

Ministry Reading Regarding Serving the Lord

for Young People and in General

Regarding Service

1. Lessons on Service and Coordination* (See Below excerpts)
2. Serving the Lord; Lessons for New Believers (Lesson 19, Book)
3. Further Fellowship on Service, Coordination, and Functioning (excerpts)
4. Basic Lessons on Service (chs. 11-20)

Regarding Leading the Young People

1. Raising Up the Next Generation for the Lord in the Church Life
(Chapters 5-8; 18; 20-26)
2. Leading the Young People with the Word and the Spirit
3. Truth, Life, Church, Gospel: Four Pillars of the Lord Recovery (four core focuses)

Reading on Growing and Experience in Life

1. The Experience of Life and/or Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life
2. Song of Songs (with footnotes), Life Study/Crystallization Study of Song of Songs
3. Life Study of Exodus (God's redemption, salvation and our supply for service and building)
4. Read through the Young People's Book Library (listed below)

Lessons on Service and Coordination

SERVING THE LORD

Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Volume 3

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE SERVING THE LORD

Life Lessons, Vol. 2

LESSON TWENTY-THREE

Serving the Lord and preaching the gospel are related. Once a person is saved, he should preach the gospel and serve the Lord. Every normal Christian preaches the gospel and serves the Lord. Furthermore, the more a Christian receives grace, the more he will receive the Lord's leading and dealing and the more he will be able to serve the Lord in a proper way.

THE MOTIVE FOR SERVING THE LORD

1. "I love my master,...I will not go out free" (Exo. 21:5).

Believers do not serve the Lord because of outward encouragement or pressure from man. We serve the Lord out of the inward motivation of our love for the Lord. Our love for the Lord inwardly compels us to serve the Lord. It urges us to serve Him. Our love for the Lord makes us unable not to serve the Lord. We love the Lord, so we must serve the Lord. This is typified in the Old Testament by the slave who loved his master. Although the slave could have been free and did not need to continue to serve as a slave, he did not want to go out free because of his love for his master. He willingly remained as a slave to serve the master whom he loved. This is our motive in serving the Lord. We become His servants and serve Him willingly because of our love for Him. Our service to the Lord comes out of our love for Him.

A saved person wishes to serve the Lord, not out of others' encouragement or compelling, but out of an inward motive. This motive is his love for the Lord. His love for the Lord constrains him and impels him to serve the Lord. The verse here describes a slave in the Old Testament who, due to his love for his master, would not go out free at the end of his days of slavery; he would rather be a slave to serve his beloved master. This typifies the New Testament believer who should love the Lord and serve Him in the same manner.

2. "I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice...which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

We love the Lord because He loves us. The Lord's love moves us and encourages us to love Him. The Lord's love for us produces our love for Him, making it impossible for us not to love Him. Therefore, the Lord's love causes us to love Him and serve Him. For this reason Paul exhorted the believers through the compassions of God to present their bodies a living sacrifice in service to Him. The compassions of God, the love of God, encourage us to love Him and serve Him. We serve Him because His love encourages us and stirs up a love within us for Him. This deep love is our motivation to serve Him, and it makes it impossible for us not to serve Him.

Here the Apostle Paul begs us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to serve God. His begging us is through the compassions of God, proving that God's compassions, which are out of God's love, should be our motive in serving God, stirring us up to love God and to serve Him.

THE MEANING OF SERVING THE LORD

1. "Enslaved to God"; "Christ's slave" (Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 7:22).

To serve the Lord is to be the Lord's slave. The word slave is not a very pleasant expression when it is applied to unbelievers in the world, because it often denotes an inferior status. However, the word slave is a felicitous and glorious expression when it is applied to believers because we are serving the Lord. To be a slave of the Lord is a glorious matter! To be a slave is the status of those who serve the Lord and the meaning of serving the Lord. Serving the Lord is not about doing a great work before men; it is about being a slave before the Lord.

To serve the Lord is to be a slave of the Lord Christ. In this verse, a slave refers to one who is sold and who has lost his freedom. Such a status reveals the significance of serving the Lord. Our serving the Lord is not to do any great work, but to be a slave of Christ to serve the Lord. Thus, in Romans 12:11, the verb used to describe one who serves the Lord is simply the verb form of the word slave and should be translated "serving as a slave."

2. "Live to the Lord" (Rom. 14:8).

Since serving the Lord is a matter of being a slave, it is also a matter of living to the Lord. The entire being of one who truly serves the Lord is to the Lord. His whole living, his entire life, is to the Lord. Therefore, service is a matter of one's entire living. The call to serve the Lord is not limited to full-time workers and preachers. With the Lord's leading, it is possible to serve the Lord by maintaining respectable works in any career (Titus 3:8, 14). Colossians 3:22-24 shows that actual slaves were serving the Lord when they served according to the Lord's will. No matter what our career or job may be, we can serve the Lord as long as it is according to the Lord's will. It is not the Lord's intention that every Christian would leave his job or career to be a full-time preacher. The Lord's will is for every one of us to serve Him, but serving Him does not necessarily mean we must become a preacher. It only means that we live to Him in everything. There are many preachers today who do not necessarily live to the Lord. Similarly, there are many believers who love the Lord and truly live to Him, even though they have a career or job. They may not be preachers, but they are truly serving the Lord by living to the Lord.

