

Perfecting Meeting for Group Serving Ones

05/02/2022

Session One 0900–1030

Session Two 1100–1230

Lunch 1230–1330

Session Three 1330–1430

Group Discussion 1430

Burden for the perfecting meeting:

We all have to hate deadness, lukewarmness, and barrenness. We must seek to be vitalized in desperation, considering this to be a matter of life or death. The practice of the vital groups will not work if we take it lightly. We must fellowship about the matter of barrenness with our companions. Then the Lord may lead us to make a decision to fast once a week. When Brother Watchman Nee was a student, he decided to fast and pray every Saturday for the next day's preaching of the gospel. We may also feel led by the Lord to fast and pray for our fruit-bearing.

We must carry out the practice of the vital groups in desperation. We should pray desperately for the Lord to give us some fruit and remove our barrenness. This should be a matter of life or death with us. If we are desperate, I believe that the fish will come to us. The Lord will send them to us. But if we are indifferent, no fish will come to us. The hardest thing is for us to be made desperate. The most crucial thing for us today is to be desperate to conquer the deadness of Sardis, the lukewarmness of Laodicea, and the barrenness dealt with by the Lord in John 15. (*The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 3)

Ministry Excerpt One:

The Fulfillment of God's Economy Requires Man's Cooperation

We need to be impressed with the fact that the fulfillment of God's economy requires our cooperation. To cooperate with God means to be bound together with God. We may use a three-legged race as an illustration. The runners in such a race must run in pairs, with each partner having one leg bound to one of his partner's legs. In order for the partners to run, they must cooperate with each other and not move independently. This is a picture of the proper Christian life. To be a Christian is to be bound together with Christ and to have one living with Him by one life.

The birth of Samuel involved Hannah's cooperation with God. The old priesthood had become stale and waning, and God wanted to have another beginning. For Samuel's birth, God initiated things behind the scenes. On the one hand, He shut up Hannah's womb; on the other hand, He prepared a provoker (1 Sam. 1:5-7). This forced Hannah to pray that the Lord would give her a male child. In her prayer she made a vow and said, "O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me and not forget Your maidservant, but give to Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head" (v. 11). This prayer was initiated not by Hannah but by God. God chose Hannah because she was willing to cooperate with Him. God answered her prayer and opened her womb, and Hannah conceived and bore a son (v. 20). Then according to her vow, she offered her son to God, placing him in the custody of Eli. From this we see that Hannah, Samuel's mother, was one who cooperated very much with God. Her case shows us the kind of persons God expects to have today.

Recently, as I was considering this matter, I recalled the experience of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, which was a very spiritual mission and was much used by God. In his biography, written by his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Howard Taylor, we are told that one day Hudson Taylor said to the Lord in prayer that he was willing to give his life and everything for the people of China. This vow was honored by God and resulted in the forming of the China Inland Mission.

Although I do not compare myself with Hudson Taylor, I can testify that my experience was very similar. In the last of my teen-age years, while I was endeavoring to get my education, God caught me, and I was saved. Immediately afterward, while I was walking on the street, I looked up to the heavens and told the Lord that I wanted only Him and that I wanted to serve Him and travel from place to place bringing the Bible and preaching Christ. Although I did not realize it at the time, I was actually making a vow to the Lord. That vow has been honored by Him.

Today many continents and countries are open to the Lord's recovery. There is the need for some to make a vow like Hannah. I hope that many of the young people will make such a vow. You need to say, "Lord, I am Yours. I just lend myself to You." God will take your heart and accomplish something to fulfill what you vow to Him. (*Life-Study of 1 & 2 Samuel*, Chapter 1)

Ministry Excerpt Two:

Changing our Concept

It is very hard to change one's concept. I myself have been making the turn for five years. From 1980 to 1984 I was constantly studying why in the Lord's recovery we would preach the gospel and labor hard every year, but our numbers would not increase. It was not only like this in Taiwan; it was also the same in the United States. This question pressed me until I had no other way but to return to the Bible and spend time studying it diligently. In the end the Lord showed me the concept of the "home." According to the revelation of the Bible, God Himself came down from heaven to be incarnated and at His own discretion went from one home to another to seek sinners. The Lord Himself went to the home of Zaccheus. He also made a special trip to seek the sinful woman by the well in Samaria. The New Testament shows clearly that the home is the center and that the gospel is a matter of being delivered to the home and not a matter of inviting people to come and listen. If today God were to invite us to where He sits in the heavens, we would never find a way to get there. Instead, He came down and brought the gospel to us, making it so available for us. Because we have acted against this principle, we have not had the Lord's blessing for a long time.

When I saw this clearly, I made a thorough repentance to the Lord. Thirty years ago when I was still living in Taiwan, I saw people riding bicycles with a sign that said Delivering Shots to Your Home. This meant that a person did not have to go to the doctor's clinic, but the doctor would come to the person's home and give him the shot. Now America has home-delivery services for food, which makes it very helpful for business. If you make it convenient for people, they will welcome you. In the same way, if our hope is that the Lord's recovery will increase and spread, then we must change our concept. Instead of inviting people to come and hear the gospel, we should deliver the gospel to their homes. This will help us to increase. (*The Furtherance of the New Way for the Lord's Recovery*, Chapter 4)

Session One

The Proper Concept of Small Groups and Group Meetings

Question 1: What is a small group? What is the relationship between the small groups and the church life?

Question 2: What is group meeting? How should we meet our group meetings?

Outline:

Scripture Reading: Heb. 10:24-25

I. Forming group with several saints and new believers.

II. Group Meeting:

- A. Leading the saints to practice fellowship, petition, caring, and shepherding in mutuality in the group meeting.
- B. Helping the saints to practice asking in mutuality which leads in mutual teaching.
- C. Perfecting and equipping the saints for practicing every step of the God-ordained way.

