

GAINING PEOPLE—SINNERS, SEEKERS, AND SAINTS—FOR THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH

Lesson 1

Gospel Heralding

Hymns: 920, 921

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:10-11; Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Hag. 1:8; Rom. 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:16-17, 23; Acts 1:8

- I. **“The gospel, for which I was appointed a herald...”—2 Tim. 1:10b-11a:**
 - A. The gospel here refers to the gospel of the divine grace and eternal life; for such a gospel Paul was appointed a herald, an apostle and a teacher—2 Tim. 1:11, note 1.
 - B. A herald announces and proclaims the gospel; a herald is a proclaimer of the gospel of Christ, an official reporter of God’s New Testament economy—2 Tim. 1:11, note 2; 1 Tim. 2:7, note 1.
- II. **Preaching the gospel is the Lord’s commission to us:**
 - A. Preaching the gospel is the greatest commission in the Bible, and it is the Lord’s greatest charge to us; three verses show that preaching the gospel is the Lord’s commission to us—Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47:
 1. Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
 2. Mark 16:15 says, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all the creation;” we need to proclaim the gospel not only to all the nations but also to all the creation.
 3. Luke 24:47 says, “That repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”
 4. According to these three portions, after the Lord Jesus resurrected, He left us with a commission; this commission was His final charge.
 - B. The Lord lives in us because He wants us to preach the gospel to others:
 1. Preaching the gospel revives us; we are burning within when we preach the gospel to people.
 2. When we preach the gospel, we are in one accord; the presence of opinions and disputes in the church is proof that the church has lost the burden of the gospel; the best way to eliminate opinions is to preach the gospel.
 - C. Today in the Lord’s recovery the greatest need, the primary need, is to gain the increase:
 1. A house cannot be built without materials; we need to save sinners through the preaching of the gospel that they may become material for the building up of the church as the house of God—1 Tim. 3:15.
 2. Our gospel preaching is not merely to save souls but is to gather material for the building of God’s house, to gain more members for the increase of the Body of Christ—Hag. 1:8, note 1.
- III. **Preaching the gospel is our responsibility:**
 - A. Paul said, “I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish” (Rom. 1:14); the debt that Paul owed was the debt of the gospel.
 - B. This applied to Paul, and it also applies to every believer; whenever a believer draws near to the Lord, he has the sense that he owes people the gospel, that he is a debtor of the gospel.
 - C. We not only need to receive a commission from the Lord, but we also need to take care of the inner feeling of responsibility.
- IV. **Our responsibility must be to increase and spread the Lord’s testimony—to preach the gospel, to bear the testimony of Jesus, to be witnesses to Him and to bring forth fruit by abiding in Him—Rev. 1:2, 9; Acts 1:8; John 15:5.**

- V. In order to preach the gospel, we must receive the spirit of the gospel; the spirit of the gospel is the only thing that will bring in the genuine power of the gospel:**
- A. The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of being beside ourselves; in order to have the spirit of the gospel, we need to be “crazy” in our spirit.
 - B. We should open our spirit to the Lord that we may receive the spirit of the gospel, becoming burdened in our spirit such that if we do not preach the gospel we can not be happy.
 - C. In order to touch the gospel spirit, the only way is for us to have a fresh consecration.
 - D. To prepare for the gospel outreach we have to continually consecrate ourselves, continually pray, and continually receive the dealings in the environment; the dealing of the cross brings in the Spirit.
 - E. This spirit of the gospel is in every one of us, but some of us suppress it instead of cultivating it:
 1. The spirit of the gospel is like fire that can either be extinguished or set ablaze.
 2. Hence, we need to cultivate the spirit of the gospel, and we even need to fan it into flame; the bigger the fire, the better—cf. 2 Tim. 1:6-8.
 - F. Individually or as the church of God, we must be filled with the spirit of the gospel; if both the individuals and the church are filled with this gospel spirit, sinners will be saved continually.
- VI. We need to pray to kindle the fire of the gospel—cf. Acts 4:31; *Hymns*, #927:**
- A. In order to preach the gospel, we first must be a person for the gospel, having the spirit of the gospel; next, we must pray:
 1. We should pray for the Lord to strengthen the spirit of the gospel within us so that the fire of the gospel would burn among us.
 2. Furthermore, we must pray for the Lord to give us a heart of love toward men, to give us a sense of urgency toward the thousands of people who are perishing every day, and especially to give us an interest in sinners and a desire to contact them—*Hymns*, #921.
 - B. This kind of prayer fans the fire of the gospel into flame; the more we pray, the more the fire of the gospel will be burning in us; eventually, when we see a sinner, we will be moved to tears, and we will love the unbelievers.
 - C. If the fire of the gospel is kindled within us, we will become crazy for the gospel and go everywhere to preach the gospel—8:4, 29-40:
 1. The young people should be crazy for the gospel on their college campuses; whenever they see an unbeliever, they should be enlivened, even to the point that they forget about eating and care only for the gospel.
 2. We should distribute gospel tracts and booklets every day; we should never be without gospel tracts, and we should give them to everyone we see.
 3. Whether we are in a store or eating in a restaurant, we should give out gospel tracts.
 4. If we are the kind of people who preach the gospel everywhere, we will see the effect of the gospel; the economical Spirit, the Spirit of power will be upon us, and we will be full of power in the gospel—cf. 4:33.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

**THE NEED OF THE RECOVERY TODAY—
TO GAIN THE INCREASE**

Today in the Lord’s recovery the greatest need, the primary need, is to gain the increase. A house cannot be built without materials. We need to save sinners through the preaching of the gospel that they may become material for the building up of the church as the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). In general, the rate of increase depends on the way we labor in the gospel, and also on the environment and the people. In Russia, in a short time of approximately one year, two large churches have been raised up, one in Moscow and another in St. Petersburg. There the rate of increase has been very high because the way has been somewhat right, the environment is very favorable, and the people are very suitable. For a number of reasons the rate of increase in the United States has been much lower. The rate of increase among the churches in Taiwan has been similar to that in the United

States. The churches in Taiwan have been in existence for more than forty years, yet the number of saints in the churches today indicates that the rate of increase has been lower than ten percent per year.

If we mean business with the Lord for His recovery, we need to consider our present situation seriously. We should not be comfortable concerning the present situation of the Lord's recovery, especially regarding the matter of increase. With the exception of Russia, the situation everywhere—in America, in Europe, and in the Far East—is about the same with regard to the increase. We need to be aware of the present situation. We should not allow ourselves to be drugged, thinking that the situation among us is so wonderful. No doubt the recovery is wonderful, but some aspects of the recovery are not encouraging, especially the matter of increase. This is why in 1984 I went to Taiwan purposely to study this matter.

I feel that in order for us to be rescued from our present situation, we definitely need the vital groups. The vital groups are a matter of life or death. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, msg. 19, pp. 184–185)

THE COMMISSION OF THE GOSPEL

We need to see the commission of the gospel. Preaching the gospel is the greatest commission in the Bible, and it is the Lord's greatest charge to us. This charge is found in three portions of the New Testament: the last chapter of Matthew, the last chapter of Mark, and the last chapter of Luke. According to these three portions, after the Lord Jesus resurrected, He left us with a commission. This commission was His final charge. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Mark 16:15 says, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all the creation." We need to proclaim the gospel not only to all the nations but also to all the creation. Luke 24:47 says, "That repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." These three verses show that preaching the gospel is the Lord's commission to us.

After a person is saved, he does not need to be encouraged to preach the gospel, because there is a spontaneous desire within him to preach the gospel to others. When he preaches the gospel, he is full of joy. Preaching the gospel revives us. We are burning within when we preach the gospel to people. The presence of opinions and disputes in the church is proof that the church has lost the burden of the gospel. The best way to eliminate opinions is to preach the gospel. When we preach the gospel, we are in one accord. Preaching the gospel is truly the Lord's commission. The Lord lives in us because He wants us to preach the gospel to others. Every believer has a desire to lead others to salvation and has the spirit of the gospel within him. Preaching the gospel is the Lord's commission to us.