According to the Bible, we are not called to make a profession out of preaching; rather, we are called to serve the Lord. This is our career. Any career or job that we have is a secondary matter. Our principal occupation is to serve the Lord; serving the Lord comes first. Our goal for living on the earth is to serve the Lord. We should make serving the Lord the center and goal of our lives. The only reason that we have a career or a job is to make a living and to supply the needs of the Lord's work. We also can contact people through our careers and jobs to preach the gospel to them. No career or job is more important than serving the Lord and preaching the gospel. We should consider our occupation only as something that we do on the side. Our focus should be on serving the Lord and preaching the gospel. Regardless of whether we are doctors, teachers, businessmen, or laborers, our career or job should be for serving the Lord and preaching the gospel. Doctors should serve the Lord and preach the gospel while practicing

medicine. Teachers should serve the Lord and preach the gospel while teaching. Whatever our profession, we should serve the Lord and preach the gospel. Each of us should consider serving the Lord and preaching the gospel as our primary occupation and our careers and jobs as secondary occupations. This is the living of a normal Christian. This is the only way to live to the Lord and to serve Him.

3. Being priests of God—“And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting...” (Acts 13:2).

In the original language, ministering here refers to service as a priest; it is the same word as in Hebrews 10:11 for the “ministering” (serving) of a priest. To serve God as a priest is to handle before God all things related to the worship of God. This requires us to constantly draw near to God and stand before Him.

4. Being the members of Christ’s Body—“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body [of Christ], even as He willed” (1 Cor. 12:18).

We believers are all members placed by God in the Body of Christ, and each member has its function. When we fulfill our office to minister in the Body of Christ according to our function, we are also serving the Lord.

5. Preaching the gospel—“God...whom I serve...in the gospel of His Son” (Rom. 1:9).

To preach the gospel is also to serve God. This means that we bring sinners to God just as the priests brought sacrifices to offer to God. Thus, Romans 15:16 says that to preach the gospel in this way is to minister “as a priest the gospel of God.” This kind of service is valuable, and it fulfills God’s eternal economy.

6. Caring for the saints—“Console the fainthearted, uphold the weak” (1 Thes. 5:14); “Communicating to the needs of the saints, pursuing hospitality” (Rom. 12:13).

These words show us that we ought to care for those saints [91] who are immature, weak, sick, needy, or in hardship. This is also a service to the Lord.

7. Serving the church:

1. As an elder—“The elders among you...shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing...according to God” (1 Pet. 5:1-2). To shepherd and oversee the flock of God, which are the saints in the church, is to serve the church and is quite valuable. This is also a service to the Lord.

2. As a deacon—The word deacon is the noun form of the verb minister. Therefore, a deacon is a serving one who takes care of affairs in the church and ministers to the saints. Such service is of a general nature and is also a service to the Lord.

3. Doing general things—Besides the duties of an elder and those of a deacon, there are many other miscellaneous tasks in the church, such as transporting guests, cleaning and arranging the meeting places, ushering, purchasing, doing clerical work, doing accounting, and serving in the business office, all of which require people’s service. These are another category of service to the Lord.

HOW TO SERVE THE LORD

1. “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be” (John 12:26).

To serve the Lord, we must follow the Lord. When the Lord was on earth, He walked a path that we must follow in order to serve Him. We must take His way. We must be where He is. Just as He died to Himself and willingly chose the way of the cross in everything, we must do the same. Just as He refused His own will and lived according to God’s will, we must do the same. In order to serve Him, we must follow Him and be with Him.

2. “David...served his own generation by the counsel of God” (Acts 13:36; see also Heb. 10:7).

In serving the Lord we must serve those of our own generation. However, we must serve by the counsel of God, just as David did in his time. If we do not serve by the counsel of God, we are merely serving people, not serving God. Only what is done according to the counsel of God can be counted as service to the Lord.

3. “His master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever” (Exo. 21:6; see also Isa. 50:4).

Because our service to the Lord is the service of a slave, we should act according to the Lord’s will, not according to our own desires. Thus, in order to serve the Lord, we need to hear His word. We can know the Lord’s will only when we hear His word. Those who serve the Lord must hear the Lord so that they can know His will and serve according to His desire in order to please Him. In the Old Testament a slave who wanted to serve his master forever would have his ear bored through with an awl by his master according to God’s command. This is a type of a serving one who has ears to hear the word of the Lord in order to serve Him. Our ears must be bored through by the Lord so that we can hear His word and serve Him.

This says that, in the Old Testament, a master would bore the ear of one who desired to serve, signifying a dealing with his ears that he might be obedient and submissive. To serve the Lord today, we also need the Lord’s dealing that we may have the ears to hear and be persons who are obedient and submissive to the Lord.

4. “They shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me” (Ezek. 44:15).

Once we have ears to hear, we must come near to the Lord, minister to the Lord, and stand before the Lord. Then we will know what He wants us to do and how He wants us to do it. In this way we can serve Him according to His will, match His heart’s desire, and be acceptable to Him.

5. “Serving God with fastings and petitions night and day”; “They were ministering to the Lord and fasting” (Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2).

In serving the Lord we need to fast and pray to seek Him in addition to contacting Him and standing before Him. To fast means that we are willing to give up our rightful enjoyment and to suffer in order to seek the Lord’s desire and accomplish the Lord’s will. To pray means to ask the Lord to reveal His desire and to accomplish His will. We must not be lacking in prayer and fasting in our service to the Lord. Strong and proper service to the Lord includes both prayer and fasting.

6. “The faithful and prudent slave” (Matt. 24:45).

We must also be faithful and prudent in our service to the Lord. Faithfulness must be accompanied with prudence. If we are faithful without being prudent, we will make a mess of our service to the Lord, and the result of our service will be the exact opposite of our desire in serving Him. Only faithfulness with prudence can fulfill our desire in serving the Lord.

7. “Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and you be like men waiting for their own master when he returns” (Luke 12:35-36).

In order to serve Him, we must gird our loins, have our lamps burning, and wait for the Lord’s return. Girding our loins means that we are not loose, having a burning lamp means that we live in the light, and waiting for the Lord means that we are watchful. Our service to the Lord must be according to these conditions.