Ministry Excerpts:

Our responsibility is to fulfill our duty in the New Testament priesthood of the gospel. As priests of the gospel, we must get sinners saved so that they may be offered to God as sacrifices (Rom. 15:16). We must also feed the new believers in home meetings and perfect the saints in the group meetings, that the saints may be able to do the work of the New Testament ministry (Eph. 4:12).

The group meeting revealed in Hebrews 10:24-25, strictly speaking, is not a meeting for gospel preaching, feeding the new believers, or prophesying. The group meeting is a meeting for mutuality. The reason I do not use the word small in regard to the group meeting is because a small meeting is a home meeting. The group meeting, however, may not be very small. Its size may be from twenty to forty members.

Some among us have not yet entered into the proper realization and practice of the group meeting. According to the New Testament, the group meeting comprises mutuality in shepherding, caring, interceding, teaching through asking and answering questions, perfecting, and equipping. The group meeting is eighty percent of the practical church life. The church life is inadequate without the group meetings. We are weak and very short in our practice of the church life today because we do not have the proper group meetings in mutuality.

The meetings of the church should be in mutuality. Mutuality is different from plurality. The responsibility of the eldership in the church should be borne in plurality. The responsibility of the eldership in the church life should be taken care of by at least three persons. In a local church there should not be less than three elders. Actually, the more elders the better. The eldership is a matter of plurality.

According to the clergy-laity system, if a question is raised in a group meeting, only the leader of the meeting is qualified to answer the question. But in the group meeting, everything is mutual. If I ask a question, someone who was baptized three days ago can answer my question. He may not be able to answer my question adequately, but whether an answer is adequate or not is a matter of degree. When I ask a question in a group meeting, the answer someone gives may be absolutely wrong. The answer may be wrong, but the activity of each one answering is right. To sit quietly in the meeting without speaking is absolutely wrong. It is better to function in a wrong way than to not function at all.

To speak in the group meeting is right, but to be silent is wrong. In a meeting... I stood up and said that everyone could speak at least four words in a meeting. As I said this, I wondered what four words everyone could speak. Then I said that everyone could say, "O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!" The Scriptures are full of the expression "O Lord," and Revelation 19:4 says that the elders and living creatures worshipped God, saying, "Amen, Hallelujah!" We can speak and sing these four words in any kind of meeting. In this way our meetings will never be silent. To sit silently does not require the exercise of our spirit, but to speak does. Our speaking in the spirit is very pleasant to the Lord. Today if our meetings are full of speaking, more people will come to the meetings. But our silence will kill the meetings, and fewer people will come.

Every kind of Christian meeting, including the group meeting, is for worship. To bow down or kneel down is not the true meaning of worship. To worship God is to enjoy God. According to John 4, to drink Him as the living water is real worship (vv. 14, 24). To drink the living water is to enjoy God. (*Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (3)*, Chapter 11)

We have to change our way, especially for the practice of the group meetings. Thus far, it is difficult to see a group meeting fully practicing in an organic way according to what we have seen and ministered as revealed in the Word. A group that is meeting together may not constitute a proper group meeting. A proper group meeting should have the mutuality in every way. The teaching should be mutual, the asking and answering of questions should be mutual, the fellowship should be mutual, the intercession should be mutual, and the shepherding and care of the saints should be mutual. When we carry out all these mutual things, that is a proper group meeting. This kind of group meeting perfects the saints. Many of our group meetings are natural. They are not group meetings that are practiced according to the New Testament teaching, especially in Hebrews 10:24-25. There is the need of much learning to practice the charge in Hebrews 10:24-25.

The co-workers and elders should learn how to contact individual saints to fellowship with them particularly concerning the group meetings. We need to fellowship with them concerning how to have the mutual teaching, the mutual asking and answering of questions, the mutual fellowship, the mutual interceding, the mutual care, and the mutual shepherding. All of this is the mutual equipping and perfecting. If there is an elder in a group meeting, the entire group may look to him for help, thinking that they do not have much knowledge or experience. This is absolutely wrong. This is the philosophy of the papal system and of the clergy-laity system. This philosophy should be put aside.

The elders should spend time and energy to teach each one of the attendants of the group meetings. They need to go to each of the saints' homes outside the group meeting. This is why Paul said in Acts 20 that he taught the saints publicly and from house to house and that he admonished each one of them night and day with tears (vv. 20, 31). Paul used both the day and the night. We mostly use our meeting time to contact the saints. We think that as long as we have attended every meeting, we have fulfilled our duty. But that is not the complete fulfilling of our duty. The fulfilling of our duty is also outside the meetings.

There is no way to carry out the God-ordained way except by the individual contact with people. What is needed today is for the full-timers, co-workers, and elders to spend their time, energy, and spiritual capacity to take care of people individually. The main thing we are learning to do in the elders' training is to contact people for their salvation, their feeding, their spiritual education, their equipping, and their perfecting. Within a period of one or two years, they should be able to do the same thing that we are doing in our service to the Lord. Today the result of our work is not like this. I hope that we would consider this fellowship seriously and have a full change in our concept and practice. (*Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (3)*, Chapter 10)

Session Two

Opening Homes and the Functions of the Sister

Question 1: Why should I open my house?

Question 2: What is the role of a sister in the church life?

Part One: The Homes

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, having been divinely instructed concerning things not yet seen and being moved by pious fear, prepared an ark for the salvation of his house, through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

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

Acts 2:47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

Josh. 24:15 And if it seems wrong in your sight to serve Jehovah, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve, either the gods from across the River, whom your fathers served, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

Rom. 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their (Prisca and Aquila) house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.

