

Shepherding the Church and Perfecting the Young People

Witness Lee



LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

SHEPHERDING THE CHURCH AND PERFECTING THE YOUNG PEOPLE

by Witness Lee

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PREFACE

This book contains fellowship given by Brother Witness Lee in Taipei to the co-workers and elders in Taiwan in January 1971.

CHAPTER ONE

HOW TO ADVANCE IN THE WORK

THREE POINTS REQUIRING OUR ATTENTION

The Church Multiplying

Acts 9:31 says, “The church throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it was multiplied.” Verse 47 of chapter 2 gives a description of the early believers in Jerusalem: they were “praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.” The situation of the churches in Taiwan is similar to that of the early believers in Acts. We have peace, we are being built up, we fear the Lord, we have the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and we are praising God. However, there is one thing that does not seem to match the situation. In Acts the Lord “added together day by day those who were being saved”; that is, the number of believers increased day by day. In recent years our numbers do not seem to have increased. Our present rate of increase cannot compare to the increase that we experienced during our first eight years in Taiwan.

In 1949 there were about five hundred saints in Taiwan who had come from the mainland. Later these saints spread to various places on the island. In 1955 there were close to twenty thousand saints in Taiwan. These figures indicate that we had a rapid rate of increase. In the last ten years, however, our increase has slowed down. During this period, there was a turmoil among us; hence, it was not so easy for the work to advance. Even though the churches in Taiwan have been in harmony and oneness for the last two to three years and the co-workers have also been in one accord, our rate of increase has been very slow. The church in Taipei has not experienced a ten-percent increase during the past three years. Although the number of districts has increased, the total number of saints in attendance has not. I believe that this is the situation in all the churches.

The churches today have more provisions than we had twenty years ago. At that time, the saints were young, and our financial capability was less than a tenth of what it is today. In spite of all these factors, our present rate of increase is very slow. This situation is worthy of our study and examination before the Lord.

Producing New Co-workers

Furthermore, very few new co-workers are being gained. This means that very few saints are answering the Lord's calling to be set apart by the Lord and be useful in full-time service. We cannot use human methods, such as opening a kind of school to recruit young people in order to cultivate and produce some useful ones. Such a method is useless. Our situation should be that year after year new ones are called by the Lord, raised up by Him, and set apart by Him. Regrettably, we do not have such a situation among us.

Spreading the Work of the Lord's Testimony

At present the work is not spreading. It seems as though we are only maintaining the status quo among existing local churches. This is in contrast to our situation a few years ago when the work was always spreading and opening new areas. Now only a few local churches are being raised up. One reason for this may be that churches have already been established in most of the major cities. Furthermore, most of the serving ones are in the major cities, and it is not so easy for them to go to smaller places. Initially, the scattered brothers and sisters moved to the major cities for the raising up of local churches. Now it is not common for the saints to move to smaller places. People tend to concentrate in large cities rather than small towns. For this reason, it is not easy to raise up more churches. In view of this situation, we must rely on the workers going out rather than on the saints being scattered in order to raise up new churches.

In the Bible there are two ways for the work to spread. The first way is for workers to go forth and establish churches in various places (Acts 13:2). The second way is through the scattering of the saints (8:1-4). We cannot rely on the saints being scattered to smaller towns. Hence, the spread of the work depends on the co-workers' going out. Since the co-workers have been unable to go out, it has been difficult for the work to spread. As a result, the work and

the testimony of the church are limited to large cities. This point is worthy of our study.

There are three matters that require our attention: the slow rate of increase in the churches, the lack of new co-workers being produced in the work, and the way to spread the work of the Lord's testimony from large cities to smaller cities and from smaller cities to towns and even to villages. We must examine these three matters before the Lord. An additional matter that is also worthy of our attention is that very few who were baptized have remained.

**BROADENING OUR VIEW
FOR THE WORK
IN THE UNITED STATES
AND OTHER PLACES**

Some saints have said that the work in Taiwan has not developed in recent years because I spend most of my time in the United States. This word is not correct. We cannot continue the work in the United States if I am required to spend half of my time in Taiwan. The work in Taiwan has been going on for twenty-one years, from the second half of 1949 until now. The foundation for many aspects of the work has been laid in Taiwan, but the work in the United States is altogether in the initial stage. If we do not labor in the United States, no fruit will come forth. The work will advance only as far as we labor. There is a good foundation in Taiwan, but it is regrettable that we have not developed it. The condition of Taiwan's society is far more advantageous to the Lord's work than it was twenty years ago. The living conditions in Taiwan are stable because of a prosperous economy and a well-developed education system. We must make use of these provisions. When Western missionaries went to China to preach the gospel, they had to establish schools, because education helps the spread of the gospel. Today there is no need for us to establish schools in Taiwan. There are schools established by the government everywhere. This is an excellent provision. In addition, the environment in Taiwan is safe and secure, and the government grants people freedom of religion. As long as a person does not violate the law, no one will interfere in his religious activities. All of these are excellent provisions, but we have not utilized them.

The United States has a similar situation. The environment there is suitable, but we have not yet laid a solid foundation for the work. The work is only in the initial stage. Hence, if we do not continue to labor, the work will suffer, but if we labor, the work will spread. If I spend six months in the United States and the other six months in Taiwan, the work will not develop in the United States. In order for the work to develop, I must spend more time there. We must have a broader view concerning the work in the United States. Although there are many local churches in Taiwan, and there are many saints fellowshiping in the churches, the impact and potential spread of the work in Taiwan cannot be compared to the United States. For example, *The Ministry of the Word* magazine has been in publication for twenty years, but there are only approximately three thousand eight hundred readers. However, *The Stream* magazine, which is in English, has ten thousand readers. This means that there are less than four thousand Chinese readers, but there are close to ten thousand English-speaking readers. Although the number of local churches in the United States and the number of saints in fellowship with us are few, the number of people who receive help from this work is not small.

In the United States there are close to a hundred million Christians, of which forty million are Catholics and sixty million are Protestants. If the work influences only one percent of the sixty million Protestants, this would be six hundred thousand people. If we lower the percentage to only one-tenth of one percent, we would still reach sixty thousand people. Hence, it is worthwhile to labor in the United States. Furthermore, in addition to the believers in the United States, believers in places such as India, Australia, New Zealand, and West Germany are also influenced by this ministry. As far as the numbers are concerned, the work in the United States cannot be compared to the work in Taiwan; however, as far as impact is concerned, the work in Taiwan cannot compare to the work in the United States. The influence of the work here is mostly in East Asia, and it is limited to the Chinese-speaking world. Outside of the Chinese-speaking world, the influence is limited. Therefore, if we have a broader view, a global view, the importance of the work in Taiwan cannot be compared to the importance of the work in the United States. If we reduce the labor in the United States by half, we may not be able to compensate for the loss. Without the work in the United States, I could spend all my energy in Taiwan, and there would be much work here. However, the work must spread in the United States. For this reason I hope that you will labor diligently to spread the work here in my absence.

Concerning the propagation work overseas, Taiwan has rendered some help. However, there are many local churches and a good number of saints in Taiwan, so we should be able to render substantial help by sending more saints out. The work needs to be developed in Japan, South Korea, and many other countries. Saints need to be sent to these places. Three or four co-workers are not enough to begin the work in Indonesia. We must be willing to send saints. The work must advance in Taiwan, but we must also supply other places. The brothers should endeavor to go forward.