8. “That I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:24).

We must be faithful to the end in our service to the Lord. We must not begin and then quit, leaving things half done. We must not be loose or light in the matter of serving the Lord. We must be clear about the ministry that the Lord has allotted to us and know the course that the Lord wants us to finish. Once we are clear about the course that the Lord has chosen, we must be faithful and endure, finishing the course and fulfilling the ministry that we have received from the Lord.

SERVING IN COORDINATION IN THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

1. “There are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord” (1 Cor. 12:5).

Although there are distinctions of ministries in our service to the Lord, every believer serves the same Lord. We may do different things in serving the Lord, but we all serve the same Lord together. Therefore, in the matter of serving the Lord, there is a need for coordination. We cannot serve the Lord individually or in isolation. We must serve together in coordination.

2. “The body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed. And if all were one member, where would the body be? But now the members are many, but the body one. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness, but our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked” (1 Cor. 12:14-24).

The church is the Body of Christ. Every believer has a part in the church and is a member of the Body of Christ—the church. We, the many members added together, are the Body of Christ. Each member has a function, and all these functions belong to the Body of Christ and are for the Body of Christ. Therefore, to exercise our function as a member, we must be in the Body of Christ and for the Body of Christ. Consequently, in the church we must coordinate with one another in the service with all the saints, our fellow members. This service in coordination with all the saints is the corporate service of the church, which is especially pleasing to the Lord. He particularly wants to gain this, and it is especially effective in bringing in the Lord's blessing.

If we want to serve in coordination with all the saints in the church, we must deal with our individualism in spiritual matters. We must deal with our independence in matters of service. We must also deal with our flesh, temper, disposition, self, and natural man. If these are not dealt with and broken by the cross, it will be impossible for us to serve in the church in coordination with all the saints, and it will be impossible for the Lord to gain the corporate service of His Body in the church. We must go through the dealing of the Holy Spirit and the breaking of the cross in order to have the coordinated service of the church. We must allow the Holy Spirit to use the cross to crucify our flesh, disposition, self, individualism, and independence so that we can coordinate with all the saints in the church to manifest the service of the Body of Christ.

Because we are members of the Body of Christ, our function is both of the Body of Christ and for the Body of Christ. According to the rule and principle, we must live in the Body of Christ, the church, in order to manifest our function as members. If we are not in the church, there will be a problem with our function. Our physical body is living, and every member that is attached to it can exercise according to its function. However, once a member becomes detached, it dies and loses its function. There is also a beautiful and lovable aspect to the living and functioning of any member that is attached to a living body, but as soon as a member is separated from the body, it becomes not only dead and functionless but also ugly and frightening. A living and functioning hand that is attached to our body is beautiful and lovable. When people see us, they even want to shake our hand. But if our hand is separated from our body, it will not only lose its function; it will also become something quite frightening to others. This is the condition of some believers before the Lord. They are separated from the church, they have lost their function as members, and they have become quite frightening to others. May the Lord have mercy on such brothers and sisters, and may He have mercy on us!

In the coordinated service of the church every brother and sister, every member, is necessary. Even the smallest member is necessary. In our body no member is so small that it does not have any function. Every member, no matter how small, has a function; therefore, every member is necessary. If we truly see the service of the Body of Christ and truly know the coordinated service of the church, we will realize that every brother and sister is necessary. The brothers and sisters need us, and we need every brother and sister. Everyone must exercise his function so that we can have coordination in the service of the church.

3. "God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then works of power, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28).

In the church God has placed all kinds of people with different functions for our coordinated service. Whether apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of power, those with gifts of healing, helps, administrations, or speakers of tongues; everyone is a part of the coordinated service of the church, and

everyone is necessary. No one can replace the service of another, and no one person can fulfill all the service of the church. The service of the church is a coordinated service of the Body of Christ, and every member needs to participate according to his function.

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

The church is the Body of Christ, and Christ is the Head of the church. The life that we receive from Him makes us His Body. Therefore, the life within us is the life of the Body, and we all have this life. If we live in this life, we will not only abide in Him, being joined to and fellowshiping with Him, but we will also be joined and knit together with all the saints. Then the Body, through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, will supply itself and grow unto the building up of itself in love. The Body grows and is built up through the function and the coordinated service of all the members.

A person who truly lives in the life of Christ is in the Body of Christ, the church. He is joined and knit together with all the members in a coordinated service. The life of Christ within us is the life of His Body, and it causes us to grow into His Body. If we act independently according to our own opinion in our service, our living will be in ourselves. However, if we live in the life of Christ, we will not act independently in our service to the Lord. The life of Christ requires us to coordinate with all the saints in the service in His Body—the church.

5. “Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, as speaking oracles of God; if anyone ministers, as ministering out of the strength which God supplies; that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

We must serve one another according to the gifts that we have received. We must use our gift as good stewards of the varied grace of God. We should not feel that our gift is too small and not participate in the service of the church. Even the smallest gift can be useful in the coordinated service of the church. In the service of the church many matters and many things are needed. Some require large gifts, and some require only small gifts. May we faithfully use our gifts, no matter how large or small, so that God can be glorified.

THE GOAL OF SERVING THE LORD – Building up the Body of Christ

1) “Out from whom all the Body, fitted and knit together through every joint of the supply, according to the operation in measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16).

This word shows us that our coordination and service with the saints are to cause the growth of the Body of Christ and to build it up in love. Besides saving sinners, perfecting the saints, and glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31), our serving the Lord [94] as His slaves is, even the more, to cause the Body of Christ to grow and be built up.

THE REWARD FOR SERVING THE LORD

1. “If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him” (John 12:26).

The first reward for serving the Lord is to be honored by the Father. This is a great matter. It should cause us to pursue serving the Lord.