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE GOSPEL

Paul said, "I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish" (Rom. 1:14). The debt that Paul owed was the debt of the gospel. In 1 Corinthians he said, "If I preach the gospel, I have no boast, for necessity is laid upon me; for woe to me if I do not preach the gospel. If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship" (9:16-17). This shows that we bear responsibility for the gospel.

This applied to Paul, and it also applies to every believer. Whenever a believer draws near to the Lord, he has the sense that he owes people the gospel, that he is a debtor of the gospel. Even though he is not hired, he bears responsibility and feels that he has the debt to preach the gospel. He also feels that it is an offense to the Lord if he does not preach the gospel and that the Lord will judge him for not preaching the gospel. If we have a heart for the Lord, we will sense the distress of not preaching the gospel. However, if we are willing to preach the gospel, we will receive a reward from the Lord. Therefore, we not only need to receive a commission from the Lord, but we also need to take care of the inner feeling of responsibility. Preaching the gospel is our responsibility. (*Guidelines for the Propagation of the Lord's Recovery*, ch. 4, p. 54)

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL AND THE GOSPEL OF THE CHURCH

Witness Lee: Individually or as the church, something is wrong when there is no fruit from our gospel preaching. Church history throughout the past two thousand years shows that as soon as an individual or a church touches God's grace, many people are saved. The church in Hong Kong must

preach the gospel. Today we will speak about preaching the gospel. Concerning the preaching of the gospel we have to pay attention to two things. First, the church must have the spirit of the gospel. Second, the whole church must be active in preaching.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GOSPEL
The Power of the Gospel
Issuing from the Spirit of the Gospel

If our preaching merely stirs up men's emotions or turns men to outward activities, this gospel will never be powerful. In order to preach the gospel we must have the spirit of the gospel. This is the only thing that will bring in the genuine power of the gospel. About three years ago I spoke on this subject at a university in Shanghai. I said that if a young person would open his spirit to the Lord, he would surely receive the spirit of the gospel from God. Today the church must preach the gospel. The church must love sinners' souls. This is especially true of the young students. If the Lord gives you a burden in your spirit, when you see your classmates playing in the field, you should kneel down and pray for them. If you do not preach the gospel, you will not feel happy. Individually or as the church of God, we must be filled with the spirit of the gospel. If both the individuals and the church are filled with this gospel spirit, sinners will be saved continually.

D. L. Moody led over one million people to the Lord on both sides of the Atlantic during his lifetime. He was a shoemaker, but because he had a love for sinners' souls, he forsook everything for the Lord's gospel. He was very burdened for man's soul. Once he invited a young girl to his Sunday school meeting. The girl promised to come but did not show up. A few days later, Moody met her on the street and ran after her. The girl ran into a hotel, closed the doors to one of the rooms, and hid under a bed. But Mr. Moody did not give up. He followed her into the hotel and dragged her out from under the bed. The girl could not do anything except go to the meeting with him. After Moody died, a co-worker, R. A. Torrey, was on a train. A lady asked him, "Do you know who I am?" He answered, "No." She said, "I am the daughter of the little girl who was pulled from under the bed to attend the Sunday school."

Another time, Mr. Moody went out in the rain with an umbrella that did not have a top. Many curious ones came around him. As the crowd gathered, he began to tell them that God's judgment would come, and nothing that they had would hide them from this judgment. They would all be like a topless umbrella; nothing would keep out the rain. Many people were saved through such a word.

Many people criticize those who are zealous for the gospel. They say that zealous ones are mentally unstable. These ones who criticize are afraid that they will also become "mentally unstable" if they become zealous for the gospel. Actually, those who are zealous for the gospel are not mentally unstable. They are pressed by a gospel spirit, and they feel uncomfortable and painful if they do not preach the gospel. When I was saved, I did not have any peace until I preached the gospel to others. Every holiday I would write some gospel tracts and go to the villages to preach the gospel from house to house. At other times, I would preach the gospel to whomever I met. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 62, ch. 37, pp. 403-406)

Praying to Kindle the Fire of the Gospel

In order to preach the gospel, we first must be a person for the gospel, having the spirit of the gospel. Next, we must pray. If we lack prayer, all our labor will be in vain. Therefore, we must pray. However, we should not pray for any specific persons; our prayer should be general. We should pray for the Lord to strengthen the spirit of the gospel within us so that the fire of the gospel would burn among us. Furthermore, we must pray for the Lord to give us a heart of love toward men, to give us a sense of urgency toward the thousands of people who are perishing every day, and especially to give us an interest in sinners and a desire to contact them. This kind of prayer fans the fire of the gospel into flame; the more we pray, the more the fire of the gospel will be burning in us. Eventually, when we see a sinner, we will be moved to tears, and we will love the unbelievers. The young saints should exercise in this way. If we feel nothing in our heart when we see people, the gospel tracts that we give them will be cold. However, if the fire of the gospel is burning within us, we will be burdened when we think of the unbelievers going to the lake of fire. Then every tract that we give out will touch people's hearts.

If the fire of the gospel is kindled within us, we will become crazy for the gospel and go everywhere to preach the gospel. The young people should be crazy for the gospel on their college

campuses. Whenever they see an unbeliever, they should be enlivened, even to the point that they forget about eating and care only for the gospel. We should distribute gospel tracts and booklets every day. When I was young, there were always gospel tracts in my pocket. On my way to and from work, I would give them to the people I met. We should never be without gospel tracts, and we should give them to everyone we see. Whether we are in a store or eating in a restaurant, we should give out gospel tracts. If we are the kind of people who preach the gospel everywhere, we will see the effect of the gospel. The economical Spirit, the Spirit of power will be upon us, and we will be full of power in the gospel. (*The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord's Serving Ones*, ch. 2, pp. 18-19)

SPIRITUAL FIRE

No one should seek for fire. As long as we have enough consecration and as long as we have enough friction, we will have the fire. If the spiritual pathway is too easy and relaxed, the fire of the gospel will be extinguished. The more we go on in the spiritual pathway, the more we should not consider ourselves as experienced or matured. If we think that we have consecrated enough, we will quench the fire on the altar. In the Old Testament God commanded that the fire on the altar must not go out day or night (Lev. 6:12-13). The entire life of a Christian, from the time he first believes to the time he goes to the Lord, must be accompanied by fire.

In Mark 8:35 the Lord said, "Whoever will lose his soul-life for My sake and the gospel's...." This is not only for the Lord's sake but also for the gospel's sake. Paul was an apostle who was consecrated for the gospel's sake. He said, "And I do all things for the sake of the gospel that I may become a fellow partaker of it" (1 Cor. 9:23). The more he advanced in his spiritual life and the deeper his life took root, the more the fire of the gospel burned in him. Paul said that he was a called apostle separated unto the gospel of God (Rom. 1:1). The gospel not only includes saving sinners from hell, but every aspect of God's gospel, including salvation, sanctification, justification, the church, etc. The gospel covers a wide scope. Paul said that he was the foremost among sinners, yet he was called to be a pattern to other believers (1 Tim. 1:16). He also said that he was less than the least of all saints, yet he received grace to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel (Eph. 3:8). These verses show us that the Lord has called us for the gospel.

I have to shout aloud that we need to bring in a gospel spirit. This is the only way for the brothers and sisters to go on. Unless we have this spirit, our preaching will be like children playing with toys. In Foochow the fire of the gospel has been ignited. The church not only must preach the gospel but must touch the gospel spirit. In order to touch the gospel spirit, the only way is for us to have a fresh consecration.

The author of the book *Seen and Heard*, Mr. M'Kendrick, was a miner. He did not even attend an elementary school, but he was a totally consecrated person. Within him was the gospel fire. His heart was filled with a burning zeal for saving souls. Once, while he was on the platform, he could not utter a word. As he looked around at the unsaved people sitting before him, he began to cry, and tears rolled down his cheeks like torrents. In the end he only shouted a word or two. God's Spirit filled the entire congregation. All were convicted of their sin and waywardness. We should not be afraid of shouting. John the Baptist shouted in the Gospels. The Lord Jesus also shouted. The apostles shouted many times in Acts. Although Brother M'Kendrick did not have much education or gift, he had the gospel spirit, and countless numbers of people were saved through him.