Philem. 1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow worker

Philem. 2 And to Apphia the sister and to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church, which is in your house:

I. The Homes—the means of God's dispensing in God's divine economy and a figure of God and man being joined as one eternally—Gen. 2:18, 24; Rev. 19:7.

Gen. 2:18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper as his counterpart.

Gen. 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Rev. 19:7 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.

II. The Homes—Entering the Ark, the unit of salvation brought through by water—Gen. 7:1, 13; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20.

Gen. 7:1 Then Jehovah said to Noah, Come into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation.

Gen. 7:13 ...Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark,

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, having been divinely instructed concerning things not yet seen and being moved by pious fear, prepared an ark for the salvation of his house, through

which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

1 Pet. 3:20 ...entering into which, a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water.

III. The Homes—God’s redemption, salvation, striking the blood, eating the lamb is the unit of being saved by believing in the Lord—Exo. 12:3-4, 7; Josh. 2:12-13, 19; 6:7, 24-25; Acts 16:31; 10:2.

Exo. 12:3 Speak to all the assembly of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month each man shall take a lamb according to his fathers’ house, a lamb for a household.

Exo. 12:4 And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor next to his house shall take one according to the number of the persons in the houses; according to each man’s eating you shall make your count for the lamb.

Exo. 12:7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

Josh. 2:12 So now, swear to me by Jehovah, I beg you, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father’s house; and give me some token of trust,

Josh. 2:13 That you will preserve my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters and all that they have, and will deliver our lives from death.

Josh. 2:19 And anyone who goes forth from the doors of your house into the street, his blood will be upon his own head, and we will be innocent. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood will be upon our heads if a hand should come upon him.

Josh. 6:7 And he said to the people, Pass on and circle the city, and let the armed men pass on before the Ark of Jehovah.

Josh. 6:24 And they burned the city with fire and all that was in it; but the silver and the gold and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put in the treasury of the house of Jehovah.

Josh. 6:25 And Joshua preserved Rahab the harlot and her father’s house and all that belonged to her, and she has dwelt within Israel to this day; for she hid the messengers whom Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho.

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.

Acts 10:2 Devout and one who feared God with all his household, giving many alms to the people and beseeching God continually.

IV. The Homes—the unit to receive blessing—2 Sam. 6:11

2 Sam. 6:11 And the Ark of Jehovah remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months; and Jehovah blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

V. The Homes—the proper relationship of infusing faith—2 Tim. 1:3-5

2 Tim. 1:3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, while unceasingly I have remembrance concerning you in my petitions night and day,

2 Tim. 1:4 Longing to see you, remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy;

2 Tim. 1:5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you.

VI. The Homes—The realm of living to teach God’s word; the spiritual companion of praying, studying, reciting and prophesying—Deut. 6:4-9.

Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God; Jehovah is one.

Deut. 6:5 And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deut. 6:6 And these words, which I command you today, shall be upon your heart;

Deut. 6:7 And you shall repeat them to your children, and speak about them when you sit in your house and when you journey on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up;

Deut. 6:8 And you shall bind them on your hand as a sign, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes;

Deut. 6:9 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

VII. The Homes—the most appropriate place to preach the gospel—Acts 10:2, 24; 11:14; Luke 10:5-7.

Acts 10:2 Devout and one who feared God with all his household, giving many alms to the people and beseeching God continually.

Acts 10:24 And on the next day they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius was awaiting them, having called together his relatives and intimate friends.

Acts 11:14 Who will speak words to you by which you shall be saved, you and all your house.

Luke 10:5 And into whatever house you enter, first say, Peace to this house.

Luke 10:6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon it; but if not, it shall return upon you.

Luke 10:7 And in that house remain, eating and drinking the things from them, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not move from house to house.

VIII. The Homes—the most suitable place to feed and teach the new ones—Acts 5:42; 20:20.

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus [as] the Christ.

Acts 20:20 How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house,

IX. The Homes—the focal point of the Body life—Acts 2:46-47.

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

Acts 2:47 Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

X. The Homes—the unit of feasting and rejoicing—Deut. 16:11, 14.

Deut. 16:11 And you and your son and daughter, and your male servant and female servant, and the Levite who is within your gates and the sojourner and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst shall rejoice before Jehovah your God in the place where Jehovah your God will choose to cause His name to dwell.

Deut. 16:14 And you and your son and daughter, and your male servant and female servant, and the Levite and the sojourner and the orphan and the widow who are within your gates shall rejoice in your feast.

XI. The Homes—the unit of serving—Josh. 24:15b; Num. 18:11.

Josh. 24:15b But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

Num. 18:11 This also is yours, the heave offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the children of Israel. I have given them to you and to your sons and to your daughters with you, as a perpetual statute; everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

XII. The Homes—the vital companions who inherit grace together and pray prayers of warfare—1 Pet. 3:7.

1 Pet. 3:7 Husbands, in like manner dwell together with them according to knowledge, as with the weaker, female vessel, assigning honor to them as also to fellow heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

XIII. The Homes—the miniature of the church and the foundation and condition to serve the church—1 Tim. 3:4-5.

1 Tim. 3:4 One who manages well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity

1 Tim. 3:5 (But if one does not know how to manage his own house, how will he care for the church of God?);

XIV. The Homes—the focal point of the gathering and testimony producing of the church—Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Phile. 2.

Rom. 16:5 And greet the church, which is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia unto Christ.

1 Cor. 16:19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, with the church, which is in their house.

Col. 4:15 Greet the brothers in Laodicea, as well as Nymphas and the church, which is in his house.

Philem. 2 And to Apphia the sister and to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the church, which is in your house:

XV. The Homes—The basic unit which builds up a model of God-man living and builds up the Body of Christ—Gal. 2:20.

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

Part two: Twenty Blessings of An Opened Home

We have seen at least 20 aspects of blessing in Psalms for opening the homes and living the church life in the homes.