2. “Blessed are those slaves whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Truly I tell you that he will gird himself and will have them recline at table, and he will come to them and serve them” (Luke 12:37).

Today we are slaves serving the Lord. When the Lord returns, we will receive the blessing of reclining at table and being served by Him. This blessing is a reward for our service to the Lord.

3. “Well done, good and faithful slave...I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your master” (Matt. 25:21; see also 24:47; Luke 19:17).

If we are good and faithful slaves of the Lord today, we will receive the reward of being set over many things in the future, and we will enter into His joy.

THE PUNISHMENT FOR NOT SERVING THE LORD

1. “That slave who knew his master’s will and did not prepare or do according to his will, will receive many lashes” (Luke 12:47).

All believers should serve the Lord. If we serve the Lord, we will receive a reward. If we do not serve the Lord, we will be punished. Since we know that it is the Lord’s will for us to serve Him, we will not escape His punishment if we do not serve according to His will. This is a warning to us.

PART SIX:
CONCLUSION
LESSON TWENTY-FIVE
SERVING IN COORDINATION AND
IN A BLENDED WAY TO MINISTER LIFE

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:24; 10:17; Acts 1:14

- I. Church service is mainly for the saints to minister life to others; the best opportunity for us to minister life to others is in the service groups; we must help the saints not primarily to carry out the service; rather, we should fellowship with them and minister life to them so that they may grow—Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:28:
 - A. We need a life and work that flows out from the love of the Lord in order to maintain our victory; if we do not have a revived living or a labor in shepherding, we will not be overcoming for long; there will be no way for us to maintain our victory; what maintains us in the victory is a life and work of love toward the Lord—1 John 5:16a; John 21:15-17:
 - 1. Every day we need renewal, and this renewal has to be refreshed day by day; every morning we should allow the Lord Jesus, our Sun, to rise up in us so that we can be renewed—Lev. 6:12-13; Mal. 4:2; Psa. 119:147-148; Prov. 4:18.
 - 2. After we have a thorough dealing with the Lord and pick up a burden, we must learn to be interested in people and involved with people; then we can pick up a burden for specific persons.
 - 3. In our care for the young saints, we should consider ourselves as a nursing mother and an exhorting, consoling father—1 Thes. 2:7, 11.
 - B. The apostle Paul was a person who always spent and was spent; because his disposition was fully dealt with by the Lord, it was soft, bendable, flexible, and applicable to any situation; he was on earth for nothing else but to gain people—2 Cor. 12:15:
 - 1. On the one hand, we need to be strong, but on the other hand, we should not be hard; we need to be soft, flexible, and applicable, good for any situation we are placed in, able to fit into every bend and corner.
 - 2. To care for little children requires much flexibility; therefore, we first need a thorough dealing with the Lord, and then we need to become available, flexible, and fully dealt with in our disposition.
- II. In our service to God, we must be brought by God to the point where we have the consciousness of the Body and do not serve individually but in coordination with the brothers and sisters—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 5:12; 15:25:
 - A. We must realize that there are two kinds of coordination: one kind is the coordination involved in outward arrangements, and the other kind of coordination is a coordination that grows out of the life within and is spiritual:
 - 1. Coordination requires that our natural being, the world, our disposition, and our flesh all be dealt with so that the Lord can grow out of us; when He grows out of you and me, we are spontaneously in coordination.

2. Many have had the experience that as soon as they were put in the coordination, their condition was exposed; once they began to serve, their self immediately became manifest, particularly in their opinions.
 3. The most important thing in the church service is not that we perform our tasks successfully; rather, the important matter in our serving together in coordination is how much our flesh, our disposition, and our individualism are being dealt with.
- B. The greatest indication that we see the Body is that we cannot be independent; we feel that we need the Body, that we need the brothers and sisters—cf. 1 Cor. 1:1:
1. Coordination means that we cannot do anything without one another; there is a sense that we need others and that others need us; those who work with young people should be like this.
 2. Those who truly coordinate in spirit should have a strong feeling that they cannot do anything without the help and coordination of others and have the spirit of a learner and the spirit of needing help.
 3. To feel that we do not need one another and that we do not need to fellowship is the greatest form of pride; it is the most offensive thing to the Lord and to the Body.
 4. If we lack coordination with others, we will always criticize what they do; because we lack coordination in our service and do not rely and mutually depend on one another, we often step on others.
- III. We must learn to serve in a blended way; 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—1 Cor. 12:24; 10:17:
- A. God has blended the Body together; the word *blended* means adjusted, harmonized, tempered, and mingled; God has blended the Body, adjusted the Body, harmonized the Body, tempered the Body, and mingled the Body; the Greek word for *blended* implies the losing of distinctions—12:24:
1. In order to be harmonized, blended, adjusted, mingled, and tempered in the Body life, we have to go through the cross and be by the Spirit, dispensing Christ to others for the sake of the Body of Christ.
 2. If we would practice the blending, we should not forget the matter of fellowship; fellowship is the basis for blending; by practicing fellowship we will lay the foundation for the blending.
 3. Fellowship tempers us; fellowship adjusts us; fellowship harmonizes us; and fellowship mingles us; we should not do anything without fellowshiping with the other saints who are coordinating with us.
 4. Fellowship requires us to stop when we are about to do something; in our coordination in the church life, in the Lord's work, we all have to learn not to do anything without fellowship.
- B. When we blend together, we have the cross and the Spirit; without the cross and the Spirit, all that we have is the flesh with division; blending requires us to be crossed out; blending requires us to be by the Spirit to dispense Christ and to do everything for the sake of His Body.
- C. 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—John 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR SERVICE BEING TO MINISTER LIFE TO OTHERS

The first point for our training is to realize that in the church service we do not do anything in the way of organization. The church is an organism, and what an organism needs is life. Therefore, our church service is mainly for ministering life to others. Even the arranging of chairs and the cleaning of restrooms are not for themselves; they are for ministering life. In ushering, clerical work, and any aspect of the church service, we must do everything to minister life to others. Of course, it is good for us to do things in a proper way. Not doing things well can be a frustration, but this does not mean that merely doing a good job is to have the proper service. In worldly religious organizations it is sufficient to do the jobs well, but in the church the main thing we need is the ministry of life. Even if we cannot do things very well, but by His mercy we minister life to others, the service is still successful. The main matter is to minister life to others.

