. Do not think that I am too much. This is where our problem lies. I believe that this brother will allow me to say that to contact people is not an easy thing. This is a problem not only with him but with all of us. As we are here in this training, many young brothers who are serving the Lord are eating in the same dining room and are being trained in the same classroom. The brothers from overseas have come not only to listen to some messages but also to seek fellowship. As a rule, we all should sense a responsibility to fellowship with them and render help to them. Unfortunately, there is a solid wall here which the Spirit can hardly break down. We simply do not have the character to contact people.

Brothers, if we were more broken, or if we had learned more concerning proper spiritual temperament, today we would be receiving even more grace. Among us, grace is not contagious enough, because we are too separated. We should allow grace to infect us, to flow between us to the uttermost. However, according to my observation, there are still many separations among us.

For some brothers and sisters, it is not that they do not like to contact others but that they like to contact only a few special ones. For example, Brother Wu loves to contact Brother Chow, and Brother Chow loves to contact Brother Wu. Brother Chow not only knows Brother Wu's name, but he knows him inside out. There is nothing about Brother Wu that he does not know. However, concerning those from Indonesia, whether their last name is Liu or Wang makes no difference to him. He does not remember clearly how many are here from Manila or from the United States. He does not know which room they are staying in. After staying with them for months, he has not asked their names. How can we serve the Lord with this kind of character?

During the training at Kou Lin in 1948 and 1949, Brother Nee in one lesson told us that in order to be useful in the hand of the Lord, one must be interested in people. One must love to study people and must have an interest in them. In particular, one should always contact the new ones. When such a person helps the new ones, he is happy. He is contented just to talk to them. We must have this kind of temperament; otherwise, our service will be greatly frustrated.

We should come early to every meeting. If the meeting starts at half past seven, we should arrive at seven o'clock. Why should we come early? We should come early to wait for people. It is worthwhile to

contact people, even if only for five or ten minutes. Contact them not only before but also after the meeting. If we contact two people before and after every meeting, throughout a week we will have contacted at least ten in five meetings. Perhaps some would say that this is too mechanical. No, if you have this kind of character, you will feel that this is very spontaneous. In every meeting you will contact one when you come and one when you leave. Some say that the saints always leave immediately after the meeting. If this is the case, why not walk with them for some distance? You could walk with them from the meeting hall to the street and exchange a few words with them, asking them about their work and their condition before the Lord. Remember that sometimes just these simple conversations give people great help.

Do not be too official or too formal while contacting people. Do not say, "Now I am serving the Lord, and from three to five in the afternoon every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I will go out to visit people. My living is regulated and I must wait until three o'clock every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I will go out to visit people only after kneeling down to pray for ten minutes." In the end, since no one seems to be home, you return empty. You may then consider this a real discipline of the Holy Spirit, because everyone you wanted to see was not home. Actually, this is a formal, bureaucratic kind of service. No one would be successful or make a profit in business by using this method. Many times a profitable business deal is consummated on a tennis court over a match or in a coffee shop over coffee.

CONTACTING PEOPLE AND GIVING GRACE AT ALL TIMES

Brothers, you must learn to have this kind of character; otherwise, believe me, you will be of little use. Our contact with the Lord is one thing, and our contact with people is another. Our contact with the Lord can never replace our contact with people. While He was on the earth, our Lord Jesus always maintained these two kinds of contact. The Lord never went anywhere without contacting people. Everywhere He went, He contacted people. If He did not contact anyone, it was intentional, because of God's will, because He lived under the governing of God's will. He contacted people everywhere. He adapted His messages to changing circumstances, speaking the proper words to each kind of person and for each occasion. His speaking was never monotonous or set, nor was it according to a formula. He was available at all times; therefore, He could give grace at all times and could contact all kinds of people.

Some brothers have the attitude that they have learned the matter of inward fellowship; therefore, they feel that such an activity as contacting people is for those who love excitement, and thus they leave it to others. This concept is wrong. Let me ask you, what lesson did the Lord Jesus learn? Whatever lesson you learn should be in the realm of contacting people. Contact people all the time. When I am with an elderly brother, I learn before him. While meeting young brothers, I render them some help. If there were such a condition in a church, how much blessing there would be! Because of this little practice many people would be brought in, and a fire would be ignited.

Many times after the Lord's table I saw the brothers and sisters leave one by one. This reminds me of the scene in John chapter eight, where the Lord Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone." Hearing these words, the Jews went out one by one, beginning with older ones until the last. It is rare to see two brothers or two sisters talking to each other. Even when people converse, they talk to those with whom they are familiar, and they seldom look for others. This is a most serious problem. (*Character*, pp. 63–67)

CHAPTER EIGHT

FIFTEEN PRACTICAL POINTS CONCERNING SHEPHERDING

Not Being Quick, but Spending an Adequate Amount of Time to Shepherd People

In order to adequately shepherd people, we must not be too quick. Our quick disposition needs to go. We cannot shepherd someone by speaking to them for only a few minutes. Therefore, we must be prepared to spend enough time with people.