- A. **Glory**—“O Jehovah, I love the habitation of Your house, / And the place where Your glory abides” (26:8). Glory is God expressed; when you open your homes for the gospel of God, your homes will be the place where God’s glory abides. Darkness is Satan expressed; today people open their homes for parties, that where darkness abides.
- B. **Beauty**—“ One thing I have asked from Jehovah; / That do I seek: / To dwell in the house of Jehovah / All the days of my life, / To behold the beauty of Jehovah, / And to inquire in His temple” (27:4). It is not beauty at all regardless how elegant and luxurious you decorate your homes; only God is beauty!
- C. **Revelation**—“ Until I went into the sanctuary of God; / Then I perceived their end” (73:17). Receiving God’s revelation in the sanctuary of God!
- D. **Loveliness**—“How lovely are Your tabernacles, / O Jehovah of hosts!” (84:1).
- E. **Vitality**—“Planted in the house of Jehovah, / They will flourish in the courts of our God” (92:13). Flourish, which is also vitality!
- F. **Fruit bearing**—“They will still bring forth fruit in old age; / They will be full of sap and green;” (92:14). We have quite a number of elderly saints whose children have grown up, or went to further their studies, or have marry and embark on a career, hence their homes have become empty nesters. They can only look at one another all day long. Why not open your homes, letting your homes to become fruit bearing homes?
- G. **Spring**—“Then singing as well as dancing, they will say, / All my springs are in you” (87:7).
- H. **Worship**—“Exalt Jehovah our God, / And worship on His holy mountain; / For holy is Jehovah our God” (99:9).
- I. **Portion**—“My flesh and my heart fail, / But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever” (73:26).
- J. **Fresh Oil**—“But You have exalted my horn like that of a wild ox; / I am anointed with fresh oil” (92:10).
- K. **Shelter, hiding place**—“For He will conceal me in His shelter / In the day of trouble; / He will hide me in the hiding place of His tent; / He will raise me up upon a rock” (27:5).
- L. **Encouragement**—“He will raise me up upon a rock. And now my head is lifted up / Above my enemies who surround me” (27:5b-6a).
- M. **Praise**—“And I will offer in His tent / Sacrifices of shouts of joy: / I will sing and psalm to Jehovah” (27:6b).
- N. **Good**—“Taste and see that Jehovah is good; / Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him” (34:8).
- O. **Satisfaction**—“They are saturated with the fatness of Your house,” (36:8a).
- P. **Pleasure**—“And You cause them to drink of the river of Your pleasures” (36:8b)
- Q. **Life**—“ For with You is the fountain of life;” (36:9a).
- R. **Light**—“In Your light we see light” (36:9b).
- S. **Dancing**—“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;” (30:11a).
- T. **Rejoicing**—“You have loosened my sackcloth / And girded me with rejoicing,” (30:11b).

These blessings are what you get if you open your homes.

Part Three: The Function of the Sisters

Rom. 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea,
John 12:2 Therefore they made Him a supper there; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of the ones reclining at table with Him.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SISTERS IN THE CHURCH LIFE

It is very clear that the brothers and the sisters are of two categories. The Lord is the source of all things, including us human beings, but in a practical, human way mothers are the source of mankind (1 Cor. 11:12). Without mothers, mankind would not be able to continue. In the same way, the sisters are the root, the source, of the church. Just as without mothers, mankind would be terminated, the continuation of the church, the corporate new man in God's eternal purpose (Eph. 2:15-16), depends very much on the sisters. Human society and families depend more on the mother than on the father. In one sense we need a good mother more than we need a good father. A good father can do much good for his children, but what he does is not so practical and subjective. The real, secret, practical, and subjective help comes not from the father's side but from the mother's. If some children lose their father yet still have a good mother, they will still be able to be good children, but if they lose their mother, they lose their source of proper help.

Although the man occupies the higher position, in a secret, actual, practical, and subjective way the real situation of the family depends more on the female side. In the church it is the same. Regardless of how fine the brothers are, if the sisters are a problem, the church will be troubled. On the other hand, if there are no problems among the sisters, there will be no problems in the church. The sisters are the factors of calm and peace, and they can also be factors of trouble and turmoil.

THE PROBLEM AMONG THE SISTERS RELATED TO NOT THINKING THE SAME THING

The problems in the church may come from the sisters because it is difficult for them to be of one mind. The church life may be greatly diminished by the dissenting mind of the sisters. The sisters love the church and are for the church, but they may still have the defect and shortcoming of not always thinking the same thing. This is a great frustration to the church life. If there is anything that the sisters need to deal with, it is their dissenting mind. All the sisters love the Lord; if they did not, they would not remain in the church life. Many of them have paid a great price to be in the Lord's recovery for His church. Still, the church life has been hindered, at least to a certain extent, by the sisters not being of the same mind. The sisters do not hate each other, nor do they fight among themselves, but they simply do not think the same thing. There is no need to have a big problem or a turmoil; as long as the sisters do not think the same thing, the church life is greatly undermined.

THE NEED TO FORGET ALL THINGS OTHER THAN CHRIST AND TO PRAY

The two greatest problems in the New Testament related to the sisters are the dissenting mind and the gossiping mouth. These matters are tests to prove where we are. We may say that we are walking in spirit, but when we come together, we may merely talk. Our talk may not be sinful, but it may be too free, without any control, restriction, or limit. If the sisters would stop their talking and replace it with prayer, the situation among the churches would be different. Whenever someone asks us concerning others, the best answer is, "I don't know," and the best ground for saying, "I don't know," is to actually not know. If we know something but say, "I don't know," we are lying. For our own protection it is better not to know many things. In our human fallen nature, however, we always like to know the affairs of others. When we come into someone's home, we may like to look into certain rooms that we have not been invited into. This is dangerous. When we come into others' homes, we should not try to know what is in the rooms. Even if we stay in a home for ten days, we should know only the guest rooms and the dining room. Then if someone inquires about the daily life of the hosts, we can say, "I don't know," and truly mean it. This will stop all kinds of gossip.