The best opportunity for us to minister life to others is in the service groups. Many saints who have a heart for the Lord have been placed into these groups under the care of the responsible ones. The leading ones in the service should not care merely for doing things properly. The main thing they must do is care in life for all the ones who serve in the groups. They must help the saints not primarily to carry out the service; rather, they should fellowship with them and minister life to them so that they may grow. If the leading ones do this, spontaneously all the saints will do the same for others. Then the entire church will be under the care of the proper ministry of life. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 12, 13)

A REVIVAL OF THE INNER LIFE

The revival that I am talking about is not the kind of revival commonly known in Christianity. It is not something sudden, brought about by days of prayer and fasting and accompanied by extraordinary events, resulting in a general excitement. The revival that I am talking about is the renewing described in the New Testament. Second Corinthians 4:16 says, "...though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." The renewal here is a revival. Every day we need a renewal, and this renewal has to be refreshed day by day. What we need today is this kind of renewal in the inner life as opposed to a renewal in outward actions or expression. God has set up a natural law that the rising of the sun affords

a new beginning and a fresh renewal every day for everything, whether plant, animal, or human being. The same is true with our Christian life. Every morning we should allow the Lord Jesus, our Sun, to rise up in us so that we can be renewed. This is the revival that I am talking about.

If we are daily revived spiritually, there will be no need for a big revival. Actually, none of the so-called big revivals are long lasting. For example, the great Welsh revival at the beginning of this century was over by 1933. All the revivals brought in by various spiritual movements in the past were transient. After a while, they all cooled down. This kind of sporadic revival is not reliable. The reliable revival is the kind that comes from a daily renewal.

I hope that the elders and co-workers would take this word of fellowship and exhortation to give their all and their time to contact and shepherd people. This was our shortage in the past. Now we must recover this matter. Only by this will the organic building up of the Body of Christ in Ephesians 4:12-16 and the meetings of mutuality in 1 Corinthians 14:26 be realized and practiced among us. For this we need a daily revival and a daily overcoming as the base. We also need a life and work that flows out from the love of the Lord in order to maintain our victory. If we do not have a revived living or a labor in shepherding, we will not be overcoming for long; there will be no way for us to maintain our victory. What maintains us in the victory is a life and work of love toward the Lord. We need both these aspects. (*A Timely Trumpeting and the Present Need*, pp. 50, 51, 57)

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."

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. Our service is not to arrange the chairs, do the cleaning, usher, or do clerical work. These are temporary matters as the means, instruments, and channels for us to take care of people. We must all go to the Lord, pray, and pick up this burden. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 16-17, 17-18)

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First Thessalonians 2:7 says, "We were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children." To cherish is not merely to do a job or to carry out a business; it is to care for a living person. Verse 11 says, "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." Paul nourished the Thessalonians as a mother and exhorted them as a father. The apostle was not a businessman or a schoolmaster. He was a nourishing mother and an exhorting father. He had an interest in people. If we do not have an interest in people, we are finished with the church service; we are not qualified to serve. We should not say that only the apostle Paul could be like this. What the apostle did is an example for all the believers. We are not apostles, but we should still be nursing mothers. Even the brothers must nourish others as a mother, and the sisters should exhort others as a father. This does not depend on our being male or a female; it depends on the kind of heart we have. A sister can have the heart of a father, and a brother can have the heart of a mother.

Strictly speaking, we do not care for keeping the chairs. We care for keeping the persons. The keeping of chairs will not enter into the New Jerusalem, but the keeping of persons will go on forever.

I am afraid that too many of us in the church service care only for the practical service, not for the persons. We need the Lord's mercy to properly exercise our heart. This is a great test to us. Some of us were born in such a way that we do not care for anyone. This is according to our natural disposition. Hallelujah, we have been reborn in another way! We have been reborn, not into a natural family but into the church. This is another birth with another disposition that is absolutely different. The disposition of our new birth is one that sacrifices our self, our soul, and even our lives for the care of others. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building up of the Church*, pp. 22-23)

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Paul was this kind of person. He always spent and was spent. He meant business with the Lord. He was on earth for nothing else but to gain people. Therefore, he also said, "To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. To all men I have become all things that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Some in the church life are too strong in their disposition to be touchable in this way; it seems that no one can cause them to be shaped. Paul, however, seemed to have no disposition of his own. He was simply like a piece of wood that could be cut into any shape. Because his disposition was fully dealt with by the Lord, it was soft, bendable, flexible, and applicable to any situation. In my training in Taiwan in 1954, I told the serving ones that they should have a character and a disposition like paste, that can be applied to any kind of surface. On the contrary, some of the brothers and sisters are like pieces of hard rock that cannot be applied to any situation. This kind of "rock" is good only for beating others. Some may even feel good about this and say that a hard piece of rock was useful to the Lord to kill the Philistine giant (1 Sam. 17:49), but it is pitiful to think in this way. On the one hand, we need to be strong, but on the other hand, we should not be hard. We need to be soft, flexible, and applicable, good for any situation we are placed in, able to fit into every bend and corner. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building up of the Church*, pp. 40-41)