A young person may not have the gift of Moody, Finney, or Spurgeon, but he can learn to be a M'Kendrick. A young brother may not necessarily have the gift of the gospel, but he must have the spirit of the gospel. In church history God raises up great evangelists only once in a long while. But every lover of the Lord should and must have a gospel spirit.

On the one hand, we should increase our gospel preaching. On the other hand, we should increase our consecration. Our consecration cannot stop. Once we stop our consecration, the spirit of the gospel will stop. In order to recover the gospel, we have to recover consecration. Both things have to be absolute in us. Our foolishness lies in the misconception that we are behind the early church only in the power of the gospel; actually, our consecration comes far behind the early disciples as well. May the fire of God's gospel continue to burn in us. May it ignite you and me first. May the church not become a hindrance to the world's salvation, but a channel through which the Lord is dispensed to the world. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 61, ch. 2, pp. 26-29)

Lesson 2

Truth Spreading

Hymns: 806

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 2:4, 7; 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:10-11; 2:2, 15; 3:14-17; Matt. 28:19-20; 24:45

- I. **“I was appointed a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth”—1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11:**
 - A. A teacher is a tutor who teaches, defines, and explains the contents of God’s eternal purpose and His New Testament economy—1 Tim. 2:7, note 1.
 - B. A teacher gives instructions to the churches with all the saints—2 Tim. 1:11, note 2.
- II. **God desires all the saved ones to have the full knowledge of the truth—1 Tim. 2:4, note 2:**
 - A. *Truth* means reality, denoting all the real things revealed in God’s Word, which are mainly Christ as the embodiment of God and the church as the Body of Christ.
 - B. Every saved person should have a full knowledge, a complete realization, of these things.
- III. **The Lord’s recovery is a recovery of the truth:**
 - A. The truths as revealed in the Scriptures have been lost, missed, misunderstood, misinterpreted, and wrongly taught throughout the ages; hence, there is the need of the Lord’s recovery:
 1. The Lord’s recovery is the recovery of the divine truths as revealed in the holy Scriptures, the holy Word of God—2 Tim. 3:16.
 2. The goal of the Lord’s recovery is to recover the reality, life, livingness, strength, power, and impact of the matters revealed in the Scriptures.
 - B. The truth in the Lord’s recovery is the consummate truth of the past nineteen centuries—2 Tim. 2:2.
 - C. The Lord’s recovery needs those who are able to teach the truth; this is according to the Bible, which says that we should come to the full knowledge of the truth and that we should teach others the truth—1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:2; cf. Acts 18:26.
- IV. **For the propagation of the Lord’s recovery, we must pursue the truth in order to be equipped—2 Tim. 3:14-17:**
 - A. Second Timothy 3:17 says, "That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work"; the Bible is our equipment, and we need to be fully equipped in God’s word.
 - B. We all need to be teachers of the Word; to be a teacher, we need to know how to speak the truth.
- V. **The truth is nowhere but in the Bible, yet the Bible needs an opener; the Life-study messages with the Recovery Version and all the footnotes open the Bible to us whenever we touch them:**
 - A. Those who have read the Life-study messages can testify that these messages with the notes of the Recovery Version have opened up a certain chapter or a certain book of the Bible; this is not to replace the Bible but to bring people into the Bible.
 - B. The best way to be constituted of the New Testament truths is to use the Recovery Version with the notes and the Life-study messages.
 - C. We all need to build up a practice of spending at least thirty minutes in the Word every day—either three times of ten minutes each or one time of thirty minutes.
- VI. **We must get into the truths and get these truths constituted into our being; the solid truth ministered to the saints can build up the church:**

- A. What kind of church we build up depends on what kind of truth we teach; there is a desperate need of the living truth to produce the church, to help the church to exist, and to build up the church—1 Tim. 3:15.
- B. When what we read becomes a truth in our being, this nourishment remains forever; the only way for the truth to get into us is through our mentality, our understanding.
- C. If the truth gets into our memory, it becomes a constant and long-term nourishment; then we have an accumulation of the truth and will know how to present the truth to others to make them solid and constituted with the truth.
- D. We should endeavor to use the time to learn the truth, to know the truth, to speak the truth, to experience Christ through the truth, and to minister Christ to people by the Spirit.
- E. In addition to our personal study, we also need to study with others; this kind of study cannot be carried out in big meeting; it can be carried out mutually in vital group meetings of six to not more than ten saints.

VII. We must bear the responsibility for spreading the understood divine truths—Matt. 28:19-20:

- A. Today there is the need of the spreading of the translated, interpreted, and understood truths for the Lord's recovery.
- B. The notes we have published in the Recovery Version are the aggregate of the proper understanding of the New Testament; the proper understanding of the Bible has been collected in our writings in order for us to study, learn, and spread the divine truths.
- C. The Lord's present charge to us should be to go and teach the nations that the present age may be consummated; we should teach people about the Triune God, God's economy and God's dispensing, the wonderful process of the Triune God, Christ's redemption, God's salvation in life, all the aspects of the church, and the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of God's dispensing.
- D. The Lord has given us His truths for us to spread them not only to Christians, but even to the unbelievers.
- E. What the Lord needs today is for thousands of His dear saints who love Him, who live to Him, and who know nothing but His recovery to take one way and to spread the same truths; we dispense the truths embodied in the Recovery Version.
- F. If we will use the Recovery Version, ministry booklets, and the Life-studies and present them to the believers and unbelievers all the time, we will gain people; in the Lord's ministry we are not building something to ourselves but altogether to Him.
- G. If we spread these truths, we will become the faithful servants to serve food to the Lord's people at the appointed time; then we will fulfill the commission of the Lord's recovery—24:45.

II. We need to learn to use the Bible and spiritual publications to bring people to salvation and to nourish them:

- A. From the time we begin to contact people, we must learn not to speak idle words, common words, or our own words.
- B. We should open the Bible and read a few verses; it is especially good to read our Recovery Version because there are footnotes for all the crucial verses.
- C. When we read the important verses to people and then read the footnotes with them, they will definitely be touched.
- D. We need to set up meetings in the homes to teach the pure truth; the best way to read in the small group meetings and the home meetings is for each one to read one sentence.
- E. In teaching we must minister Christ and point out the things related to the Spirit and life.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE NEED TO BE SATURATED WITH THE TRUTH

In principle I hope that you would take my word to help the saints in their personal time to get into the Word and also to bring the church meeting into such a living way and, even more, a rich way. The result will come out in many directions when the saints are saturated with the truth. The Bible indicates that whenever we are filled up within we will utter something (Eph. 5:18-19). When the saints are filled up within they will speak something. Their utterance may be the preaching of the gospel, the teaching of the truth, or the ministry of life. Even now we may encourage the saints to preach the gospel, teach the truth, and minister life, but they are empty. They have the heart and the desire to speak something, but they have no word to say because they are empty. They are not full. Even if some of you try to preach, you will realize that your preaching is not that full. You may try to teach and discover that your teaching is not that full. You want to minister life to others in your neighborhood, to your cousins, to your relatives and in-laws, but you do not have the riches of life. How then can you minister life to others?

THE PROPER DIET

Therefore, it is basic to have the saints getting into the Word personally every day and to have the entire meeting entering into the truth. Meeting after meeting and week after week you will see the accumulation of the truth go onward. I believe this is the proper way. This proper diet will kill all the germs on the negative side. Then there will be very few problems in the church life because the germs will have been killed. So many saints will be healthy and strong because they received the nourishing diet. This holy Word with the Spirit as the content does everything for the church—it produces the church, builds up the church, heals the wounds, swallows all kinds of darkness, and nourishes, strengthens, and enriches. This is the basic thing. If we could just do this one thing, the church would be wonderful.