We need the Lord's mercy and grace to learn the lesson to forget the things that we have heard. We should not have many things in our mind. In our mind we should have the Lord's word of life (Phil. 2:15-16). Let us keep this word in our mind, forgetting everything else. (*CWWL 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "The Crucial Function of the Sisters in the Church Life", pp. 129, 132, 134)

THE FUNCTION OF THE SISTERS IN THE CHURCH

The Function of Being Submissive

In considering how the sisters should function in the church, the first lesson the sisters need to learn is to be submissive. In fact, the greatest lesson for Christians to learn is to be submissive (Eph. 5:21-22). Being submissive requires the abundance of life, for submission is the expression of life. There is a difference between submitting and being submissive. The sisters need to learn the lesson not only of submitting but also of being submissive. If the sisters can learn this lesson, the church will be strong and will be enriched. To be submissive, the sisters need to realize what their position and standing are.

The first function of the sisters is to be submissive. This does not involve the doing of any kind of work, but it is a real function. Being submissive is much greater than any kind of doing. If the sisters are submissive, they are doing the greatest thing in the world. This is the greatest function on the side of the sisters.

First Corinthians 11:3 says, "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ." In this verse we can see the divine order...If the church is to have a proper testimony in the universe, there should be no murmuring or complaining from the sisters. The sisters need to learn the lesson of being submissive. They need to have the attitude that, as sisters, they do not know what is wrong or what is right; they know only one thing- that their position in the church is to be submissive. To decide what is right and what is wrong is not their responsibility or their position. The sisters are only in the position of being submissive.

The Function of Prayer

When the sisters learn the lesson of being submissive, it will be easy for them to take care of their second function—the function of prayer. The local church very much needs the functioning of the sisters in prayer. The function of prayer is not mainly on the side of the brothers but on the side of the sisters. Some of the members of the church need to constantly bear the responsibility of praying for the church, which includes praying for the elders and the responsible brothers. If the sisters are submissive, the Holy Spirit will burden them to pray for everything related to the church. They will never criticize anyone in the church but will always pray for them. They will always be burdened to pray for all the matters and all the persons related to the church life. Whatever they realize, know, and understand related to the brothers and sisters, to the families, and to the spiritual situation of the church, they will turn into prayer. They will never complain, murmur, or criticize; rather, they will be submissive and always burdened to pray. The praying function of the sisters is based on and comes out of the real submission. This is what the church needs from the sisters.

In order to function in prayer, the sisters first need to be submissive. They need to take the position and standing of being submissive. This is absolutely different from the age of the world, from the course of the world, and from the flow, the tide, of the present century. The sisters must realize that the position the Lord has given them is to be submissive. I say again that if the sisters will fulfill this responsibility, they will have the life to continually pray for the church. The spiritual eyes in their spirit will be very keen to enter into the hearts of the saints and know their situation. Although the sisters will know the situation of the saints, including the elders, they should never say a word. Rather, they should bring all the matters to the Lord and call on the Head as the highest authority. The church will receive the greatest benefit from the sisters' function.

The Function of Caring for the Affairs of the Church

If the sisters are submissive and carry out their function of prayer, it will be easy for them to realize what affairs of the church they need to take care of. Nearly everything related to the church needs to be taken care of by the sisters. The sisters need to take care of the brothers, the sisters, the children, the elderly saints, and the young people. In a family the wife and mother takes care of nearly everything. It is the same with the church. All the affairs of the church need to be taken care of by the sisters. The brothers are only the head, whereas the sisters can be likened to the body, which has many members and many functions. If the elders are inadequate in fulfilling their function, the reason is not that something is wrong with them; rather, something is wrong with the sisters, because they did not take care of the elders well. If the sisters care for the elders properly, the elders will fulfill their function. The sisters should not complain that the work among the young people is poor. The sisters need to realize that it is poor because they did not take care of the young people well. If the sisters exercise the proper care, the work among the young people will be uplifted.

If the sisters take care of the elders, the young people, and the children, what a help they will render to the church! The sisters' care will issue in the genuine building up of the church. Moreover, the sisters will be strong in spirit, rich in life, and bold in what the Lord has done through them. Then it will be easy for the sisters to function in the general meetings of the church, even though many brothers may be present. The sisters need to increase their functioning in the church meetings, but this depends on their being submissive, fulfilling their praying function, and taking care of the things that they need to take care of in the church. (*CWWL 1968*, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles", pp. 83-88)

THE SISTERS' SERVICE IN THE CHURCH

We will consider the position of the sisters in the church service. We often find symbols of spiritual matters in physical things. We can use a woman's position and service in a family as a symbol of the sisters' position and service in the church. The church is God's family. In a family there are parents and children, a husband and a wife, older ones and younger ones, and males and females. Women have a definite position in a family. On the surface a woman's position may not be as manifest as that of a man, because the man is the head according to God's ordination (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23). Even though Western countries emphasize equality between men and women and promote the rights of women, men are more prominent than women. Nevertheless, whether she is only a wife or also a mother, the woman in a family bears a large and important responsibility, and her influence is profound. Someone once said to me that Chinese women do not have any power but that all the power is in the men's hands. I replied that he was wrong; in China, women actually have more power. Ninety percent of the power in Chinese families is in the hands of the women. However, this is not noticeable; it is hidden.