DEALING WITH OUR NATURAL DISPOSITION TO BECOME FLEXIBLE IN CARING FOR PEOPLE

We must all be tested by the church life, by fruit-bearing, and by lamb-feeding because these are the three matters that kill our natural disposition. The church life is a killing, not of the good things but mostly of our disposition. Likewise, fruit-bearing and lamb-feeding are a killing. All these are killing “knives” for our disposition. Passing through these three tests causes us to become right, because after passing through them we become persons who have dealt with our natural disposition. Then we will be flexible. To care for little children requires much flexibility. Any mother who is not flexible should not expect to have good children. Her children will all be damaged by her inflexibility. To bear fruit among our in-laws, cousins, and schoolmates requires us to be flexible. We should not speak of inconvenience or say that we do not have time. Whether we have time depends on our desire. We may illustrate this by the need to answer correspondence. In the early years of my work, I would often apologize for not answering people sooner, telling them that I had been too busy. However, something within condemned me, saying, “It is not because you were too busy; it is because you did not have the desire.” Everyone is busy. Even a sister with no husband, children, job, or school can stay busy every day. She can tell people she does not have the time for this or that. This is absolutely due to our dispositional inflexibility.

If we are not flexible, we cannot bear fruit. In order to bear fruit, we need to be flexible, available at any time, and never claiming to be too busy. We should always have time to talk to people. If we wait until we have time to help people to be saved, we may wait forever. We have all been cheated in this regard. We have said, “This week I am very busy; let me see how next week will be,” but the next week we are busier and have even more things to do. Then the following week is worse, and we are never free. Being busy or available is a matter of our disposition. Therefore, we first need a thorough dealing with the Lord, and then we need to become available, flexible, and fully dealt with in our disposition. (*The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, pp. 63-64)

HAVING THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BODY IN OUR SERVICE IN COORDINATION

In our service to God, we must be brought by God to the point where we have the consciousness of the Body and do not serve individually but in coordination with the brothers and sisters. We must be brought to a point where the brothers’ move is our move,

and our move is the brothers' move. Regardless of the circumstance we are in, our feeling should always be that what the brothers are doing is no different from what we are doing. The two should be the same.

Not only so, whenever there is a problem in our coordination with the Body, we should sense it immediately. When our coordination with all the members is normal, we may not have much feeling that we are in coordination. This is similar to the coordination in our body. In a normal situation the members of our body do not have much feeling about each other's existence. However, when a certain member has a problem, then there is a consciousness. Therefore, if we sense the existence of a certain member, then that member must have a problem. When we are particularly conscious of our eyes, something must be wrong with our eyes.

LIFE ISSUING IN SPONTANEOUS COORDINATION

We must realize that there are two kinds of coordination. One kind is the coordination involved in outward arrangements such as sweeping the floor, cleaning the chairs, and dusting the windows. This kind of coordination is not very deep. The other kind of coordination is a coordination that grows out of the life within and is spiritual. This coordination is deeper and more real. This kind of coordination requires that our natural being, the world, our disposition, and our flesh all be dealt with so that the Lord can grow out of us. When He grows out of you and me, we are spontaneously in coordination.

COORDINATION MAKING OUR SELF MANIFEST

While learning to serve the Lord, many have had the experience that as soon as they were put in the coordination, their condition was exposed. When they were at home praying, reading the Word, or pursuing the Lord, they did not sense their own condition very much. When they went out by themselves to preach the gospel and distribute gospel tracts, they also were not very conscious of their condition. However, once they began to serve together with the saints, their self immediately became manifest, particularly in their opinions, because opinions are the best representative of a person's self.

COORDINATION BEING MAINLY NOT FOR RIGHT OR WRONG BUT FOR DEALING WITH OUR SELF AND INDIVIDUALISM

Suppose five of us are serving in coordination to dust the chairs, and suddenly I suggest that we turn the chairs over with the legs pointing upward. How would you react? This would be a test to you. Immediately opinions and thoughts would rise up from within you. You must realize that the most important thing in the church service is not that we perform our tasks successfully. Rather, the important matter in our serving together in coordination is how much our flesh, our disposition, and our individualism are being dealt with. When we who serve the Lord are coordinating together, the main thing is that our flesh and our disposition are dealt with. The emphasis of our service in coordination is not on whether a certain matter is right or wrong nor on whether the reason behind a matter is right or wrong. Rather, the emphasis is on whether or not our person is right and on whether or not the life is right.

The biggest reason the church service is not strong and does not have much blessing is that the reality of coordination is missing. Our coordination in service has to be so real that it surpasses human organization and is as organic as the human body. (*Being Apt to Teach and Holding the Mystery of the Faith*, pp. 44, 45-46, 47)

LACKING A FEELING FOR COORDINATION

Another problem among us is that although the serving ones are capable, they do not have a feeling for coordination in their spirit when they come together to serve. It seems as if everyone is able to serve without others. Consequently, few among us have the spirit of a learner and the spirit of needing help. Those who truly coordinate in spirit should have a strong feeling that they cannot do anything without the help and coordination of others. Our present coordination is one of formality. They do their part without needing anyone else. We may not argue, but there is not much interdependence in spirit. This shows that our spirit of service is improper.

This is the situation of those who work with the young people and the children. The coordination is formal; everyone does what he should do when it is his turn. This is cooperation, not coordination. Coordination means that we cannot do anything without one another. There is a sense that we need others and that others need us. Those who work with young people should be like this; all the service of the church should also be like this. It is

normal when the deacons and elders mutually need one another, and the saints feel that they cannot do anything without the elders and deacons.

Today we have rules and arrangements. The elders do things pertaining to elders, and the deacons do things pertaining to deacons. Everyone works when it is his turn. However, we do not have a deep feeling that we cannot go on without the elders and deacons in our service. Some brothers not only lack a sense of the need for the elders and deacons, but they even think that elders and deacons are unnecessary. This is dangerous.