EXERCISING TO FUNCTION IN THE WORK

The work needs leadership, but the co-workers cannot depend solely on the leadership. The foundation has been laid, and churches have also been established in many places. The co-workers should exercise to function in the work. We are not an organization, nor do we have a constitution. The co-workers in Tainan are free to develop the work in Tainan, but they must not interfere with the work in other churches. A co-worker in Taipei must first fellowship with the co-workers and elders in Taipei regarding his service in a particular district, and then he should labor diligently. While he should follow the direction of the work, he should not wait passively. However, it is a fundamental mistake for the work to direct the day-to-day activities of the workers. If the work directs the workers in this way, the work should be fundamentally adjusted. At the most, the work should make some initial arrangements for the co-workers concerning their service. In the church in Taipei there are many district halls. The work can arrange for a worker to serve in a particular district, but once a worker is assigned to serve in a place, the work should give him total freedom. The work does not have a central command unit. The co-workers must not hold such a concept.

The co-workers must not give their responsibilities to someone else. If a country has the best president, but none of its ministers work diligently, sooner or later that country will fall. But if the ministers do their best, even if the president is not intelligent, that country will become stronger. Hence, in a sense, the work needs leadership, but in another sense, the work does not need a leader or leaders, because we are not an organization. A co-worker serving in a certain place should have some amount of freedom. Some

co-workers are restricted because the elders in their locality exercise too much control. These elders need a change of concept.

We do not control, rule over, or restrict the co-workers. If a co-worker is serving in Keelung but fails to accomplish anything, he should not blame anything or anyone, because he was perfected by the work and given freedom in his service. Therefore, the co-workers need a change in concept. Once they are serving in a certain place, whether large or small, they should work until that place becomes a “New Jerusalem.” The place of our service does not matter; what matters is that we accomplish something. There is no need for a commander-in-chief in Taiwan. We simply need to labor where we are.

The work does not need a commander-in-chief, nor does a district meeting or a group meeting need a commander-in-chief. We should remove all the leaders, and let everyone be a leader. A co-worker should take the lead in the work by concentrating on nothing else but working diligently. This is the right concept. If he is not controlled, he cannot blame anyone but himself for the outcome of his labor. If the result is good, it is to his credit; if the result is poor, it is his fault.

Hence, the workers must change their concept. There is no organization in the work. We are not like a government office. Every co-worker works according to the grace he has received. If the grace he has received is comparable to what Paul received, his work will be comparable to Paul’s. If the grace he has received is similar to what Barnabas received, his work will be comparable to the work of Barnabas. Whether or not the work tries to control him will not change the fact that he is a Paul or a Barnabas. It will only impact the effectiveness of his service. In Acts the work was not under anyone’s rule. Once an aspect of the work is placed in our hands, we should exercise to function; we should not wait for “instructions” from a leader. This fellowship is related to the co-workers.

ELDERS BEARING THE BURDEN OF THE CHURCH

The elders must seek the Lord’s grace so that they are able to bear the burden of the church. In the initial stage of the church, when it is still weak, the co-workers’ help is needed. However, in some local churches the co-workers have been helping for more than twenty years. It is not reasonable

for these churches to continue to ask for the help of the co-workers. It is the elders who should bear the burden of the church. However, the elders must not have the concept of being an elder forever. If the church does not advance or spread, the elders should go before the Lord and see if there are others who are more useful. If there are such brothers, the elders should consider giving up their service. The elders do not have a specific term of service, like the president who serves for four years and the legislators who serve for two years. There is no term limit related to the eldership. However, if an elder cannot bear the responsibility in a locality, and there is a brother who is more mature and more capable, then the elder should consider giving up his service. We should bring such matters before the Lord.

As elders, we should bear the burden of the church in our locality. If the situation of the church is poor, we can fellowship and ask the work to send co-workers to assist us. However, it is not easy, even for the co-workers, to produce elders. This is because the more a co-worker serves, the more he can keep things in his own hands. This results in limited opportunities for others to serve and learn. After a co-worker works in a place for two or three years, elders should be raised up from among the saints, and the burden of the church can be handed over to them. It is often the case that some local brothers show signs of being an elder, but after a co-worker arrives and works in the locality for three years, these brothers no longer show any signs of being an elder. This is because the co-worker assumes all the responsibilities in the church. When the co-worker serves directly, he does not know how to train others and even believes that he is the only one who can carry out the work. The longer he takes care of things, the less capable others become. This is a problem. The church can become a trap to a co-worker if he thinks that he is indispensable. When a co-worker goes to a place where there are no elders, he should train the local brothers with the aim of producing elders. After three years some local brothers who can be given the responsibilities of an elder will be manifested. Then the local brothers should be appointed as elders. In this way, the co-worker will be freed to move to another locality. This situation is normal.

At present, however, the elders do not bear the burden of the churches, because the co-workers are still bearing the burden of the elders. No new elders have been raised up, and not many elders have manifested their function. I hope that the elders will go before the Lord, examine themselves anew, and have a new beginning in the Lord's light. They should determine

whether or not they can advance or whether or not others are more suitable to be elders. If there are no suitable brothers, we can fellowship with the work.

SIMPLIFYING THE MEETINGS AND SPENDING MORE TIME SHEPHERDING AND VISITING

Many new believers have not remained after being baptized, because we have not spent enough time to care for them. Our service has focused on maintaining the meetings. We rely on meetings to shepherd the saints. Most of the serving ones focus on maintaining the meetings. We spend our time and energy on the meetings. As a result, the service related to shepherding, teaching, visiting, and comforting does not exist. This means that after a person is baptized, no one cares for him or nourishes him. It is regrettable that some new believers have even been lost.

We need to examine our situation and consider whether we can change the way we do things. The responsibility for this matter lies with the elders. They should change the system by spending more of their time shepherding. Not only should the elders spend more time shepherding, but the responsible ones in the districts and the serving ones should shepherd more. In particular, the saints who meet regularly should also do the work of shepherding. It would be good to drop one weekly meeting and use that time for visiting and shepherding. The elders and responsible ones in the districts should reduce the church business affairs; they should not spend too much time on the business affairs.

The church life should not depend on those taking the lead. Rather, we should simplify our meetings as well as the administrative affairs so that there is more time for visiting and shepherding the saints. The elders' meeting should also be simplified. In this way much time can be saved and used for shepherding the saints. In short, elders should do more shepherding and visiting. They should also bring the responsible saints in the districts and small groups into shepherding and visiting.

Furthermore, we should make a list of all the saints in the meetings and then arrange the saints into small groups. There should be one weekly meeting in the meeting hall, and the rest of the time can be used for small

group meetings. A group of five saints may decide to visit another saint, or they may invite another saint to fellowship with them, or they may preach the gospel. These things are all good. Whatever the saints in a group desire to do, they may do. They can meet two times a week, but it would be best to meet three times so that they can also shepherd and care for other saints. Two groups may decide to come together and fellowship. This is also good. Such matters do not need to be brought to the elders' meeting for fellowship. The saints should have the freedom to carry out such matters with each member participating. The elders oversee the church. They should observe how the groups are progressing, how many new ones are being gained, and how many backslidden ones are being recovered.