In a proper family a woman should not be the head. As a good wife and mother, a woman needs to bear everything in a family; nevertheless, she should not make decisions and act on her own, nor should she represent the family in public. Rather, she should do things according to her husband's command. A wife should do things with her husband's consent and under her husband's leading, even though ninety percent of the household matters are in her hands. A family that is not like this is not a good family. A family in which everything needs to be done by the husband will be paralyzed.

At this time we would like to mention five major matters that we neglected in the past that require the sisters' coordination for us to carry them out. Our present care for these matters is inadequate. The brothers are helpless in these five matters. The sisters must rise up to bear the responsibility.

Children's Work

The first matter for the sisters' service is the children's work. Concerning the children's work, within me there is truly a heavy burden. All the churches must have a children's work. According to statistics, forty-five percent of the population of Taiwan is under fifteen years of age. This is roughly six million people. Many local churches have quite a few families with children. I estimate that there are about

ten thousand children in the church in Taipei and about the same number of children in the churches in the rest of Taiwan. If we work with these twenty thousand children, they will all be young brothers and sisters after six to seven years. This is what the sisters should do.

Appointing a Few Serving Sisters to Take the Lead

In carrying out this work, we need to pay attention to a few principles. First, a number of sisters should rise up to lead the children's work. A number of older sisters must receive this burden. The elders should also appoint three to six sisters to take up this responsibility.

The Sisters Bringing the Children to the Meeting

The sisters should also bring the children to the meeting. If a sister cannot bring ten children, she should be able to bring five. Every week the sisters should consider how to bring the children to the meeting. If the meeting place is inadequate, they can open their homes. The sisters are like nursing mothers who care for the children and pray for them. After the meeting, the sisters need to take the children home. All the sisters should give themselves to this service.

Training the Young Sisters to Be Teachers

We must use the young sisters to lead the children's meetings. Two or three other sisters can assist them in teaching the children to sing. The church should train the teachers so that the young sisters learn to teach and lead the children. Some brothers also need to collect and write material for the children's meetings. They should prepare material for the youngest group of children, for the children in the middle grades, and for the older children.

Opening the Homes for Children's Meetings

The saints should open their homes for children's meetings. When the children's work is carried out in a good way, I estimate that there will be about three hundred groups with twenty-five to thirty children in a group. This is close to ten thousand children. This means that we will need several hundred places for the children's meetings. Of course, we can use the meeting halls, but the number of meeting halls we have will not meet this need. We need many brothers and sisters to open their homes. It would be good to have three hundred meeting places for the children every Lord's Day. How beautiful this service will be! And how much the Lord's work will be propagated!

When the entire church is mobilized in this way, all the brothers and sisters will have an opportunity to serve. Some can open their homes, others can bring the children to the meetings, and still others can teach the children. When all the saints endeavor in one accord for the Lord's heart's desire, the profit will be immeasurable. This will impress the children that we are all for the Lord and are caring for them without compensation. Those who open their homes do not ask for money, those who teach do not ask for money, and those who transport the children do not ask for money. Instead of asking for money, the saints spend their own money to pay the expenses of carrying out the children's service. As a result, everyone will be full of joy. Our conducting children's meetings in this way will deeply impress the children from their youth. They will see people who live for Christ and who sacrifice for Christ, not caring for themselves. This is the ultimate benefit. Furthermore, the impact will unconsciously influence the relatives of the children in such a way that it will be easy to invite them to a gospel meeting. Hence, the children's work is a major service.

Recovering the Dormant Sisters

The second matter for the sisters' service is to recover the dormant sisters. The sisters should use every means possible to locate the dormant sisters. Some sisters will need to head this up. The five areas of service need to be headed up. The sisters who take the lead should form home groups with about eight to ten sisters in a group. As to when and where the home groups meet, each group can decide. Then the sisters can invite the dormant sisters to their homes and have a time of fellowship, have tea and

snacks, and sing some hymns; in other words, the sisters can have a time of fellowship without formality. I believe that this will stir the sisters up. If we are able to stir up the sisters, the husbands of at least half the sisters will be influenced to love the Lord. Hence, this also is a major service.

Cooperating in the Students' Work

A third matter is the work with the students. This requires the sisters' cooperation. We earnestly hope that several working saints will have homes near the gates of every university in Taiwan. When we preach the gospel on a campus, immediately after someone is led to salvation, we can bring him to one of these homes. In this way the homes will become homes for the young people. Whether or not students live at home, they like to be in other people's homes. When we open our homes, the young people will be cherished. If the sisters receive this burden and are willing to cooperate, the result of our gospel work in the schools will be doubled. Hence, this also is a major item of the work. If the families can coordinate with the students' work by rendering care to the students, it will be a great help to the work.

Learning to be Spiritual Nursing Mothers

Fourth, the sisters should learn to be spiritual nursing mothers. As groups of young people are baptized, their parents may not be able to render them adequate shepherding. The young brothers and sisters will need spiritual mothers who have received a burden and who seek the Lord's leading to help and lead them spiritually.

If the sisters can shepherd the young people in this way, it will be a big help. This will give the young people an opportunity to turn to the Lord, since they will listen to what their spiritual mother says, even though they may not necessarily listen to what their parents say. Our care and love for them causes them to realize that what we do for them is from the Lord, and it will open their heart, making it easy for them to receive our words.

Many believers who were used by the Lord were saved and shepherded in homes. For example, George Müller, who established several orphanages, was not saved in a big meeting. He was saved in a gospel gathering in the home of a believer.

Giving Hospitality

Finally, we hope that many sisters will open their homes for hospitality. Whenever there is a conference or a young people's training, the sisters should open their homes to receive guests. The result of the opening of the homes for hospitality is rich and very profitable. Presently, we put the guests in the meeting hall, which may be profitable, but we can hardly say that there is warmth or care.