HAVING THE GREATEST FORM OF PRIDE

Those who live in the workers' home are bright and capable. They seem to be independent and do not need others. This is very dangerous because it is the greatest form of pride. If four brothers are living in the workers' home, they should depend on one another, and others should sense their dependence on one another. Sadly, this is not the atmosphere among us. For example, if it is my turn to preach the gospel, I will either do everything or do nothing. From the human perspective, this may be considered to be coordination, but this coordination is according to regulation and arrangement. There is no sense of needing others in spirit. Some may think that coordination is unnecessary and troublesome and that it is better to not coordinate.

Those who do not need to coordinate are dry, lack blessing, and are useless. The fact that we are clever, capable, and do not need one another's help is a great danger. This is a sad and pitiful situation. The fearful thing is that this situation is hidden and not very apparent. This situation can be compared to leprosy. If it is manifested, it is easier to deal with it.

This shows that we lack the fellowship of the Body. When we come together, we seldom have thorough fellowship. For example, when saints from other cities visit Taipei, we sit together for a meeting. After the meeting, however, we all go our separate ways without fellowshiping. This was not our situation during our first six years in Taiwan. In those years, whenever we had a conference, we came together and had much fellowship. Now we are all capable, brilliant, and knowledgeable. We do not need one another; we do not need to fellowship. This is the greatest form of pride. It is the most offensive thing to the Lord and to the Body. We should humbly minister to others and restrict our cleverness through coordination.

NEEDING FELLOWSHIP AND COORDINATION IN THE BODY AND IN LIFE

If we lose the principle of coordination and dependence in the Body, we will not be strong in our administration of the church and ministry of the word. Once we lose this principle, we will not have much blessing. Our coordination should not become mechanical, and we should not work only when it is our turn. We should have the feeling that we cannot do anything without others, that we truly need one another. If we come together and assign work, with each doing only his own work, our situation is similar to the division of labor in a civic organization or a large institution. This lack of the flavor of coordination among the members of the Body must be dealt with.

What does it mean to see the Body? The greatest indication that we see the Body is that we cannot be independent. We feel that we need the Body, that we need the brothers and sisters. Presently, however, our coordination can be compared to work in an organization. It seems that we are moving like a machine and that we lack the sense of the fellowship of life.

THE LACK OF COORDINATION PRODUCING CRITICISM

If we lack coordination with others, we will always criticize what they do. Even if we do not express it, we are filled with criticism, and we disapprove of what others do. Such people are narrow and pitiful. In our service we should not expect others to be like us, nor should we expect to be like others. However, because we lack coordination in our service and do not rely and mutually depend on one another, we often step on others. We either do not walk, or we step on others when we do walk. We either do not work, or we do the job of others. We either are not concerned, or we criticize the work of others. When a certain matter is in others' hands, we are not able to do anything, but when an opportunity comes to us, we do it according to our way and discard the help of others. Although this condition is not apparent among us, it will be in our future, because we are not willing to submit to others. This is a foolish way. (*The Administration of the Church and the Ministry of the Word*, pp. 25-27)

GOD HAVING BLENDED THE BODY TOGETHER

God has blended the Body together (1 Cor. 12:24). The word *blended* also means adjusted, harmonized, tempered, and mingled. God has blended the Body, adjusted the Body, harmonized the Body, tempered the Body, and mingled the Body. The Greek word for

blended implies the losing of distinctions. One brother's distinction may be quickness, and another's may be slowness. But in the Body life the slowness disappears and the quickness is taken away. All such distinctions are gone. God has blended all the believers of all different races and colors. Who can make the blacks and the whites lose their distinctions? Only God can do this. A husband and a wife can have the harmony in their marriage life only by losing their distinctions.

In order to be harmonized, blended, adjusted, mingled, and tempered in the Body life, we have to go through the cross and be by the Spirit, dispensing Christ to others for the sake of the Body of Christ. The co-workers and elders must learn to be crossed out. Whatever we do should be by the Spirit to dispense Christ. Also, what we do should not be for our interest and according to our taste but for the church. As long as we practice these points, we will have the blending.

All of these points mean that we should fellowship. When a co-worker does anything, he should fellowship with the other co-workers. An elder should fellowship with the other elders. Fellowship tempers us; fellowship adjusts us; fellowship harmonizes us; and fellowship mingles us. We should forget about whether we are slow or quick and just fellowship with others. We should not do anything without fellowshiping with the other saints who are coordinating with us. Fellowship requires us to stop when we are about to do something. In our coordination in the church life, in the Lord's work, we all have to learn not to do anything without fellowship.

Among us we should have the blending of all the individual members of the Body of Christ, the blending of all the churches in certain districts, the blending of all the co-workers, and the blending of all the elders. Blending means that we should always stop to fellowship with others. Then we will receive many benefits. If we isolate and seclude ourselves, we will lose much spiritual profit. Learn to fellowship. Learn to be blended. From now on, the churches should come together frequently to be blended. We may not be used to it, but after we begin to practice blending a few times, we will acquire the taste for it. This is the most helpful thing in the keeping of the oneness of the universal Body of Christ. Today it is very convenient for us to blend with one another because of this modern age with its modern conveniences.

When we blend together, we have the cross and the Spirit. Without the cross and the Spirit, all that we have is the flesh with division. It is not easy to be crucified and to do all things by the Spirit in ourselves. This is why we must learn to be blended. Blending requires us to be crossed out. Blending requires us to be by the Spirit to dispense Christ and to do everything for the sake of His Body.