I feel that it is worthwhile for us to change the system. In particular, the elders and the responsible ones in the districts and the small groups should have a turn. It would be best if the business affairs took up only one-tenth of our time and visiting and shepherding took up nine-tenths of our time. We should spend more time and energy visiting the saints. Visiting is not the responsibility of only the elders; all the saints should be involved. We need more fellowship concerning this matter. Changing a system is not a revolution, but it requires more effort than a revolution, because it is possible to have a revolution but still maintain the old system. Therefore, to have a change of system requires more effort.

SUPPLYING THE LORD'S DAY MEETING

We must also pay attention to supplying the Lord's Day meeting. I attended a Lord's Day meeting in which the saints merely sang hymns, prayed, and gave testimonies. That is not the best use of our time in the Lord's Day meeting. Some of the testimonies encouraged the saints. The meeting was not in the hands of the elders; in other words, the elders did not consider the meeting to be their responsibility. This situation can be likened to inviting guests for a meal but not preparing anything. We need to have a plan. We must be determined to have some "food" for supplying the saints during the Lord's Day meeting.

If I bore responsibility in a district, I would do everything in order to get a supply to meet the need of the Lord's Day meeting. Otherwise, several hundred saints will come together for one and a half hours every week without receiving a supply. After a few weeks some will feel that they are

wasting their time and energy. Hence, the elders must labor desperately. They should bear a heavier burden for the Lord's Day meeting. Instead of relying on the co-workers, the elders should labor and pay the price to receive a supply for the Lord's Day meeting.

A two-hour meeting on the Lord's Day is not long. There should always be a good, suitable, and living supply rendered to the brothers and sisters. We should not fill the time with things that do not supply the saints. If an elder cannot fulfill this need, he should ask another brother to take care of it. We must set aside some time in the Lord's Day morning meeting to render an adequate supply to the saints. Another period of time should be set aside for the saints to fellowship and give testimonies. These are also necessary. In every Lord's Day morning meeting we should render a supply to the saints for their edification, and all the saints should have mutual fellowship.

Furthermore, we should set aside two evenings a week for the saints to take care of their household affairs, which have nothing to do with spiritual things or church service. The saints can meet in the hall for their edification on any other evening. The focus of the meeting in the hall should be for the edification of the saints. The small groups can decide how to use the rest of the evenings in the week; they should include a prayer meeting. The elders should not decide the location of the small group meetings. Every group can make that decision. The saints in a group may decide to pray in the home of one saint this week and in the home of a different saint next week. A small group can consist of five saints, ten saints, or even twenty saints. However, all the saints in a group should live nearby and be in the same district. Two groups may even decide to meet together.

The activities of a group may include meeting, fellowshiping, finding and visiting backslidden saints, and preaching the gospel to lead people to salvation. The responsibility for this service can be placed on the shoulders of the saints. In this way the church is responsible only for taking care of the meeting on Lord's Day morning and the mid-week meeting. The mid-week meeting can be on a Wednesday or Thursday, and each small group can decide whether to visit or to shepherd on other evenings. The elders should charge the saints to come together to pray, fellowship, visit and recover the backslidden saints, strengthen the weak saints, comfort the disheartened saints, and lead people to salvation. Every group can participate in these

activities. When the number of saints in a group increases, the group can split into two new groups.

There should be two meetings a week to edify and supply saints. These meetings should be in the district halls, one on the Lord's Day morning and the other during the week. If the elders cannot give good messages, they can coordinate together to select a few messages and digest them. They can select a message from *The Ministry of the Word* magazine. The brothers should read, digest, and fellowship concerning the message. They can then use this to supply the saints on the Lord's Day.

The elders should always have something with which to supply the saints. They should never be empty-handed. We should not be like an irresponsible mother, who does not consider how to feed her children.

The elders must bear this responsibility. Every Lord's Day morning when the saints come together, the elders should supply them in a proper way with "food." No matter how poor the elders think that they are, they must always be ready to supply and nourish the saints. This is the proper way.

EVERYONE IN THE SMALL GROUP BEARING RESPONSIBILITY AND SERVING

In the small groups we should introduce the saints to spiritual books for their study and encourage them to fellowship mutually in the meetings. A small group can use one evening to read spiritual books and pray. About ten saints can gather together and use half the time to read and the other half to pray. A group can use two evenings to visit saints or preach the gospel. If we can practice this consistently, over a period of time we will see results.

The information concerning gospel friends does not have to be taken care of in a central location. This information should be taken care of by the small groups. We also need to consider certain matters such as baptisms. Such matters do not necessarily need to be done in the halls. Baptisms can be taken care of by the small groups. A small group can baptize its gospel friends who have received the Lord. In this way the church life is simplified.

We should make a new list of the saints who are in the meetings. Based on this list saints can be formed into groups. We should not designate one saint as the responsible one, because every saint is a responsible one. Even if twenty saints come together, every saint is responsible. These saints should take care of one another. They can preach the gospel together and edify one another; all the saints should be responsible.

Because there seems to be a hint of bureaucracy among us, no one should be assigned to be a leading one in a small group. Every saint should take the lead and take care of the group. If the saints do not take care of themselves, they will die. We need an atmosphere of mutual care. We must not let the districts administrate the small groups. Such an administration would annul the function of the saints. The more we try to administrate, the more problems there will be. We should eliminate any administration through the districts by letting the saints serve and take care of their activities.

When the saints meet on the Lord's Day morning, it is the responsibility of the elders, the "fathers and mothers," to give them something to eat. Do not control the saints; instead, feed them. The districts should not seek to control the saints. The oversight of the elders in the districts is a sufficient responsibility for the elders. The administration in a district must be reduced.

In a local church the responsibility of the elders is mainly in feeding and teaching. When the saints gather together on the Lord's Day morning, the elders should give them food. The genuine administrative responsibility of the elders is to give food to the saints. If people are fed, there will be no problems. This principle also applies to the administration of a nation. If a nation is fed and satisfied, there will be no problems. Hence, we must feed and satisfy the saints. If the saints are not fed, our administration will bring in confusion. If the saints are fed, our administration will bring in order.

SETTING THE SPIRITS OF THE SAINTS FREE

A hall that stresses only administration of outward matters is like a "cake not turned" (Hosea 7:8). Some may think that it is a risk to reduce the administrative involvement of the elders. We need to run this risk and see what happens. We should not feel a need to direct every matter in a group meeting. This will enable the function of the saints to be developed. If the

saints in a small group are quarreling, we should not be quick to intervene with their quarreling. If a small group becomes desolate because of incessant quarreling, let it be so. Eventually, the Lord will open a door for the consecrated saints to address the real need of the group, and the quarreling will stop. Perhaps I am too much in my speaking, but I am greatly disturbed by the situation here. In my forty years of service, I have never seen such a situation where there is so much administration. It puts a “shackle” on the church life. We must remove the concept of having responsible ones in the groups. Let the saints meet and serve.

I believe that if there were less administration in a district, the saints would come forth to serve. Our situation can be compared to a family in which the elderly father and older siblings restrict the younger siblings from doing anything. Too much administration can cause the saints to lose the spirit to serve. I do have a basis for saying this. Many saints give up inwardly and no longer want to serve, because they were merely maintaining a façade. If we reduce the administration, the saints will be enlivened.