We should bring all the saints in the churches in the Lord's recovery into the practice of carefully reading one or two Life-study messages each week. If we do this, over the long term—perhaps ten, eight or just five years—the saints will make much progress in all areas. (*Truth, Life, the Church and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery*, ch. 1, p. 13)

ENDEAVORING TO GET INTO THE TRUTH

Also, the elders have to endeavor to get into the truth. Do not excuse yourself by saying that you are too old. Even at the age of eighty I spend a certain, time every day in the Word. If I can make it, so can you. It all depends upon whether or not we have the heart. We all know the universal proverb which says, "If there is the will, there is the way." All of us elder brothers need to get ourselves saturated, soaked, and, constituted with this basic knowledge of God's Word. I must testify that I love God's Word. God is Spirit and God is life. The Spirit is in the Word and the Word is life.

It is not too much for me to propose such a thing strongly. I propose that you study the Bible with an opener, with a help. All of us who have some experience with the Life-study Messages know that they may be considered as the best help. They are the most availing and prevailing key to open up the New Testament to all of us. We must remember that at the beginning of any endeavor we always feel awkward and not so successful. However, we must realize that the beginning is the experimental stage, and if we keep endeavoring to get into the truth, I believe the result that will issue will be very promising.

A PRIVATE TIME IN THE LORD'S WORD

We should encourage the saints to have a private time in the Lord's Word and that they should do this as a proper rule of their daily life. Regardless of how busy or how tired we are, we can reserve thirty minutes a day for a time with the Lord in the Word. It all depends upon our will. If there is the will, there is the way. To save half an hour among twenty-four hours is not a hard thing. If the saints could practice one hour or more in the Lord's Word this would be wonderful, but at least we should encourage them to give a half an hour to the Lord every day. The saints should be encouraged to separate or sanctify thirty minutes everyday to the Lord. We all can realize what a blessing this will be, and I believe, this will make the Lord very pleased. Then every local church needs to find a way to

carry out the meetings in the principle of giving the saints the proper education in the full knowledge of the truth. (*Elders' Training, Book 3: The Way to Carry Out the Vision*, ch. 13, pp. 145-147)

**THE NEED OF THE SPREADING,
OF THE UNDERSTOOD DIVINE TRUTHS
FOR THE LORD'S RECOVERY AND RESTORATION**

Today there is the need of the spreading of the understood divine truths for the Lord's recovery and restoration. We can borrow Romans 10:14-15 and say, "How shall people hear without one who spreads? How beautiful are the feet of those who spread the interpreted and understood divine truths!" If we have a burden to go to Europe, we must spend day and night to study the truths we have published. Then we will know what the Lord's recovery is, and we will have a real burden to go to Europe to teach people. The Lord charges us in Matthew 28:19 to go and disciple the nations. The Lord's word here shows us that we should be burdened to go and teach all the nations.

There is the need of the spreading of the translated, interpreted, and understood truths for the Lord's recovery and restoration. The Lord does everything by speaking. If there is no speaking of the Lord, there is no work of the Lord. There cannot be a recovery in Europe if there is not the speaking of the divine truths. Most of the millions of people in Europe are void of the knowledge of these divine truths.

The spreading of the divine truths will bring in the Lord's restoration. According to Isaiah 11, the restoration will come because "the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, / As the waters cover the sea" (v. 9). We have to speak for the Lord to bring in this restoration. How shall people hear without one who spreads the divine truths? How beautiful are the feet of those who spread the interpreted and understood divine truths!

This is why we have to study these truths. Otherwise, we are not qualified to go to Europe. We should not go to speak to people in a superficial way. We may be able to speak John 3:16 to people: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." However, if someone asks us what eternal life is, we may not be able to tell them. It is possible to give fifteen messages on John 3:16. The first message can be concerning who God is, the second message can be on love, and the third message can be on the world. Then we can tell people how God gave His Son. God did not drop His Son down from the heavens to the earth. He gave His Son through incarnation. Then another message can be given on the only begotten Son. More can be said about what it means to perish and what it is to have eternal life. Message after message can be given on John 3:16.

We are not going there to preach to people in the traditional way, but to talk to them about all the divine truths. Through our speaking, some will be solidly saved. If we speak the deeper truths in John 3:16 to them, they will never forget this verse. May the Lord burden us to learn the divine truths and to spread them everywhere for His recovery and restoration. (*The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move*, ch. 2, pp. 31-32)

**THE LORD'S PRESENT CHARGE TO US SHOULD BE:
GO AND TEACH THE NATIONS THAT
THE PRESENT AGE MAY BE CONSUMMATED**

The Lord's present charge to us should be: go and teach the nations (cf. Matt. 28:19) that the present age may be consummated (24:14). In order to take the Lord's charge, we must keep the oneness. We must have the one accord. If we lose the oneness and the one accord, we are finished as far as the Lord's move is concerned. I realized the danger of divisions among us over the past ten years. This is why I called at least four urgent elders' meetings. I told the brothers that I realized there was the tendency among us toward divisions. This was because some of the brothers wanted to have their own work within the unique work of the Lord's recovery. Eventually, by 1987 my warning was fulfilled, and these divisions came to the surface. The main cause of these divisions was ambition. Some desired to have their own work, and at the same time they pretended to be for the Lord's recovery.

When the saints go to Europe, they should not touch any of these negative things. We should only go to teach the divine truths. We should teach people about God. We should tell them how the eternal God is triune and how He is perfect and complete as love, light, holiness, and righteousness. Then we

can go on to teach them God's economy. In God's economy, He desires to have man as His expression. Thus, He created the heavens for the earth, the earth for man, and man with a spirit to receive Him as life. We need to teach people God's economy, God's desire, God's plan, God's purpose. We also need to teach people God's dispensing. We need to tell them how God wants to dispense Himself in His element and essence into our being to make Himself one with us.

We should also teach people about the wonderful process through which the Triune God has passed in order to dispense Himself into us. He was incarnated and lived a human life on earth for thirty-three and a half years. In His living we can see the divine attributes and the human virtues. He went to the cross and died an all-inclusive death to deal with Satan, the world, sin, the flesh, the old man, the old creation, and the ordinances. Through His death, on the positive side, He released the divine life and entered into resurrection. In His resurrection, we were resurrected with Him. He became the firstborn Son, and we, through regeneration by Him and with Him, became God's many sons as the members of Christ to constitute His Body. We need to teach people all of these things.

We should also teach people the detailed items of Christ's redemption through His blood. He redeemed us by washing us; forgiving us, justifying us, and reconciling us to God. We also should minister to people the items of God's salvation in the life of Christ, in regenerating us, renewing us, sanctifying us, transforming us, conforming us into His image, and glorifying us in Christ as the glory. The people also need to see all the aspects of the church. They need to eventually see how the one universal church, as the Body of Christ, should be expressed as the local churches in many localities. We need to teach with much stress the truths concerning the all-inclusive Christ and the church as the organic Body of Christ. Eventually, the church will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the ultimate manifestation of the processed Triune God mingled with the transformed tripartite man to express the Triune God to the fullest in eternity. Our teaching of the divine truths should include the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of God's dispensing. When we go to Europe, we should teach the central line of the divine truth with the main stresses without making any small point an issue for debating or fighting that causes divisions. (*The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move*, ch. 3, pp. 40-41)

FULFILLING THE LORD'S COMMISSION TO HIS RECOVERY

The Lord has commissioned us with His recovery, and He has surely opened up the New Testament to reveal many dear and precious truths to us. What the Lord needs is for thousands of His dear saints who love Him, who live to Him, and who know nothing but His recovery to take one way. Regardless of whether the saints are from Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, England, Thailand, Indonesia, or the United States, we all bear the same burden, take the same way, and spread the same truths. We dispense the truths embodied in the "gold bar," the Recovery Version. We have no other merchandise! If we would be like this, the entire earth will be taken!

It breaks my heart to see some practicing to have another ministry, using the material of the ministry. We all have to pray, "Lord, rescue me from my ambition to be somebody in the recovery." We should only know the truths of God's New Testament economy. We only use one way by one accord, prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. This is what I believe the Lord is after, and this is what we all expect in the depths of our being. Everyone will feel happy about this.