We may come together without much blending because everyone stays in themselves. They are afraid to offend others and make mistakes, so they keep quiet. This is the manner of man according to the flesh. When we come together, we should experience the terminating of the cross. Then we should learn how to follow the Spirit, how to dispense Christ, and how to say and do something for the benefit of the Body. That will change the entire atmosphere of the meeting and will temper the atmosphere. Blending is not a matter of being quiet or talkative but a matter of being tempered. We can be in harmony, because we have been tempered. Eventually, the distinctions will all be gone. Blending means to lose the distinctions. We all have to pay some price to practice the blending.

A group of elders may meet together often without being blended. To be blended means that you are touched by others and that you are touching others. But you should touch others in a blending way. Go through the cross, do things by the Spirit, and do everything to dispense Christ for His Body's sake. We should not come to a blending meeting to be silent. We have to prepare ourselves to say something for the Lord. The Lord may use you, but you need to be tempered and crossed out, and you need to learn how to follow the Spirit to dispense Christ for His Body's sake.

THE BLENDING NOT BEING SOCIAL

Such a blending is not social but the blending of the very Christ whom the individual members, the district churches, the co-workers, and the elders enjoy, experience, and partake of. (*The Divine and Mystical Realm*, pp. 86-88)

The New Testament tells us, first, that we are grains of wheat. In John 12:24 the Lord Jesus was the unique grain. Through His death and resurrection He released His life into us, making us the many grains. This is very good. However, the New Testament goes on to tell us that as grains, eventually we need to become a lump (1 Cor. 5:6-7a). This means that we

need to become dough. The making of dough requires the blending of grains of wheat; but before being blended, the grains need to be ground into fine flour.

The New Testament also tells us that eventually we all become a loaf (10:17). In a sense, the grains, the fine flour, the lump, and the dough are nothing until they become a loaf. After we become a loaf, we mean something and we are something in the hand of the Lord. The loaf is the group. At the Lord's table, we often praise the Lord for the loaf, the bread, yet in actuality we may not be a loaf. A number of saints among us may never have been ground or broken. Although we are grains, it is possible that we have never been broken and ground into fine flour. On the other hand, we may be broken, yet we may never have been blended together. Thus, we are far from being a loaf. The way to become a loaf is to be blended together in the groups. The loaf is the group.

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. According to the type of the meal offering in Leviticus 2:1-13, to be blended requires the adding of oil so that the flour will not be dry. It is impossible to blend fine flour that is dry; oil is needed to make the flour moist. In the same way, we need the Spirit as the oil to "moisten" us so that we can be blended together.

To be blended together, we also need the salt, that is, the death of Christ, to kill all the germs within us. We need to realize that we have many germs in our being. All these germs need to be killed by the death of Christ. Then, we also need to be in the resurrection of Christ. In the blending we need to experience the Spirit as the oil, and we also need to pass through the experiences of the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. If by the Lord's mercy we are able to experience such a blending, we will be absolutely different from what we are today. It is not enough just to put people together and call them a group. That can be done very quickly. The proper grouping with the blending of the members will take time.

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.

We should not be afraid of being known by others. The more we are known in a proper way, the better. This will put down our pride, take away our boasting, annul our superiority complex, and even put aside our inferiority complex. However, most of us are not willing to expose ourselves. Instead, we prefer to cover ourselves by pretending to one another. Because of this, it is difficult for us to have an intimate and thorough fellowship that results in our being blended together.

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.

Among us there is a great need for a breakthrough to allow the Lord to carry out the grouping. From the very beginning in the four Gospels, when the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples, He did not send them one by one; rather, He always sent them two by two, grouping them together. From the time the recovery came to the United States the Lord has not been able to carry out the grouping among us. A number of saints came into the recovery in a very strong way and remained with us, but at a certain point they left. That indicated that they were not willing to be grouped together in the recovery. We who have remained in the recovery all have the problems of our disposition and character that keep us separate from one another. Although by the Lord's mercy we are still together, among us there has been very little grouping. Because of this, we do not have the impact. The impact is with the one accord, and the one accord actually is the blending.

If we do not have the one accord, God cannot answer our prayer, because we do not practice the Body. Our not being in one accord means that we do not practice the Body. According to the proper interpretation of the New Testament, the one accord is the one Body. We must practice the principle of the Body; then we will have the one accord. Although we may not fight with one another, we still may not have the one accord. Because we have remained together, we have seen the Lord's blessing, but only in a limited way. Therefore, we need to have the one accord to practice the Body.

It is difficult for us to open ourselves to one another, but it is even more difficult, after listening to one another's fellowship, to speak something in response in a way that is frank and full of love. After coming together in our groups, we should be free to tell the others concerning our inward situation with the Lord. Likewise, the others should be free to respond. Because we are afraid to expose ourselves and are afraid of offending others, we pretend with one another and are unwilling to let people know our real situation. We need the intimate and thorough fellowship. Of course, we need to be careful concerning what we open to one another in public. In certain cases the public confession of sins has caused serious trouble in the past. I do not mean that we should open ourselves in a careless way. Nevertheless, we need to find a way to be blended. Otherwise, the Lord has no way out of our present situation. We need to be blended until we have an intimate love for the members of our group. If we continue to hide ourselves and keep a distance from one another, when we go out to visit people, we will not have the impact. The people whom we visit will sense that we are not one.

Our situation today is very different from that of Peter, James, and John. When they were together following the Lord as His believers, they were genuine, as seen in the fact that they fought with one another. In Matthew 20, while the Lord Jesus was unveiling His death and resurrection to them (vv. 17-19), it seems that they did not hear what He was speaking. After the Lord Jesus finished His speaking, they had a contention among themselves (vv. 20-24). This indicates that they were very genuine.

If we do not practice the points in this message, there will be no way for us to be grouped. Grouping is an urgent need among us. We are trying to break through in this vital matter. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 81-82, 87-90)