The elders and responsible ones must not shackle the saints; instead, they must supply the saints so that the saints come forth to serve. The saints need to be free in their spirit. According to the Bible, the co-workers and elders are raised up to meet a need. If they become a system or an organization to control and rule over the church, they should be removed.

NOT RESTRICTING THE LORD’S WORK

Although it is not appropriate for the elders to choke the workers so severely, the co-workers should be “choke-proof.” A brother who serves in a locality should not stop doing something simply because he feels that the elders are not fully supportive. The elders should not control him, but the brother should still be able to coordinate with the elders. However, the elders should not direct him in his service, whether it is giving messages, working with young people, working on the campuses, or contacting saints.

While the elders should not restrict the co-workers, the co-workers should not blame the elders. Instead, the co-workers should supply others. If the co-workers have something, they will supply life in the meetings, and whenever they open their mouths, the saints will be enlivened. Who would restrict the co-workers if they supply the saints? The co-workers should

always have the supply. They should be like a river. The co-workers should forget about any restrictions and instead have a ready supply.

I would advise the elders to administrate less but exercise discernment. They should see whether a brother has a genuine supply. If a brother has the supply, he should be encouraged to serve. The brothers can testify that our work has never restricted the saints. In the work there is only leading, supplying, and supporting. We must reduce the administration. In the church life no one is useless; rather, everyone is useful. In any case, a person's usefulness depends on whether or not he is used.

A co-worker should not allow himself to be useless. At the very least, he can preach the gospel to one person a day. He can distribute two hundred tracts every day. If we are useless, we bear the blame. We should not say that we are useless. Even a person who is mute and cannot speak can distribute tracts. The co-workers have many functions. A co-worker with no function has not developed his function.

It is not good for the co-workers to delegate everything to others and then merely attend the meetings. The co-workers should never be useless; instead, they should always advance and look for opportunities to develop their function. No saint is useless. To be useless means that we have not worked to develop our function. We should not blame our environment. We must develop our function. The Lord's work cannot be restricted. The Lord's work cannot be stopped. There is always work to do. We must labor to the extent that all the saints are stirred up.

LETTING THE SAINTS WORK

We must have a long-range view. We must have a change of concept and let go of any thought of controlling the church. The church life will not become worse from a lack of control. Twenty years ago I would not have dared to say this. However, today I can say this. We should not control out of fear that the saints will make mistakes.

Last year in Los Angeles three young top serving brothers volunteered to labor with the young people. The more they worked, the less the young people came to the meetings. One day they came to fellowship with me. I told them that they should no longer work with the young ones; rather, they should let

students work with students. I also said that those who are not in school should not work with students. Thus, the work with the young saints was put into the hands of the students. I even told the elders not to check how the students' work was progressing. Even in a young people's conference during the Thanksgiving holidays, the young students bore the responsibility of the meetings.

Before the conference, the young saints heard that no one would be overseeing the conference, and they were afraid that they might make mistakes. So a few of them made a plan for the conference and brought it to me. Instead of reviewing their plan, I told them to hold the conference and that it would not matter if they made mistakes. I can testify that that young people's conference was blessed. The young people did an excellent job. This subdued the brothers who were ambitious to work with the students. The young people are qualified to take care of other young people. The young ones who thought they were incapable of doing a good work were quite capable in the end. We later asked the young people to take care of another conference, and two hundred and twenty-five young people were baptized. We should let go and let the saints serve. We should be bold and let them do the work.

CHAPTER TWO

SHEPHERDING AND OVERSEEING

THE CHURCH NEEDING SHEPHERDING AND OVERSEEING

First Peter 5:2-3 addresses the elders, saying, “Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing...according to God; not...as lording it over your allotments.” This means that the elders should shepherd and oversee the saints but not as lording it over the saints. The shepherding and the overseeing spoken of by Peter are very important in the church. According to John 21, shepherding includes feeding (vv. 15-17). A shepherd feeds as well as shepherds the flock.

The slow rate of increase in the churches may be due to our lack in shepherding and overseeing. First, our shepherding is insufficient, and the flock lacks spiritual food and spiritual guidance. Food is for feeding, and guidance is for shepherding. Second, although there is a shortage of overseeing, there is an abundance of managing. Managing is quite different from overseeing. Managing is related to handling church affairs. A person who manages is one who handles church affairs and is responsible for them. A person who oversees is one who lets others handle and be responsible for church affairs while he takes the oversight. There is much management in the churches. The elders, the responsible ones in the districts, and the responsible ones in the groups handle every matter instead of committing matters to the saints. We should have the attitude of an overseer and let the saints handle things while we oversee the saints. If the saints do not know how to do a certain task, we can direct and guide them. If they make a mistake, we can help and correct them. If they do an inappropriate job, we can further advise and instruct them. The saints should do everything.

There was a locality in which the co-workers and elders were very busy before and after every meeting, because the saints asked the co-workers and elders everything, including how to arrange chairs and how to open the windows. Instead of committing these matters to the saints, the saints were only directed to do them. It is one thing to direct people to do things, and it is

quite another to delegate things to people. A brother may have ten or even a hundred tasks, but he delegates all the tasks to others. Then he does not need to continually direct the saints to do the tasks. He merely entrusts them with the tasks and lets them do the tasks. This is in contrast to the brother being responsible for all the tasks, which requires the saints to check with him about every task that they do. As a result, he has to direct someone to do each task that he wants done. He must ask someone to pick up the mail, clean the meeting hall, and open the windows. The saints will not or cannot do anything without his command. This was the situation in a locality.

The co-workers and elders must commit all matters to the saints. The cleaning of the meeting hall should be handed over to a group of saints. Things related to the mail should be assigned to another group of saints. Once you hand tasks over to the saints, let them handle the tasks. Do not give them commands or orders anymore. Then the co-workers and elders will be relaxed and pleasant in the meetings, because the chores are not in their hands but in the hands of the saints.

SHEPHERDING THE CHURCH

Shepherding Needing the Lord's Word

Shepherding first involves feeding and then guiding, or leading. In the churches we need to feed the saints with the Lord's word. We should encourage the saints to be strong, released, and fresh in their spirit when they meet so that everyone is living, and we should also watch to see that they are being properly supplied and fed. Being living and released is one matter, and receiving the life supply and feeding is another matter.

Giving Messages Not Being Shepherding

In Acts 20:32 Paul says, "I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified." This verse says that we must use the Lord's word when we feed the saints. According to our Christian concept, believers can be fed only by listening to sermons. This concept must be dropped. It is often said in Christianity that believers need to be taught, cultivated, and edified

through sermons. However, feeding is a better and more practical way. The general atmosphere in Christianity, of believers needing to be taught and nurtured through messages, has produced professional speakers, such as preachers and ministers. A congregation that does not have a pastor or a preacher has to hire someone. We have been affected by this atmosphere. Although we feel that it is not proper to hire preachers or pastors, we have so-called co-workers among us. The saints think that the co-workers are capable of and specialized in giving messages; hence, giving messages is the responsibility of the co-workers. This attitude is inappropriate; it is not the thought in the Bible. A full-time co-worker who is specialized in giving messages is, in principle, the same as a pastor or preacher in Christianity. The only difference is in name.