We all have to realize that we are the full-timers. If we are a banker, we do banking to Him. If we are a teacher, we teach to Him. If we make one dollar or one million dollars, we make it to Him. Then when we go out, the Lord will surely back us. We do not need to worry about our living. The Lord will be backing us. When we go out, we do not go in a dissenting or ambitious way. If you go out with your ambition to build yourself up and I go out with my ambition to build my ministry up, we are finished. The Lord has to go to others. We all need to go out in one way like an army. Then we will have the morale and the impact.

We do not need to do that much. We just need to go out with a pure heart, without anything to ourselves but all things to Him. Just go out with all the truths and the Recovery Version to read to people. I assure you that you will catch someone every week. You do not need to preach your teaching or your kind of doctrine with your terminology. We have to see what the Lord's recovery is. The Lord's recovery has been commissioned with a big enterprise to spread the Lord's truths. He has given us the truths which we are holding. But we need the faithful, pure-hearted ones, who do not

have any intention to live to themselves but to Him, to go out to spread these “gold bar” truths. There is no need for you to preach or teach in your way. Open up the Recovery Version and read some of the notes with the hungry ones.

If we all would go out in this way, I believe each one of us would get some persons every week. We would begin to have the increase, not just in percentage but in fold. We could even triple our number in one year. If we would all gain one person every three months, we would have a fourfold increase in one year. If you use the “gold bar” (the Recovery Version), the rainbow booklets, and all the Life-studies, and present them to the believers and unbelievers all the time, within three months you will get one person. I believe that you may even get one person every week. In the Lord’s ministry, we are not building something to ourselves but something altogether to Him.

Let us all be full-timers! If we are led to drop our jobs, then we drop them to Him and go out to serve the precious truths in the Recovery Version, the rainbow booklets, and the life-studies to everybody. We may read them note 14¹ in 2 Corinthians 13 or note 3⁴ in Hebrews 1, which tells us what aspects of Christ are revealed in each of the books of the New Testament. If we go out to read the notes of the Recovery Version to people, they will be caught. We will gain much increase. Actually, though, I do not care that much for the increase. I care for the spreading of the truths so that they can get into the needy hearts. If we spread these truths, we will become the faithful servants to serve food to the Lord’s people at the appointed time (Matt. 24:45). Then we will fulfill the commission of the Lord’s recovery. This is where my heart is. I will die to this. I told the brothers in the Far East I will not stop until my entire being is exhausted by this ministry. I hope you all will say the same thing. (*Elders’ Training, Book 8: The Life-Pulse of the Lord’s Present Move*, ch.8, pp. 124-127)

LEARNING TO USE THE BIBLE AND SPIRITUAL PUBLICATIONS TO BRING PEOPLE TO SALVATION AND TO NOURISH THEM

Next, we need to learn to use the Bible and spiritual publications to nourish people. From the time we begin to contact people, we must learn not to speak idle words, common words, or our own words. The best thing is to read a good book, especially the Bible. The Bible is the world-renowned classic of classics and is the highest book in the human race. Although people may not believe it and may even oppose it, they still would admit that the teachings in the Bible are the highest. When you go to contact someone, you should open the Bible and read a few verses to him. It is especially good to read our Recovery Version because there are footnotes for all of the crucial verses. When you read the important verses to someone and then read the footnotes with him, he will definitely be touched. Once he is stirred up inwardly, you can then explain the footnotes to him, and he will surely be receptive.

Besides the Bible, we still have many spiritual publications such as *The Mystery of Human Life*. This title elicits respect, and the content is not something common. It is not about going to heaven; that is too shallow. *The Mystery of Human Life* is the key to open up people’s hearts. This booklet stirs up people’s interest, causing them to want to read it, to discover something uncommon and to see the mystery of the four keys. Whether you read it to a person or he reads it himself, you need to observe his facial expression. Once you detect that there is an opening in him, stop reading and ask him directly how he feels. Then ask him to pray with you. Once he prays in the name of the Lord, he is saved. However, there is another half step, the other foot, which is baptism. At this time, you must quickly get the water ready, not giving him any chance to have second thoughts, and baptize him immediately. As soon as he is baptized, it is as if you have made a contract and had it signed. Later, when you meet with him in his home, you must continue the use of the Bible and spiritual publications. When you are meeting in the home meetings with him, you must observe in what areas he is lacking. Once you sense the lack in a certain area, you must immediately find pertinent messages and go over them with him to nourish and to perfect him.

Among us are a large number of spiritual publications, close to one thousand, on all kinds of topics. Every message is appealing. We need to choose appropriate publications and carry two or three with us. We also need to prepare ourselves by finding a few suitable verses; this is to learn how to use the Bible. Then when you go to the next level of visitation, you should not begin with idle words but rather say to him, “This Bible verse is very good. Please read it.” According to my

experience, eight out of ten people after reading it would say, "I want to buy this book. I want to have this Bible." (*Rising Up to Preach the Gospel*, ch. 6, pp. 104-105)

HOW TO USE THE READING MATERIAL

One point needs special attention: In selecting the reading material, we should precede each portion with a few crucial verses. Every time we meet together, we should first have the attendants pray-read the verses. This will plant the Lord's word into man's heart. His word is living, operative, and full of power. We hope that those who come to the meeting will receive nourishment and truth and will testify that we are here for the spreading of the gospel and the presenting of the truth.

Do not underestimate the practice of pray-reading in the meetings. There are three to four meetings a week, and fifty-two weeks in a year. In time, the deposit will add up. As the saints pray-read the Lord's words into them these words become a deposit in them and serve as their timely supply. We need to pay much attention to this. Never neglect this practice by saying that there is not enough time for pray-reading. No matter how long the meeting is, there should always be three to five minutes for pray-reading a few verses. Even if there is not enough time, we should still take care of this, because this is an indispensable element of the meeting.

In reading the publications, do not be dull or monotonous. A few ways of reading should be avoided. First, we should not have everyone read together except when we come across the crucial sentences. If the whole congregation reads through half a message or an entire message together, that will kill the meeting. Next, we should not have one person read through an entire paragraph. According to my experience, observation, and personal investigation, the best way to read in the small group meetings and the home meetings is for each one to read one sentence. This kind of reading may be difficult at the beginning, but in time it will become easy. I hope all the halls, small groups, and home meetings will promote this kind of reading. I would like to see this practice developed until it becomes our "family tradition." (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 1: The Vision and Definite Steps for the Practice of the New Way*, ch. 11, pp. 228-229)

Lesson 3

Fruit-bearing

Hymns: 925

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:28; John 15:1-8, 16

- I. The primary thing that every serving one in the church must do is to bring forth fruit:**
- A. The Lord Jesus said that we believers are the branches of this vine, and the branches of this vine are for bearing fruit—John 15:5.
 - B. God firstly created one man, but He desired to have many men for His purpose; therefore God said, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”—Gen. 1:28:
 - 1. According to this verse the primary responsibility Adam bore was to reproduce.
 - 2. Likewise, we Christians are charged to bear fruit—John 15:16.
 - C. All other matters in the Christian life are for this; we read the Bible because we must bear fruit, we pray because we must bear fruit, and we are victorious and overcoming because we must bear fruit; everything is for fruit-bearing.
 - D. If we do not have fruit-bearing, we cannot have the increase, and if we do not have the increase, we cannot build up the Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12.
- II. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain...”—John 15:16a:**
- A. The word “set” is a strong word; it is not just that the Lord appointed us or arranged something for us but that He has set us; this is our destiny; the destiny of the lovers of Christ is to bear fruit.
 - B. According to John 15, fruit-bearing is not an easy thing (vv. 18-25); the vine suffers for many months before its season comes to bear fruit.
 - C. The Greek word for *go forth* means *to depart*, implying to leave for another place; hence, it is rendered *go forth*:
 - 1. To go out just once or twice, or even thirty or forty times, will not work.
 - 2. We should keep going out to preach the gospel for a complete year regardless of whether we bear fruit or not.
 - D. “I do not expect that you will gain one person every year, but I expect and the full assurance that within three years you will gain at least one”—*Exercise and Practice of the God-ordained Way*, msg. 9, p. 81.
 - E. The Lord’s desire is for remaining fruit; the problem is that we have never built up a habit to labor persistently over a long period of time.
 - F. “I can assure all of the saints in the churches that they will be successful if they will be faithful to go out for two to three hours every week, week after week, for forty-four weeks a year. While the saints are practicing this, they will learn many things”—*Exercise and Practice of the God-ordained Way*, msg. 9, p. 81.
- III. We need to practice a simple way to bear remaining fruit:**
- A. First, we need to make a vow to the Lord to spend two to three hours per week to contact people for their salvation.
 - B. Second, we need to be revived by the Lord, day by day:
 - 1. The *Holy Word for Morning Revival* has been a help to the saints to be revived by the Lord every morning.
 - 2. 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; v. 24, note 1.