The church in Los Angeles is an example. The out-of-town guests at the summer training—more than a hundred saints—are received into the homes of the saints. In 1963 we conducted the first training in Los Angeles, and a little over thirty trainees participated full time. The next year the number increased to about sixty. In both trainings the work arranged hospitality for the trainees. In 1965 we purchased a meeting hall, and the saints found homes near the hall. There were eighty to ninety saints living in the area around the hall. As a result, all the saints opened their homes for hospitality that year. Every home received two or three saints. All the saints as well as their guests participated in the training. Hence, before the evening meetings there were brothers and sisters everywhere around the meeting hall. People in America seldom walk on the street; they usually drive their cars. However, the saints who lived within walking distance from the hall did not go to the meetings by car; instead, with Bibles in hand they walked in threes and fives to the meetings. There were nearly one hundred visiting saints in that training, all of whom were received by the local saints. Hospitality gives people a deep impression, and it renders them much help. After the meetings, the saints returned to the homes, and the host families and the guests had further fellowship and prayer.

When the number of sisters in a church decreases, either the church is becoming weak, or the work with the sisters has problems. The sisters must rise up. In addition to the regular service of the church, they must actively take over the service of the five main items mentioned above. They should collect information cards for the sisters who are cold and backslidden or who have not been to a meeting for a long time and should care for these sisters according to the Lord's leading. They should also make a list of all the families that have children and assign sisters to visit these families. The co-workers should also promote these matters in the churches and charge the sisters to rise up to take care of these things. Furthermore, the sisters should learn to be nursing mothers in shepherding the young brothers and sisters. (*CWWL 1967*, vol. 1, "Serving in Coordination and Washing in Love", pp. 303-309)

THE LEARNING NEEDED FOR THE SISTERS IN THEIR SERVICE

Being Persistent in the Burden

The sisters who have a burden should stand in the position of sisters with their heads absolutely covered. They should not take the lead or head up anything but only actively promote things. They can speak to the elders so that the elders who do not have a burden will become burdened over time. However, they should not depend on the elders for everything, because the elders will not be able to consider all the details. Instead, the sisters should pray over every matter, have a thorough fellowship among themselves, and then ask the elders to give the word to proceed. The sisters should not expect the elders to make all the arrangements or plan everything for them. The sisters can make plans and arrangements, but before implementing anything, they should bring their plans and considerations to the elders and ask the elders to examine and approve them. If the elders do not approve of a certain aspect of the arrangement, it should be dropped. The sisters should not do anything that has not been approved by the elders. This kind of fellowship and coordination will result in the elders becoming more burdened.

In the matter of service, the sisters should first promote their burden to the brothers. The elders in a locality are often very busy, and they have many things to oversee. Consequently, it may take time for them to sense the growing burden. The sisters should wait for them on the one hand and be persistent to promote the burden on the other hand. Without the sisters' persistence, the elders may not act, and the sisters may lose their zeal. Such a development would be regrettable. Hence, the sisters in every place must be persistent.

The Sisters Not Assuming the Headship but Leaving All Decisions to the Brothers

The service is quite precious when the sisters do not assume to be the head or take the lead, but, rather than being passive, are still persistent with the brothers. The sisters are actually the most capable. In the church there are two kinds of situations that are not good. In some churches the sisters do not do anything, because they think that the brothers should take the lead and also do what needs to be done. This is not a proper situation. In some churches, however, the sisters think that because they have been asked to serve, they should be given the full authority to decide everything. This is an appalling situation that can be the source of many problems in the church. For example, a sister may be asked to look after the sisters who have not been meeting regularly. Consequently, she may feel that she should stir them up at any cost. If the brothers agree with her way, she will do it, and if the brothers do not agree with her way, she will still do it. This will create problems. The most precious and valuable situation involves sisters who can actively undertake a task but have no opinions of their own.

Most of the sisters who followed the Lord in the Bible were burning within, but they did not have their own opinion, nor did they exercise any authority. They labored, but they did not take the lead. They were always persistent to put a little positive pressure on the brothers to take the lead. Today we truly need sisters who do not replace the brothers in the headship but who also do not expect the brothers to head up everything in a proper way. The sisters should be prepared. Even if the brothers are slow in taking the lead in some matters, the sisters should be persistent in promoting these matters to the brothers so that they will pick up the burden and take the lead. Although the sisters should never

assume the headship or take the lead, they should never give up on the brothers or give them reason for rest. Even if the brothers are unhappy because of the sisters' persistent pressure, the sisters should not be bothered by the brothers. Instead, the sisters should be able to diffuse the brothers' displeasure and clear the air. The sisters who can do this are like the worthy woman whom King Lemuel spoke of in Proverbs 31, a woman who is able to build up her household (vv. 10, 27).

In certain matters the brothers may be slow and unclear, but when they make a decision, their decision is almost always correct. Most of the time the sisters are the first to have a sense concerning a matter; the brothers are indeed inferior. In sensing things and in seeing through and understanding things, the brothers are often not as good as the sisters. However, when it comes to making decisions, the sisters cannot be depended on. We all must learn this lesson.

Being Receptive to the Sense of the Sisters

In the church life the brothers should be willing to receive the sense of the sisters. For example, if the sisters say that there is a need to preach the gospel, the brothers should catch up with their feeling concerning this. The sisters' sense is quick and keen. However, when a decision must be made, we should never follow the sisters. This is my experience. The more the sisters know themselves, the more they realize that their sense is sharp, but they should not strive for the right to make decisions. Sisters should readily fellowship their feeling about a matter with the brothers, but then they should let the brothers make the decision. This is the secret of my work. I am very receptive to the sisters' sense, but I let the brothers make the decision.