Elders Needing to Labor in the Word and Teaching

The Bible says that the elders should shepherd the flock of God. First Timothy 5:17 says, “Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.” This verse says that the elders who lead well are those who labor in word and teaching. Hence, to shepherd with feeding is to teach with the Lord’s word. The elders in a local church should bear the responsibility of shepherding and feeding. This can be compared to parents bearing responsibility in a family. The elders should not excuse themselves and say that they do not have the gift of preaching the word. Such a thought is the influence of traditional Christianity. When we first began meeting as the Lord’s testimony, we were greatly helped by the Brethren. They were the first group of believers to recover the church life, but they paid too much attention to the gift of preaching the word. In their consideration a person could not give a message unless he had the gift of preaching. However, we have clearly seen 1 Corinthians 14:31, which says, “You can all prophesy one by one.” Hence, we should uproot the concept of not having the gift of preaching the word. We need to learn how to use God’s word to feed others.

Not Depending on Full-time Serving Ones

Whether you have the gift of prophesying does not matter, because 1 Corinthians 14:31 says, “You can all prophesy one by one.” This can be compared to a married sister who must cook even though she says that she does not know how to cook. In 1962 I went to the United States, and after being there for ten months, I was able to cook even though I had never cooked previously. I had to cook because I had to feed myself. Initially, I ate meals that others prepared, but as a result, I suffered from an ulcer. That was the result of my inability to cook. But when I began to eat my cooking, my ulcer was cured. I give this example to say that we have depended too long on others. The elders in the local churches depend on the co-workers and exalt them. The co-workers are like famous chefs whom we invite to our homes to cook for us. Actually, in terms of the skills in giving a message, some co-workers may be far inferior to the elders. I hope that we will be enlightened to see our mistakes. The concept that whoever serves full time is able to preach the word and whoever does not serve full time is not able to preach the word is erroneous.

Speaking to Meet the Need

It is correct to say that we can all prophesy one by one. However, the ability to give messages is not the result of a change in status; it does not come when a person begins to serve full time. A brother does not gain an ability to preach the word simply because he begins to serve full time. There are several elders who are very capable of giving good messages. As soon as they begin to speak, they hit the mark. If the elders are willing to endeavor, their speaking will be effective. We do not give messages in order to receive people’s praise. The movements of a boxer are not to gain people’s applause; rather, his sole aim is to deliver a blow to his opponent. We do not want to give lengthy and eloquent messages that are ineffective. We want to give messages that are effective because they touch people’s heart.

Our speaking needs to be effective. We do not care whether the message is appealing or grammatical. We care about touching people’s heart. Once after D. L. Moody, a prevailing American evangelist, preached the gospel, he was approached by a learned person who was in the congregation. This person told Moody that he had used mistaken grammar in his message. Moody was not an educated person; in his youth he was an apprentice in his uncle’s shoe store. But after the Lord gained him, he was fervent to work for the Lord by preaching the gospel. Moody then suggested that this person preach the

gospel with his correct grammar to see how many would be saved. Moody was very clear that he preached the word not to teach English grammar but to lead people to salvation. He cared only for people to be saved.

Some brothers speak with an accent. This is difficult to change. Nevertheless, as long as they are willing to practice, they will be able to give a message that is effective. Some brothers use beautiful words, but their speaking does not touch people. Some brothers articulate their words and are eloquent and logical, but their speaking produces no fruit. They may remain in a place for two years, but the place remains the same. There are others whose messages are ordinary but effective. Our goal is to give effective messages.

On the one hand, the elders should not expect the co-workers to bear the responsibility of ministering the word. They should not expect the co-workers to meet the need of the church. On the other hand, the co-workers must have a heart for the church and give messages that are effective. Otherwise, their speaking is not useful. The elders must learn to speak the word. I do not say this to depreciate the co-workers. I say this because the localities rely too much on the co-workers. We need to be delivered and to change our concept. We do not attend meetings in order to listen to beautiful messages, and the full-time workers are not the only ones who should give messages.

Having a Burden and Shepherding the Saints with a Parent's Heart

An elder may say that he cannot speak the word because he has not received much training and does not know the Bible. Suppose there is a co-worker in a nearby church who knows the Bible. It may not be beneficial for the elder to invite him to speak the word, because the co-worker may not have a burden for that locality. Speaking the word must come out of a burden. In order to be effective, a person must be burdened to work until a fire in the saints is kindled. Our speaking is to enliven the saints and cause them to be burning for the Lord. If we do not have a burden, we should not speak. The elders are obligated to feed the flock; they are like parents with children. If the elders have such a heart, the situation in the church will change.

Some brothers may ask how to “prepare a meal.” Our publications are very rich. We should study the publications and select portions that will meet the need. We cannot rely on others to do this for us. We must learn. This is the responsibility of the elders. This responsibility will also make the elders more useful.

Knowing the Needs of the Saints

Our weakness has been that we have the concept that it is the full-time co-workers who are specialized in giving messages. Our concept is that the co-workers, not the elders, are responsible for speaking the word. We must change this concept. If the elders are willing to endeavor, they will be very effective when they speak the word, because they know the needs of the saints. They may not be eloquent, but they will be very useful.

There was a brother in northern China who was a good speaker. However, after giving good messages for four years, he did not reap much result. There was also a brother who did not know how to give messages and was not eloquent, but he established the church in Tsingtao. When he went to Tsingtao in 1934, there were no brothers there. Fourteen years later more than seven hundred people had been baptized. Although this brother was not a good speaker, his messages were practical. He administrated and led the church, and he knew the needs of the saints. In order to meet the need of the saints, he studied and prepared his messages. If the saints needed a word on redemption, he studied and prepared a message on redemption. In this way the saints received the benefit. As a result, the church was built up in a very solid way.

Messages that are lofty and nice do not bear fruit. As long as we are willing to make an effort, there will be results. The elders indeed need to devote more time to their service. Some elders should even serve full time. First Timothy 5:17 says, “Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.” This means that elders who serve full time should be honored and should receive material support. Some elders should devote all their time to administrating the church, and some brothers who serve full time should get a job. If the function of a full-time brother is not manifested, he should not waste his time. He should do something else. However, some elders should give all their time to care for and administrate the church.

The principle is that the elders are like parents or older siblings in a family. They ensure that everyone in the family is fed. The elders should do the work of shepherding and feeding; they must not rely solely on the co-workers. The co-workers who are useful should set aside some time for the spreading of the work. A co-worker who stays in one locality is tied down by that local church. In principle, this may not be profitable.

OVERSEEING

Entrusting and Overseeing

The elders in the church should first shepherd the saints and then oversee them. This means that after shepherding the saints, the elders should entrust them with some services. This is not merely to teach the saints but to put things into their hands. After entrusting the saints with a service, the elders should then oversee. This means that the elders should take their hands off and let the saints be responsible for giving suggestions and making decisions. The elders should not make decisions. Suppose a brother is assigned to the young people's work. The elders no longer need to take care of the young people's work. They should let the brother bear the work. The elders should only oversee. If every matter in the church is handed over to the saints, the function of the saints will be developed.

When the saints are assigned to a service, they should be in charge of everything, and the elders no longer need to manage that service. We should train the saints to be responsible for their service. Then the elders and co-workers will only be overseers. It is not proper for the co-workers and elders to keep everything in their pocket. A proper elder is an overseer. The more responsibilities he has, the more he should delegate and oversee. In this way he will bring the saints into the service.