3. We should get two verses from the Scripture to live on every day and then contact people for the Lord in a definite way.

C. Third, we need to make a plan with a schedule to personally contact people every week:

1. Make a decision and tell the Lord that you will spend two to three hours every week in the gospel contacting people one by one personally and directly.

2. 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.

3. Plan and schedule your time so that you can contact two or three individuals per week.

4. 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.

5. Labor on those with whom you are acquainted directly or indirectly—relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates, etc.

6. 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.

7. You can start by yourself and then get a companion to labor with you.

8. Redeem your time to pray for them, write them letters [or emails], send them booklets, and make appointments to go to visit them.

9. Labor to bring one or two to the church life yearly; this should be the goal of our labor.

IV. We must make a strong decision to labor in a personal way for the increase of the church:

A. We need “new blood,” newly saved ones; all the churches must pay attention to this.

B. The only rescue for us is to change our way so that we can gain the increase; the increase of the churches is the key point to us today.

C. What we need today is the proper increase due to our labor; if we labor faithfully we will see the result.

D. As we are preaching the gospel we should learn to exercise our discernment concerning whether a person will be difficult to gain or not; if we discern that the environment, the family, and so forth would make it difficult to gain someone, we should not invest our time in that person.

E. We should keep two or three gospel candidates under our care; if we have close relatives, we should spend our time, heart, and energy on them.

F. We must visit those under our care at least once a week; a nursing mother must feed her little ones regularly; in the same way, we must visit the new ones again and again.

V. We need to contact people directly, personally, and continually to bear remaining fruit:

A. We should each make a decision to get one person saved for the church life every year.

B. The most basic, crucial, and vital thing is for us to bring forth children; to bring forth spiritual children, you must make a serious decision to contact people directly.

C. The reason why we do not bear fruit is because we do not practice contacting people directly, personally, and faithfully.

D. We may feel that we do not know how to perfect people, but we all can go to them; we should focus our attention on going to see people and letting them see us; this practice will bring in the increase.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

The primary thing that every co-worker, elder, and serving one in the church must do is to bring forth fruit. A fruit tree does not bear fruit once every five years. According to Revelation 22:2, the tree of life yields its fruit twelve times a year. The tree of life in Revelation 22 is the vine in John 15. The Lord Jesus said that we believers are the branches of this vine, and the branches of this vine are for bearing fruit (John 15:5). If we do not bear fruit, we are wrong. We should bear at least one fruit a year.

God firstly created one man, but He desired to have many men for His purpose. Therefore, God said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). According to this verse, the primary responsibility Adam bore was to reproduce. Likewise, we Christians are charged to bear fruit. All other matters in the Christian life are for this. We read the Bible because we must bear fruit, we pray because we must bear fruit, and we are victorious and overcoming because we must bear fruit. Fruit-bearing is not for the Bible or for prayer. Rather, everything is for fruit-bearing. We have many things today, including Bible reading, Bible study, and prayers, but the one thing we lack is fruit-bearing. An orchard is for fruit-bearing, not for making a show. It is meaningless to keep an orchard clean and in order but not have fruit. It is better to have a messy orchard that is full of fruit. If we do not have fruit-bearing, we cannot have the increase, and if we do not have the increase, we cannot build up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). (*Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (3)*, ch. 8, pp. 72-73)

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

Now I want to come to my point. If you would receive mercy from the Lord to live Him, to live for Him, and to preach Him to gain sinners for Him, just do it yourself. Do not trust in any preacher. Do not expect to get help from any speaker. Just gain people for the Lord yourself. Surely you can save one person within one year. I am burdened that we have a breakthrough in this matter. I am looking to the Lord that each one of you would make a decision to get one person saved for the church life every year. In the natural realm, it is normal for people to have children. But today for us Christians who love the Lord, it seems difficult to bring forth a spiritual child. The Lord told us in John 15 that He is the vine and we are the branches (v. 5). He appointed us to go and bring forth remaining fruit (v. 16). We all should desire fruit that remains.

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.

I would beg you elders to learn to have a start in this. You yourself have to do it. Do not expect others to do it. You yourself do this one thing. Practice personally contacting people every week. Contact them individually. You can contact your relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates, etc. You need to plan and schedule your time so that you contact two or three individuals every week. You should pray, "Lord, I do not want to contact them in a natural way. I do not want to have natural talk when I meet with them. Lord, show me the vital way, the living way, to bring them to You." If you pray such a prayer, the Lord will show you. Today there is the need of some faithful doers in the practice of fruit bearing.

We need to practice contacting people. We may contact someone without any success or result. Then we can go to the Lord to repent and open to Him for His adjustment. He will impress us to go back to them in a certain way. When we follow the Lord to contact people according to His way, they will be saved. As we go out to contact people one by one, we will find out the proper way from the Lord. We will also find out the right persons to visit. We will learn not to waste our time. We have found that just to knock on doors in a general way can be a waste of time. We must look to the Lord to get a proper candidate for our labor. Then we need to work on him in a proper way. This is the successful way to labor in the gospel. The ones on whom we labor should be those with whom we are acquainted, either directly or indirectly. In this way the time we spend will be worthwhile.

Whether or not this can be worked out depends upon our endeavoring. We cannot just make an announcement in the meeting, encouraging others to go. We ourselves have to go. We should start by ourselves and then get a companion to labor with us. After half a year, we can bring forth four new ones who will labor in the same way that we are. For the destiny of the church in our locality, this is needed. We have wasted too much of our time. We must make a budget to be very economical in the way that we spend our time. We need to redeem our time by praying for our acquaintances and relatives, writing them letters, and sending them booklets. Then we can make appointments to go see them. As we labor, we need to learn with an honest and sincere heart. We need to learn how to talk to people and how to gain them within a short period of time. If we endeavor like this, we can bring at least two persons to the Lord yearly as remaining fruit. We may baptize more than five, but out of the five, two will remain in the church.

Keep this in mind—you must practice this yourself. I beg you to forget about having preachers and preaching meetings. That does not work so well. Just practice visiting people one by one personally and directly. Then after a short time, maybe two or three weeks, other saints will follow you to be your companions. Then you will have a start of the practice of fruit bearing in your locality.

You must spend your time on the right persons in the right way. In order to gain a valuable result, you must labor.

Do not trust in preachers with large preaching meetings. That will waste your time and delay others. You yourself must have a start in the practice of fruit bearing in such a strict way. Every week you' should spend two to three hours to contact individuals. You should carry this out as a business. Then you will see the results. I hope and pray for this. I believe that the Lord will eventually work this out, making each one of His lovers a winner of sinners.

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.

You do not need to announce anything to the church. If the saints in the church remain the way they are, do not blame or condemn them. Rather, go along with the church, and help it to go on. But you yourself need to labor in a definite way to gain people. New ones will then be brought into the church life through you, and everyone will see this....

We have tried many ways in the last six years, and they may work, but they do not work satisfactorily. Only the way of contacting people directly brings a satisfactory result. We need to plan how to contact our acquaintances. We have to keep working on one of them directly, individually, and continuously. To get someone saved and established takes about six months, and to bring them into the church will take another six months. We may think that to bring one or two a year into the church life is too slow. But this slow way is actually the quick way. If twenty are meeting together in a locality, and five of them bring two people into the church life, that is a fifty percent increase. I can assure you that this can be worked out. Any other way will waste our 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....