The sense of the sisters is very fine; this is an innate quality of the sisters. They have the ability to see the fine points of a matter much better than the brothers. Everything that the brothers cannot see, the sisters will see. Hence, the brothers should accept the sisters' feelings and views quickly and should truly receive them. However, the brothers should bear the responsibility for making the decisions. The greatest mistake that the brothers can make is to either be unreceptive to the sisters' feelings or follow the decisions of the sisters. This is most foolish.

In God's creation the sisters are finer, keener, and deeper in their sense; the brothers cannot compare to them in this. The brother who is the finest in his sense is still coarse when compared to a sister. This is a matter of God's creation. Hence, the brothers should quickly receive the sense of the sisters and encourage the sisters to exercise their sense. The more the sense of the sisters is exercised in the church, the better; but the sisters should not act independently. When it is time for a judgment or a decision, the sisters should stand back and allow the brothers to exercise their judgment. If the brothers are slow to make a decision, the sisters can be persistent, applying positive pressure so that the brothers make a decision. Eventually, the decisions made by the brothers will have a beneficial outcome. This way also protects and shields the sisters. There are unspeakable and countless benefits in taking this way.

Not Doing Anything that the Brothers have not yet Decided

In conclusion, the sisters should come together to pray and fellowship and to seek the Lord's leading as to how to present to the brothers their feelings concerning the needs in the church life. As the sisters "push" the brothers, the sisters should remember that they are sisters. Although they may be finer, more thorough, and deeper than the brothers in their sense, observation, and view, God never entrusts sisters with making decisions. Hence, the sisters must know their place. On the one hand, they should do their best to fellowship, to express their feeling, and to "push" the brothers, but on the other hand, the decision making should be left to the brothers.

The sisters should not do anything that the brothers have not yet decided on and agreed upon. Everything should pass through the brothers. If the brothers are slow, the sisters can apply a little pressure so that the brothers will become burdened. However, if the brothers do not agree or do not reach a decision, the sisters should not do anything. If we realize this principle, there will not be any problems. If we do not maintain this principle, the more the sisters do, the greater the problem will

become. In the end, the church in that locality will suffer great loss. (CWWL 1967, vol. 1, “Serving in Coordination and Washing in Love”, pp. 341-346)

Giving the Sisters the Opportunity to Do Things; the More They Do, the Better

Hence, we must give the sisters the opportunity to do things; the more they do, the better. A decade ago I did not dare to say this, because I was concerned that the trend in society would be brought into the church and disrupt the proper order. However, the sisters have received many years of perfecting, and they have also been tested by many years of turmoil. We believe that the sisters know their position and their measure and are clear about the way of the Lord. Hence, we should give the sisters more opportunities to serve; we should instruct the sisters and cultivate their service so that they have more opportunities to function. (CWWL 1967, vol. 1, “Serving in Coordination and Washing in Love”, p. 304)

Becoming A Real Help and Blessing to the Church

some sisters do a very good job of serving their family at home. They know how to be wise at home, how to lead and strengthen the family, and how to put positive pressure on their husbands. In the same principle, if the sisters love the Lord and love the church as much as they love their families, they will be able to conduct themselves properly in the church and bear responsibilities, just as they do in their own homes. This will be a great help to the church. The church is a home, and it needs this kind of service; it needs a group of sisters who are good wives and loving mothers and who know how to bear responsibilities and yet not assume the position of the head. In other words, the church needs sisters who will not act on their own or make decisions on their own. When they encounter anything, they will handle it as they would in their own homes, letting their husbands make the decisions.

If the sisters see the brothers lagging behind in their sense of things, the sisters should not speak against them in an inappropriate way; rather, they should be patient and wise. This can be likened to a wife who knows how to deal properly with her husband at home. When a wife sees that her husband is upset, she will not continue to pressure him. After a couple of days, when she sees that his mood is better, she may speak of the matter with him again. Eventually, he will realize that she is the best wife. Similarly, the brothers who take the lead in the church will realize that the sisters love the Lord and the church very much and that they are very considerate of the brothers and helpful to them. Such sisters, who are good wives and loving mothers in the church, are a great blessing to the church. (CWWL 1967, vol. 1, “Serving in Coordination and Washing in Love”, p. 347)

Session Three
Regrouping of Small Groups

Question 1: Do I need to reform my group?

Question 2: How should I reform my group?

Crucial thought: From big to small, from coming to going, from meetings to people.

I. Re-establishing the structure and members of the groups:

- A. Each district forming 3 groups (or more), each group having 12 members, and 6 of the saints taking care of another 6 saints and gospel friends in coordination.
- B. Having group meeting once every week by rotation in the saints' homes or the homes of the gospel friends who were willing to open their homes. Meeting from house to house so that each home would become a gospel station, truth station, and life supplying station that allows the invited friends, neighbors and classmates to have the opportunity to be blessed. Allowing the opened homes to become the channel of God's blessings.
- C. Each district must have 3 types of name list: (1) Meeting Regularly (2) Meeting Occasionally (3) Gospel friends.
- D. Each group have two smaller groups. The functions of the smaller groups are on gospel preaching, visiting, caring, and shepherding.
- E. Everything related to love feast, giving hospitality, Levitical service, gospel preaching, visiting, knocking on doors, caring, supporting, petitioning, blending, morning revival, shepherding, conferences and training will be done in the groups.

II. The perfect timing to re-establish small groups—grasp the timing to have a turn from online meeting to physical meeting.

III. The key for the small group to succeed—vital person

- A. A Life being revived every morning—the fountain of vitality.
- B. A prayer life—the source of strength.
- C. A blending life—the factors of motivation.
- D. These three powers combining together becoming a spiritual impact.