Some brothers are concerned that the saints will make mistakes when we let them serve. We should not be so concerned. The churches in Taiwan are established; consequently, even if the saints make a mistake, it will not be serious. When the saints make a mistake, we should assist them. This is more effective and will help the saints to participate in the service.

The Saints Having Authority but Not Being Independent

Elders should shepherd and oversee the saints. The elders should entrust the services to the saints and give them the authority to make decisions. However, this does not mean that the saints are independent. Suppose there are eight districts in a church, and the elders delegate the church affairs to the eight districts. This does not mean that the districts are independent. In the same way, the saints are in different districts and in small groups, but they are still the one church. The function of the elders is to oversee the church, not to lord it over their allotments (1 Pet. 5:3). The elders should shepherd the saints, delegating services to the saints. Then they should oversee the saints, letting the saints have authority for their service and allowing them to develop.

In the church in Taipei some halls have very capable saints. However, the saints are not developed, because there is not much shepherding and overseeing. Directing the saints is not the same as overseeing. When we direct others, we have not handed things over to them. To hand things over means to entrust. For example, if a brother is given the responsibility to purchase a tape recorder, he will need to pray earnestly even concerning the money to make the purchase. He must also consider the size and type of tape recorder. Concerning the finances, the size, and the type, he and those who coordinate with him must go before the Lord in prayer.

The service for recording the meetings is a good example. The key to the recording room should not be in the pocket of the elders; it should be given to a serving one who manages everything related to the recording room. If he is careless and leaves the tape recorder in the elders' room, they can remind him to put it away. If he is careless in other matters, the elders should pray for him. If he loses the tape recorder, he will surely learn a lesson. This is not a joke. In this way many saints will be raised up.

Some elders have argued that the co-workers are serving very faithfully. I know the co-workers are faithful and have a good intention. Nevertheless, their faithfulness and good intention annul the function of the saints. After working in a place for two years, the co-workers and elders should not be tied down, and the saints should be useful. We must change our concept and raise up the saints by handing things over to them. We must not be fearful of their mistakes. I handed over the responsibility of a conference to the young saints in Los Angeles and told them that making mistakes is the way to be perfected. The most precious thing in our work is to produce useful saints.

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE CO-WORKERS

The Co-workers Bringing Forth Useful Saints

We must change our system. Once our concept is changed, it will be easy to change our system. The work of shepherding and feeding in the church desperately requires the time and energy of the elders. They should be like parents endeavoring to feed their children. The work has decided to move the co-workers out of the localities, but we are worried about the churches. The churches have relied too heavily on the co-workers. After working in a local church for three years, a co-worker should be able to leave, because he should have raised up useful saints. However, our practice has not been to develop the saints but to replace them. The more the co-workers have labored, the more responsibilities they have gained, but other saints were not brought in to function. When a co-worker arrives in a local church, he does not have much responsibility. But after three years all the responsibilities in the church are on his shoulders. He does everything, while the other saints do nothing; they merely listen to his instructions. As a result, no responsibilities are handed over to the saints, and the saints are not raised up to bear responsibility. In the end the co-worker cannot leave the church, because if he leaves, the church will lose its support. The co-worker has become the only pillar in the house, and when the pillar is removed, the house collapses. A laboring co-worker is a pillar, but he should gradually add other pillars to the building. When there are fifteen pillars in a local church, it is time for the co-worker to leave. This is the principle of our work.

In a training in 1953 I said that a co-worker should lead the saints, but under no circumstance should he replace them. However, in the churches that I have visited, the element of replacing the saints still remains among us. It is greater than the element of leading.

The co-workers have been serving in place of the saints. They keep things in their hands and direct others. If this situation continues, the saints in the localities will not know what to do when the co-workers leave. This is wrong. The more we work, the more the saints should be raised up to do the work.

In 1946 I was led by the Lord to go to Nanking. In my first fellowship with the brothers, I said, "You brothers are happy that I am here, and you think

that I have come to help you. However, I want to warn you that while I am here, your responsibilities will not decrease. I am very burdened. Everyday a part of my burden will be transferred to you. After a year I will be free of my burden, and all the burden will be yours. Hence, I have not come to replace you; rather, I have come to burden you.” In less than two years all the responsibilities in the church in Nanking were borne fully by the brothers. They took care of everything.

The Co-workers

Not Replacing but Guiding Others

However, today the co-workers are not laboring in this way. It seems that they pick up all the responsibilities of a local church; hence, they cannot leave that church. In some places the co-workers replace not only the saints but also the elders. The elders only sign documents; they leave everything else to the co-workers. It is no wonder that there is no increase in the churches and that the work cannot spread. A small number of co-workers are doing all the work, and the saints who should have been employed are idle. We must change our concept and then change our system. We must not replace others any longer; at most, we should only guide them. When the saints are able to take care of things, we should leave the services completely in their hands. Then we can oversee from a distance. In this way we will produce capable saints who function according to their ability, and every brother and sister will be useful. Then we can delegate a suitable service to every saint according to his function.

Some co-workers have worked for three to five years in a place, yet no elders have been raised up. The co-workers say that there are no qualified brothers in those localities. This is their concept. We must change our concept, and we must change our system. To change our system does not mean that the co-workers should no longer serve; rather, the co-workers should do more to raise up useful saints. Then we will have results in the work.

Changing Our Concept and Our System

and Focusing on Large Cities

Some brothers have suggested that we take the co-workers out of all the localities, but this will not resolve our situation. We must change our concept.

Without changing our concept and our system, we will always labor according to old concepts and old ways; we will replace others instead of leading them. Hence, it is of little avail to remove the co-workers from the local churches.

However, if our concept and our way of working are changed, even if the co-workers are not removed from the localities, we will have results. After one year of serving, the number of the saints will double. There will be no need to send a co-worker to propagate in the towns and villages. If a young co-worker is sent to the towns and villages for one year, at most he will gain fifty people. Even though every saint is valuable before God, there is a difference in our function. The work in the towns and villages will increase the number of local churches, but it will not necessarily increase the number of saints. It is best for us to labor in large cities and in schools. A co-worker serving in hall three may gain a thousand new ones. This is not an increase in the number of churches, but it is a large increase in the number of saints, and the capacity of these new saints may be greater than the capacity of new ones gained in the towns and villages. Taipei is a large city with a large population. To gain a hundred thousand saints, including twenty thousand students, would be quite substantial. This would be much more effective than gaining scattered believers.

Learning to Lead Others and Be Led

Taipei is a large metropolis with many businesses and numerous universities. We should diligently work here. For this reason, the co-workers do not necessarily have to be taken out of the churches, but they must change their concept and the way they work. Then instead of replacing others, they will lead the saints and will be willing to be led by others. How good this would be! It is very easy to replace others, but it is not so easy to lead others to do things. We all have the tendency of doing things by ourselves. Most cooks do not like other people in the kitchen. We all have this tendency: once we have a task, we prefer to do it by ourselves. This is the natural way of doing things.