Being Positive and Not Sloppy

Although we should not be too quick, we must be very positive. Very often, positive persons are quick ones, and slow persons are passive, even sloppy and uncaring. If a brother says, "Let us go to visit someone," a passive one may say, "We should not be so quick. Let us wait for another two weeks." However, if mothers care for their little ones in this passive way, their children will not survive. We should not be too quick, but we must be positive and on time. The secret of a good surgeon is not to be quick but to be positive and not lose any time. We all need to learn the best way. To this end, we need much work of the cross on our disposition. Anyone can do some amount of shepherding, but to have shepherding that is up to a proper standard, we should be very positive, though not too quick.

Listening to Others in Order to Realize Their True Need and Real Situation

We must learn how to listen to others in order to realize their true need and real situation. This requires us to stop our own thought, concept, feeling, and speaking while we are shepherding them. We should be open to others and allow their situation to speak to us. This is not easy; it means that we must be positive but not quick. We should not say too much or make a decision too quickly. Rather, we should stop ourselves and listen to the person under our care, allowing him to say something, trying our best to understand him, and putting ourselves in his place to understand his situation in the same way as he does.

Many times our visiting damages people rather than helps them. It tears down rather than builds up. This is because we are too raw; we have never been "cooked." Since we have never been dealt with adequately, we are still too wild. As long as we are raw and wild, we are able only to offend people, not to nourish them. Even if we nourish them to a certain extent, we may offend them to a greater extent, resulting in a net debit. We may feel that we have helped a brother, yet we do not realize that we tore him down even more. Eventually, this kind of shepherding produces a loss. Therefore, we all need to be dealt with. Some may say, "In this case, to be a brother or a sister in the local church is too hard. We simply want to go to the meeting on the Lord's Day and enjoy ourselves for an hour by listening to the good singing and speaking. To shepherd people according to a high standard is too great a burden." Yes, this is a burden, but we have no choice. In saying these things, it seems that I am a troublemaker, troubling myself first and then troubling others. However, according to Paul's writings, he was a "troublemaker." He gave himself no peace or rest in his care for the churches (2 Cor. 11:23b-28). He troubled himself, he troubled all the saints, and even today he troubles us. If we read his Epistles, we will all be troubled. The church life is a troubling life, but what other way can we take? We are destined to take this way. As human beings, we must believe in the Lord Jesus, and as believers, we have no choice but to take the way of the proper church life.

Visiting Others without Saying Much

We must also learn not to say too much when we visit people. This is the hardest lesson to learn in shepherding. The longer we wait to say something, the better it is. Someone may ask, "If we should not say anything, why should we contact anyone?" The secret is simply to contact them without saying much. If we speak too much, we will be like the friends of Job. This will waste our time and cause more problems. The best way to shepherd a person is to visit him without saying much. If he asks if we have anything to say, we can simply say, "Praise the Lord. Amen." Over forty years ago some of us would go to Brother Nee and say, "Brother Nee, I have been invited by the church in a certain place. Please tell me what I should do?" He told us, "Do not do anything except this: Whenever they ask you something, you should say, 'I don't know.'" This

answer truly bothered us. We said, “If this is the case, we do not need to go. If we do this, they will simply ask us to leave.” However, we eventually found that this fellowship rendered us the greatest help.

Because we all assume that we know so much, it is hard to say, “I don’t know.” Brother Nee taught us to say, “I don’t know” because, strictly speaking, we do not know much, and what we do know, we do not know thoroughly. We should not contact people in order to teach them. We ourselves have a greater need of teaching. We should go to the saints and to the churches to learn of them. We must not consider that we know more than they do. It is likely that they know more than we do. Those who went out to the churches without practicing Brother Nee’s principle eventually created many problems. The secret to contacting people is not to say much but to let them say something.

Not Making Decisions for Others

We should never make decisions for others. This is to consider that we are superior to them. We should not play politics. We need to be honest with the ones who are under our care, but we must still be restricted by the Lord not to make their decisions.

Never Arguing with People

We also should never argue with people, regardless of whether they are right or wrong. Every conversation is a temptation to adjust others, convince them, or “sell” our good opinions and concepts. We must avoid all these things. There is no need to do this. If we do, it will not help them.