We must have a plan for reaching people. We should make a list of all our acquaintances and study their situation. Then we can work on them according to our study. This is the way to gain the proper persons. We should not leave our bearing of fruit to fortune. It is not a matter of fortune but a matter of labor. We all have acquaintances for whom we can pray. We need to consider them and pray for them. We need to study their situation and decide when the best time would be for us to visit them. Farmers do not labor in a loose way. They study the situation of their land, their crops, and the weather, and they labor accordingly so that they can reap a proper harvest. We need to be the same way in our labor to gain people. We must have a plan and a schedule to labor on people two to three hours every week. We need to learn how to gain people.

LABORING IN A PERSONAL WAY FOR THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH

I would ask the elders if they are happy about the increase in their locality. We must make a strong decision to labor in a personal way for the increase of the church. We should schedule our time for the weekly preaching of the gospel. For the Lord's recovery we all need a turn from barrenness to fruitfulness. We need the new ones. We need "new blood," newly saved ones. All the local churches must pay attention to this. If our number remains the same year after year, the saints may eventually lose interest in serving. Instead of being busy in the church life, they may become busy in a negative way. Mothers with young children are consumed with taking care of them. They do not have much time for other things. The only rescue for us is to change our way so that we can gain the increase. This is the only remedy.

If we cannot gain a thirty percent increase in a year, we should consider that as a failure. A twenty percent increase is good, but not that good. If twenty out of one hundred saints take this way, they can bring in at least thirty yearly. We do not need the whole church to work in this way. But it

is altogether reasonable, logical, and possible that one-fifth of the saints will work in this way. Then we can gain a thirty percent increase yearly. This increase will stir up the interest of the whole church.

This burden has been on my heart for a long time. The increase of the local churches is disappointing. Many churches have been existing for years with under one hundred saints. This has caused me great concern. In the physical realm, the parents are eventually concerned that their children have children. If the parents have five children, and none of them has any children, the parents will be bothered and disappointed. Not to beget children is a serious thing. The increase of the churches is the key point to us today. I have been in the Lord's interest for about sixty-five years. I have no trust in any kind of revival. We found out by history and through our history that big gospel campaigns do not work for the long run.

The Lord needs some of His saints to practice the priesthood of the gospel according to His ordained way. Then the Lord will have a way. The way of revival with big speakers does not work so well. What we need today is the proper increase due to our labor. If we labor faithfully, we will see the result. We need at least twenty percent of the saints among us to labor in this way. These ones can bring a thirty percent increase to the church. This will lay a foundation for the Lord to start a solid building up of His Body. In the local churches, the basic number with the basic, promising members is short. We need solid members for the solid building. We have to look to the Lord for His mercy that this work could be started among us. (*Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (2)*, ch. 9, pp. 143-151)

Lesson 4

Shepherding

Hymns: 1170

Scripture Reading: John 21:16; Luke 15:20-24, 4-7. 2 Cor. 12:14-15; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 John 5:16a; Exo. 21:5-6; Isa. 50:4-5; John 4:31-34; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2:1, 7-8, 11; Acts 20:20, 31; Matt. 24:45

I. “Do you love Me?...Shepherd My sheep”—John 21:16:

- A. The meaning of shepherding is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock, taking care of all the needs of the sheep and to take care of the children of God by feeding them—John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; cf. Psa. 23:1-2.
- B. In Christ’s heavenly ministry He is shepherding people and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people—John 21:15-17.
- C. Without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective.

II. We need the person and heart of a shepherd:

- A. In our service for the Lord, the person is the first thing; the kind of thing accomplished depends on the kind of person carrying it out.
- B. We need the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the seeking and shepherding spirit of our Savior Christ—Luke 15:20-24, 4-7.
- C. We must have the heart to spend and be spent for the Lord’s people—2 Cor. 12:15.
- D. We must be lovers of men and must cultivate an interest in man; as long as someone is a man, we should be interested in them.

III. We need to see the importance of being a pattern in shepherding people; the best way to shepherd people is to give them a proper pattern—1 Pet. 5:3:

- A. Peter charged the elders in 1 Peter 5:1-3 to “shepherd the flock of God...according to God...; nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.”
- B. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 Paul says, “You became imitators of us and of the Lord;” imitating is related to growing; children grow by imitating; in a family, to imitate actually means to grow.
- C. The proper way to foster the new believers is to show them a pattern; in this way you water them, supply them, nourish them and cherish them; the best way to feed others and to foster them is to give them a proper pattern.
- D. In order to be patterns of the flock, we must contact the Lord as our pattern in our spirit in order to enjoy Him daily as the richest grace and sweetest love—1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 5:14-15.

IV. The purpose of our service must be to minister life to others; we should fellowship with them and minister life to them so that they may grow—1 John 5:16a:

- A. In order for us to minister life to others, we must do at least four things:
 - 1. First, we must all purposely go to the Lord, not to pray for other things but simply to spend time with Him and to consecrate ourselves anew to serve Him in the church; to be a good serving one depends on our open ear; as ones who have life and the timely word from the Lord, we can speak the timely word to minister life to the weary and weak ones—Exo. 21:5-6; Isa. 50:4-5.
 - 2. Second, we must learn in the presence of the Lord to be dealt with by Him; it is better to pray in this way by ourselves, dealing first with the light we already have.
 - 3. Third, we must all pick up a burden to care for people.
 - 4. Fourth, we must learn to be interested in people in the way of life; every day the Lord’s people must be our “food” (John 4:31-34); then we can pick up the burden for some specific

persons, make a list of their names and always keep it in front of us, and pray for them one by one.

- B. In taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life—2 Cor. 7:2-7; 12:15; Philem. 7, 12:
 - 1. How fruitful we are, how much fruit we bear, does not depend on what we are able to do; it depends on whether we have an intimate concern.
 - 2. A ministering life is a life that warms up others; if we would minister life to the saints, we must have a genuine concern for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate.
 - 3. In shepherding the saints, it is possible that we may kill others; the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern—cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.
- C. Love, interest, burden and prayer are the essential, basic elements of proper shepherding; no shepherding can be prevailing if we do not have a love for people, an interest in them, and adequate prayer.

V. We need to follow the pattern of Paul as a nursing mother and an exhorting father in shepherding the believers—1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Thes. 2:7-8, 11; Acts 20:

- A. We should pick up one or two new ones and consider them as our babes; we must be prepared to spend two years to get someone saved, nourished, fed, raised up, and to some extent perfected to be one who is fully in the church life.
- B. We need to teach the divine truths to people to strengthen our shepherding and reach its goal.
- C. In order to help people in a definite way, we first need to determine their need and which stage of the spiritual life they are in; then we should find a way to help them or to meet their need.
- D. When you feed these little babes, you cannot feed them too much; in most cases, three or four verses are enough; you should always keep them a little hungry.

III. We need to set aside a weekly time to pray for our work of contacting people and to fellowship and study those whom we should contact:

- A. Each week we should meet with our group to pray for the work of contacting people; then we should fellowship about the situation with our contacts, so that we can study their cases.
- B. 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.
- C. We must learn to go and contact people through prayer, in prayer, and with prayer all the time.

IV. We need to raise up God's children with the word of God to know the two spirits, the basic practices of the Christian life, the different items of God's salvation, the experiences of life, and the church—2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Tim. 4:6:

- A. The first thing we should help the new believer to know is the two spirits—the Holy Spirit mingled with our human spirit—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 3:6; 4:24; Rom. 8:16; 1 Cor. 6:17.
- B. The second category of things we should impart to the new believers must be the basic and crucial practices of the Christian life: reading the Bible, praying always and pray-reading the word, keeping morning [revival], attending the meetings, etc.
- C. The third category of things we should cover with the new believers are all the different items of God's salvation; within God's salvation there are many different items including the forgiving of our sins, redemption, reconciliation, justification, regeneration, etc.
- D. We should shepherd the believers into the experiences of life.
- E. We should also shepherd the believers into knowing the church.