It requires skill to be a chief with apprentices. Eventually, the apprentices should also become chiefs, such that their teacher may even learn from them. The saints whom we perfect to function should surpass us. This requires skill. This is the way that we have conducted the work in the States. Initially, I took the lead, and a few others did the work with me. I was the “chief,” and they

were “apprentices.” Gradually, many have become “chiefs,” and I have become an “apprentice.” I have learned many things by observing them so that when I lead, the function of the saints can be developed even more.

In 1958 I went to the United States and lived there for an extended period of time. Initially, I hoped that some co-workers would go there to labor. However, I eventually felt that it was better for none to go there, because they would not perfect the saints, and as a result, the work would not spread. Even the Taiwanese students have had little effect on the campuses there because they were not brought into function here in Taiwan. It is regrettable that the co-workers replaced the saints when they should have been leading them into service. The co-workers must learn to bring other saints with them. When you observe a particular skill in a saint, you must let him serve, and you must be willing to be led by him. If he makes a mistake, you can provide further guidance. Only when we let others serve do we bring them into their function. The slow development of our work has been mainly due to these reasons: we are inadequate in shepherding the saints, in entrusting the saints with the work, and in leading the saints. We always have only a small number of saints serving.

It is wrong for the co-workers to expect the elders to listen to them. Some have made this a requirement for their labor. When a co-worker goes to a place, he should not only lead but also be led. In this way all the saints can function. Our concept and our system must change, or else our situation will not improve. The most important thing is to change our concept and our system. The co-workers can continue to labor in the localities, but they should not keep everything in their hand; neither should they replace the saints. They should lead the saints into serving. Eventually, all things will be in the hands of the saints for the producing of the talents. This is the proper way to serve.

A brother said that the Lord prepared many useful saints in Los Angeles, but this is not the case. The saints in Los Angeles have at most a “junior high school education,” but the saints in Taipei are mostly “graduate students.” However, the saints in Taipei have not developed their talents. I am not joking, and neither am I being sarcastic. There are many useful saints here, but they are not functioning, because they are not perfected, and most matters are kept in the hands of a small number of co-workers. The co-workers must hand things over to the saints. Then the co-workers can instruct and oversee the saints and let the saints do the work. In this way,

many useful saints will be produced, and they will all participate in the service.

The saints in Los Angeles do not practice the so-called baptismal interview. In most cases we baptize the new ones immediately, and at least eighty percent of those who are baptized remain. In contrast, we have baptized at least two thousand people here, but not even a hundred have remained in the church. Hence, we must thoroughly reconsider our concept and the way we do things. It is not sufficient to merely change our ways. If we pull the co-workers out of the local churches, the churches will still be weak; moreover, the co-workers will have no place to work. In large localities, such as Taipei, we still need the co-workers to assist the elders and the responsible ones in the districts for the spreading. If the co-workers are willing to assist the elders in one accord, two to three thousand new ones will be added in a year or two. But if the co-workers go to labor in a small town, they may not gain two thousand new ones, even after laboring for ten years.

Concentrating Our Energy on the Students' Work

We should also put our energy into the schools. The universities in Taiwan are clustered in three centers: Taipei, Taichung, and Tainan. We must labor on the campuses in these three places. If we do not labor on the campuses, we are shortsighted. We must concentrate our energy on the schools in these three centers because this work will have double the results with half the effort. This work will bring in many young people. The churches in these three places are our provision. As long as the saints are willing to go, there will be results. This is much easier than going to labor in a small town of fifty to sixty thousand people where there are no saints.

Co-workers Going Out for Propagation

In Taiwan we should focus on large cities and schools. Every year the co-workers who have been manifested in their function should go abroad because there is a great need overseas. In other words, every co-worker whose function has been manifested should spend at most nine months a year in Taiwan and at least three to four months overseas. The co-workers should go

to Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia.

Indonesia is in urgent need of help. Even three co-workers, staying there long-term, would not be enough to meet the need. Since we do not have a sufficient number of co-workers, one person can go there for three months, and then another person can go for another three months. Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia all have urgent needs, but the door for the work is not as wide open as in Indonesia. The Philippines also has a need. However, a foundation has been laid there, and the brothers are able to accomplish a certain amount of things themselves. The situation in Indonesia is different. If the co-workers do not go there, the brothers will not be able to go forward. A firm foundation has not yet been laid there. During the past five years there has been some progress there, but this was due to the help rendered by the co-workers. If the churches follow the way that they have practiced for the last thirty years, they will not be able to catch up with the flow in the work. The population in Indonesia is close to a hundred million people. It is the fifth largest nation in the world. There is a need for co-workers to go and labor there. The doors to the countries around us are open. Therefore, the co-workers whose functions have been manifested can go abroad for three to four months to labor and spend eight or nine months in their respective localities. In this way, the co-workers will be more useful. If we will practice this, the work will reap many benefits.

We must grasp these three crucial points for the work. First, we must labor in large cities. Second, we must labor in the schools. Third, we should labor abroad. The door overseas is open; the co-workers need only to go and work. Of course, this does not mean that all the co-workers should go; we need some to stay and meet the need here. Those who go must be useful. In other words, they should be able to produce results. We must not send anyone carelessly. Sending someone carelessly is the same as sending no one, and it will cause damage. At least ten to fifteen co-workers can go abroad every year. If the co-workers in the local churches lead the saints to serve, their leaving will not affect the churches when the need arises.

We need to develop strategic locations, that is, large cities; we need to promote the work in schools; and we need to let the useful co-workers go abroad every year. If they cannot go to faraway places, they should at least go to Southeast Asia and to Japan and South Korea. There are many benefits to

carrying out these three crucial points for the work. The students who are saved will return to their hometowns. In this way, the gospel will gradually spread to the smaller towns, and we will not need to send the co-workers to small towns for the propagation. The co-workers should remain in the large local churches to labor in the strategic places, push forward the work in schools, and then go abroad. To labor in this way will be more profitable. I hope that the co-workers and elders will have a clear view concerning this matter. The elders should not think that the co-workers must stay in their locality. There should not be any problems if they go abroad for three to four months every year.

Laboring until Every Saint Is Useful

The greatest need of a church is to utilize every saint according to his function. This is also the most difficult thing for a church to achieve. Every saint can be useful. Never think that the saints in a certain hall are more talented than the saints in your hall. In every hall there are useful saints. Whether or not they are useful depends on the way we work. The co-workers must make the saints useful, perfect them, and lead them. We must have a thorough change of concept and work hard, because it is not easy to train apprentices, all of whom have opinions. Nonetheless, we need to lead the saints forward.

It is rather difficult to know how a young person will turn out in the future. Brother Nee is an example. Both he and his mother were saved by a woman preacher, Sister Dora Yu. On the night of his salvation, at the age of seventeen, Brother Nee was also called by the Lord. He was willing to give up his schooling and learn to serve the Lord. His mother, who also loved the Lord, agreed with his consecration and sent him to a Bible school run by Sister Dora Yu in Shanghai so that he would learn to serve the Lord. One day Sister Dora Yu asked Brother Nee to deliver mail to the post office. It took Brother Nee longer than usual to finish the errand because of the poor condition of the road. Sister Dora Yu thought that Brother Nee, being young, had been delayed by some amusement, so she asked him to withdraw from her school. Even though Brother Nee had spent the time running the errand, he willingly returned to Foochow and continued his schooling in Trinity College.