Not Passing On Vain Knowledge

We must never pass on vain knowledge to people. People may ask us about many matters, but we must learn to exercise our spirit to discern the purpose of the questions. If we discern properly, we may realize that the questions are in vain. People often like to gain knowledge, asking about the elders, the brothers and sisters, and many other matters. We must learn to be wise, not be involved with questionings, and not pass on vain knowledge. This also is a difficult lesson for us all.

Not Being Involved in Any Negative Talk

We should not be involved in any negative talk. In other words, we should not be a “trash can.” Flies like to find a dirty place, but we must be clean and sterilized. If we do not visit people in a clean way, but rather take germs to them, they may be incited to open up in a wrong way. They will open their “tombs,” and death will come out. We should not get into any negative talk or answer any questions about negative matters. We must be in another realm, another kingdom.

Being Honest and Not Political

We must learn to be honest, never pretending and never playing politics. We should not be political in order to make the situation easier. We must be honest persons, answering honestly yes or no. If the situation does not allow us to answer yes or no, then we should not say anything. If we learn all these lessons, we will be able to care for others.

Ministering Life to Others

Most importantly, we must learn to minister life to others. In order to do this, we ourselves must have life. We may illustrate this with money. If we desire to give money to someone, we must first have some ourselves. If our pocket is empty, we have nothing to give. We must have something before we can minister it to others. Therefore, we must learn the lessons of life. Then we will know how to minister to others. In fact, if we have life, there is no need to purposely minister life to others. Life will already be ministered to them. When visiting others to take care of them, the proper principle is to minister life to them. All the foregoing points are a preparation for ministering life. If we do not have this preparation, whatever we do will only diminish our ministry and supply. If we are careless about any of these matters, our ministry of life will be annulled and swallowed up. If we are careful about all these items, we will remain in a pure condition to minister to others.

Taking the Lead to Bring Others into a Prayer Life

We need to pray with others and help them to pray. We should not try to wrongly impress people that we have the way to do things, that we are smart, or that we know everything. Rather, we should simply help people to put their trust in the Lord and depend on Him for everything. To this end, we should bring with us a spirit and atmosphere of prayer to help others to come into a prayer life. We need to create an atmosphere so that whatever happens to people, they will pray, look to the Lord, and rely on Him for His presence and clear leading. We need to build up those under our care with a prayer life. If we ourselves are not persons with a prayer life, we will not be able to build up others as this kind of person. We ourselves need to take the lead.

Contacting People with Patience

In order to care for others, we need patience. We should not expect that someone who is newly saved or recovered will immediately be in a proper condition. We need patience to care for the weaker ones. A weaker one may require our patience to contact him again and again. This kind of continual, patient contact will shepherd people. This takes time, but there is nothing else we can do. The church grows through shepherding. If we have gospel preaching without shepherding to take care of the new ones, many of the newly saved ones will fall away. This will spoil and damage our appetite for gospel preaching. Many will say, "We brought so many to the Lord, but most of them are not here anymore." We will be like a family that has lost its children. Therefore, we need the proper shepherding for the proper child raising. It is impossible for only the leading brothers in a church to take care of the shepherding. Everyone must pick up the burden to take care of others. This requires our patience.

Trusting Those Who Are under Our Care

We must learn to trust and rely upon the ones who are under our care. This is to have a proper fellowship. In one sense, we are the parents nourishing our children, but in another sense, we are all brothers and sisters. Therefore, we should show others that not only do they rely on us, but we also rely on them. This mutual reliance creates much profit. It causes others to be open to us, trust us, and have confidence in us. This is to "open our veins for the blood to circulate." All the members must be open to one another. Then the circulation will do its proper work. We have seen that some of the ones who are under our care do not open to us, regardless of how much time we spend with them. This means that they have no confidence in us. We need to behave in a way to build up a mutual confidence; this will cause them to open to us. This requires us to depend on them, rely on them, and show them that we need their help.

Never Forcing Anyone to Do Anything

We should never give anyone under our care the sense that we are forcing them to do anything. We must all learn the attributes of God. From the beginning, God never forced people. Rather, He gave them a free choice. We should not even try to overly influence people. Not to force or coerce people is contrary to our natural concept. In shepherding, however, we should stay away from every kind of forcing, coercing, and convincing. We should allow people to have a free choice.

Fellowshipping with Others according to Our Own Experience

Whatever we fellowship with the dear ones must be according to our own experience. Paul told the Thessalonians, "Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying" (1 Thes. 2:11). No doubt, Paul testified many things to the saints, but a great part of his testimony must have been his own experiences. We need personal experiences to be able to testify to the younger ones. In the proper sense, whatever we render to them as a help should be from our own testimony. How much we can testify in this way depends on how much we have experienced. We must have a certain amount of experience of all of the foregoing detailed items. The more we pick up the burden to shepherd others, the more things we will need to learn. (*Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 101–107)