V. We should be very flexible and adjust ourselves to the level of the new believer, not trying to deal with too many different things in one visit; it would be better to discern which one of the things should be the subject for the visit and to feed the new one the proper food based upon that subject—Matt. 24:45.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

LEARNING TO BE INTERESTED IN PEOPLE

After we have a thorough dealing with the Lord and pick up a burden, we must learn to be interested in people. Because of the fall, many of us are not interested in others. We consider that whether others go to heaven or to hell is their own business. We do not care whether others grow in life, and we feel that it is sufficient for us to care for our own spiritual welfare. However, the church service requires every one of us to be involved with others. We need an interest in the Lord's people. We may illustrate this interest by the taste for certain foods. Many Chinese people are interested in Chinese cooking and have the taste to go to Chinatown. We, however, need to be interested in the Lord's people. Every day the Lord's people must be our "food" (John 4:31-34). Some older teenage sisters should say, "All the young girls between ten and fifteen years old in the church life are my food. I am interested in the young people to this extent."

However, we must not be interested in people in a natural way. Some people were born with the inclination to talk and even gossip. That is not what it means to be interested in people in a proper way. Many young ones like to talk about marriage, and many older ones like to ask concerning each others' children, grandchildren, and in-laws. We must forget about this kind of gossip. This is the natural, social way. Rather, we must be interested in people in the way of life. We should not care to ask about people's marriage, in-laws, or other matters. We are interested only in life. We should pray concerning this, and some may need to fast in prayer. We may pray, "Lord, by my birth I love to talk to people in a natural way," but others may need to pray, "Lord, I was born in a way that I do not like to talk to people. I love the brothers, and I have been in the church for ten years, but until today I still do not like to open myself to anyone." We should all pray, "Lord, burden me. I want to be fully interested in and involved with all Your dear saints, not in a natural or social way but in the way of life. Lord, I am willing to pay any price, even at the cost of my life. I love these people, and I would die for them. I want to see them saved, grow in life, and become matured."

Then we can pick up the burden for some specific persons. We should make a list of their names, always keep it in front of us, and pray for them one by one. A teenage sister may pray, "Lord, this one is still not saved. Lord, I will never be at peace until I see her saved. Lord, even for my sake You must save her." We may be too spiritual and say, "Lord, this is not for my sake." However, the Lord may say, "Because you have a genuine burden for this one, I will save her for your sake." Eventually the sister will see the little one be saved. After this she may say, "Lord, this little one is now saved, but she does not love You. I can never be satisfied with this. Do something in her so that she will love You, Lord, as I love You." Again, the sister will see the Lord answer her prayer. Likewise, the older generation must be burdened and pray in the same way. We need to be interested in people and involved with people. Then we can pick up a burden. Many in the church need our shoulders to bear them and our breast to embrace them (Exo. 28:9-12, 15-21, 29). We must love them. When they fall, we should weep, and when they rise up, we should be joyful. We must bear them as our burden. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, ch. 1, pp. 16-18)

KNOWING PEOPLE'S NEEDS AND HELPING THEM ACCORDINGLY

In order to help people in a definite way, we first need to determine their need and which stage of the spiritual life they are in, that is, their degree of growth in the divine life. Then we should find a way to help them or to meet their need.

If we meet an unbeliever, we will realize that his urgent need is to be saved. After realizing his need, we should pray and seek the Lord for the way to bring him to salvation. Through our prayer we may realize that there is a certain tract that would be very helpful to him. Through our seeking of the Lord we may also realize that this person has a certain problem that we cannot solve but that some other brother or sister may be able to solve. Thus, the Lord may lead us to bring this unbeliever to some other saints.

On the other hand, we may meet some who have been saved but do not know how to fellowship with the Lord, read the Word, or pray in a proper way. They may still live like people in the world, or there may be many things in their living and in their past that have not been cleared up. Once we

become aware of these needs, we need to find a way to help them. We may begin by helping them learn how to fellowship with the Lord. For this, we must ask the Lord for wisdom and the best way to help them. Later, they will be brought through in this matter, and something will have been built up in their Christian life. Then we may help them learn how to read the Word and pray. After a certain time they will be brought into these practices in a solid way. Then we may continue by helping them in the matter of the clearance of the past.

Suppose we meet some who already know how to fellowship with the Lord, read the Word, and pray. We may realize that although they have made some spiritual progress, they have not consecrated themselves to the Lord in a real way. Thus, we must find a way to help them in this matter. Then, at a certain point we may realize that they need to see the matter of the ground of the church and to know and experience Christ. We must help them in these definite matters. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1964*, vol. 2, "The Proper and Adequate Service to the Lord," ch. 8, pp. 43-44)

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*, ch. 25, pp. 243-244)

RAISING UP THE NEW ONES WITH THE WORD OF GOD

The second point regarding the raising up of God's children is that you have to raise them up with the word of God, not with your own word. You must always keep this principle. Do not speak your own word too much. You must learn to seize, or grasp, the opportunity to inject these new ones with the word of God. Feed them with the milk of the Word of God. This is why I published *Truth Lessons* and *Life Lessons*. In these volumes I have collected the most suitable verses for helping the new ones. I encourage all of you who are working in the Lord's new way to become very well acquainted with all forty-eight lessons in *Life Lessons*. All the subjects of these lessons were carefully selected according to my knowledge and experience to meet the needs of the new ones. Study these lessons, and learn how to use all these golden verses. It is best if you can recite all these verses, but at least you must know where they are in the Bible. Then if you cannot recite a verse, you can find it quickly. Sometimes, even if you can recite the verse, it is better to open to that verse and let the new one read it. Whatever you do, you must do it in a living way, and you should try to cover at least one definite point using the best verses.

The first thing we should inject into the new ones is that our Savior is the Spirit and that we as saved ones have a regenerated spirit. We need to spend at least three or four home meetings to impart this matter into them.

The second category of things we should impart to them must be the basic practices of the Christian life. As Christians we should read the Bible, the Word of God. We should pray to God, which is to breathe in God. Also, we should have morning watch. Every morning we should rise up early to have a time of morning watch with the Lord. We must also teach them how to practice morning watch by reading some verses and then pray-reading these verses. You have to charge them to attend the Christian meetings. Then you also have to help them to do the same thing that you did for them, that is, to preach the gospel to others. These are the basic practices of the Christian life.

The next matters we should cover with them are all the different items of God's salvation. God's salvation is all-inclusive, and within God's salvation there are many different items. There are the washing away of our sins, the forgiving of our sins, redemption, reconciliation, justification, regeneration, and so forth. All of these matters are covered in the forty-eight lessons in *Life Lessons*. You have to take care of all these matters, and to do so will require many weeks.

If you cover these three categories properly, the ones who are under your care will be raised up very well. Spontaneously, they will grow and become steadfast. The home meeting is like kindergarten, and the group meeting is like elementary school. In later messages we will have much fellowship on the group meeting. (*The Exercise and Practice of the God-ordained Way*, ch. 21, pp. 194-195)

Knowing the Spiritual Stage of the New Ones in Order to Help Them in a Particular Way

If we do not know where we are or where those whom we contact are, our fellowship with them will be very general. Of course, this is better than nothing, and for the first few contacts this may be good enough. For the long run, however, we need further learning. Then we will know where we are, and we will know where others are. We will know what we are short of and we will be able to help others to the extent of our own experience. Then the whole church will grow. Otherwise, we will simply meet together in a general way without being clear or knowing what we are doing. Not only the service groups but also every local church with an adequate eldership must help the saints to go on in this way. At first, the church life may be only in the “sixth grade,” but after a few years we will advance to “junior high,” “high school,” and eventually “college.” At the same time, some of the new ones will still be in “junior high” and even in “nursery school.” As a whole, however, the church will be at a higher level of life. This requires us not merely to give messages week after week. Rather we must know how to help the saints at every level, just as in America today we have all the different levels of education. Because of this, to be an elder in the proper church life is not an easy burden.

We must all see that this is the proper way of shepherding. Otherwise, we will not be clear what we are doing for the long run. We must know people’s spiritual condition. Then we will know where they are and what they need. We will realize whether or not we can afford them what they need, and we will go on to experience something further. This is what it means to shepherd people according to the experiences of life. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, ch. 9, pp. 109-113)