Later Brother Nee met Sister M. E. Barber and was taught under her. Sister Barber was very strict. At the time more than sixty young brothers and sisters

went to Sister Barber to receive spiritual edification. Miss Barber rebuked every one of them severely, such that eventually they all left; only Brother Nee remained. Brother Nee often went to Miss Barber even though he knew that he would be rebuked. Sometimes he would argue with her. At one time he was contending with Brother Wang. When Sister Barber heard of this, she dealt with Brother Nee. Sister Barber asked Brother Wang to do many things. When Brother Nee challenged Sister Barber, she would reply, "He is older than you by a few years." One time a number of people were going to be baptized, and Sister Barber asked Brother Wang to perform the baptism even though another brother, who was older than Brother Wang, was present. When Brother Nee pointed this out to Sister Barber, she only repeated that Brother Wang should do it. Because Sister Barber realized that Brother Nee was good material, she continually dealt with him and at the same time also supplied him. Brother Nee later testified that he received genuine perfecting from Sister Barber. He was constantly rebuked, but he was not disheartened, because Sister Barber not only rebuked him but also supplied him. As a result, Brother Nee was the only one under the hand of Sister Barber who was truly useful.

We all must learn this lesson. We should not blame the young people or give up on them. Of course, we need to deal with their opinions, but at the same time we should supply them and let them function. We absolutely must not give up on them; rather, we must lead them gradually. If we do not lead the young people now, we will have no one to continue after us.

We need to fellowship further concerning taking the co-workers from the local churches. We need to study this matter. In hall one there are three or four responsible brothers. On the one hand, the elders do not have the way to carry everything out, but on the other hand, it is a mistake for the co-workers to keep everything in their hand. There are even levels of administration. There are the co-workers and the elders, under whom are the responsible ones in the districts and in the small groups. This is not the proper administration. The elders should consider how to perfect all the saints. In terms of administration, it would be best if we would follow the Bible and have only elders and deacons. When taking care of the church affairs, we should include other saints. If the saints do not know how to serve, we should guide them. If they make a mistake, we can adjust them. We should not ask them to quit as soon as they make a mistake. The more mistakes they make,

the more we should bear them. We should always lead the saints into the service.

This kind of working and serving is what we lack. The purpose of all our work of administration is to utilize all the saints by letting them serve. In the beginning, it may require more effort for us to teach, lead, and correct the saints, since we must be patient with them and bear their weakness and mistakes. However, after a period of time they will be able to serve. We are like orchard keepers, who do not bear fruit themselves but who cultivate the fruit trees that bear fruit. We simply take care of watering, pruning, and spraying of insecticide. However, it is not sufficient for us to be the only persons doing the work of watering, pruning, and spraying for the bearing of fruit. We must work until every saint is enlivened and is brought into this service. We must train the saints until they become useful. This is the kind of work that all the co-workers and elders should endeavor to learn.

These basic principles were fellowshipped in the book *The Elders' Management of the Church* and also in the book *The Normal Christian Church Life*. Elders should not do things by themselves; instead, they should let others do the work while they oversee. Only in this way will all the saints be brought into the service. Not only so, elders should teach, lead, and even correct the saints so that the saints are able to bear responsibility. This way of working is urgently needed and effective. If we desire our work to spread, we must work in this way.

This does not mean that the co-workers should be removed from the churches and begin the work in other places. Rather, this means that we need to change our concept and our system. As long as we continue according to the old concept and old system, we will not see an increase in the total number of saints, even if the number of local churches increases. However, if our concept and our system are changed, we will concentrate on cities with large populations. When the co-workers and elders assist each other, it will be very effective. At the same time, we can work in the schools, which will double our results. We should not switch from large cities to smaller towns. We should focus on strategic locations and select the key places for our work. In this way the work will spread quickly. The church in Taipei is an example. It is a locality in a large city, and it has a regular attendance of about three thousand saints. If we can bring all three thousand saints into the service, in five years there will be at least fifty to sixty thousand saints. Furthermore, the

local church will be very strong. If there are ten thousand students in Taipei, the testimony will be strong and the future will be bright.

If we take the co-workers out of the large localities and transfer them to towns and villages, the function of the co-workers will be reduced and weakened. At the same time, the churches will be weakened because there will be no help from the co-workers. Therefore, the co-workers and elders must change their concept and the system. They should not replace the saints but should lead and train the saints to serve until every saint is useful. Then we will have a promising future. Otherwise, only a few saints will be zealous and burning. We must learn to work in the way of perfecting the saints until everyone who meets regularly is useful. We must let the saints have the opportunity to serve. They must learn to be adjusted, trained, and led. Gradually, this will be a work that is carried out by the majority of the saints.

CHAPTER THREE
CHANGING THE CONCEPT
IN OUR SERVICE—
TEACHING AND PERFECTING OTHERS

STUDYING THE FACTORS
THAT HINDER THE INCREASE

In this chapter we want to study the factors that have hindered our increase. In the beginning of the work in Taiwan there was a rapid increase in numbers, but after a period of time we seemed to have come to a stop, and no matter what we did, there was not much increase.

Doing Things Ourselves and
Being Unable to Teach Others

After spending time with the Lord and analyzing our situation, we are clearer concerning our situation. A primary problem has been that the co-workers do things themselves and have not been able to teach others. Suppose three brothers go to a new locality to serve. Since they have a heart for the Lord, new ones are gained. If the co-workers teach these new ones, raise them up, perfect them, and bring them into the service, the co-workers will gain some “apprentices.” It is regrettable, however, that we have neither learned to bring the saints into the service nor learned to perfect the saints. Instead, we do everything by ourselves and thus unconsciously replace the saints. As a result, the saints do not know how to function, and the responsible ones do everything.

The scope of what two or three people can do is limited. Hence, if we cannot teach and lead others, the work will come to a standstill. Then the Lord will have to lead the co-workers to another place where there are no saints, where the work has not reached. The co-workers can then gain new believers and labor until the work again comes to a standstill. At that time, they will have to move to yet another place.

If the co-workers do not move to a new location, there will be no possibility for increase, because the co-workers always work by themselves and do not bring others into function. A person can do only a limited amount of work. Although the other saints can also do a limited amount of work, it will be difficult for them if their function is not manifested. If we continue in this way, there is no way for the church in a locality to spread. Since we do not teach the new ones how to bring others into function, they will repeat our pattern of doing everything by themselves. After a period of time any work in their hands will also come to a standstill, and the church will not spread.

Not Teaching Others and Not Coordinating with Others

If we cannot bring others into the things that we do, we cannot teach them. If we cannot teach others, we cannot coordinate with others. These are the two main factors that frustrate the spread. Our inability to coordinate with others is not related to being at odds with them; rather, it is the consequence of not having a disposition and habit to coordinate. It is wrong to think that we can do everything and that we have no need of others. If the work assigns a second co-worker to serve in a local church, but the first co-worker still does all the work, the second co-worker will not be able to enter into the work. This deficiency is not the result of unwillingness on the part of the new co-worker. Nor is it related to any resentment toward the first co-worker. Rather, it is because the first co-worker cannot coordinate with another person; hence, the two cannot work together. In this case, each co-worker is a separate cord, and they cannot be twined into a twofold cord, much less a threefold cord (Eccl. 4:12). This limits the increase in a local church.

This is an example of not being able to teach others, not being able to work with others, and not being able to coordinate with others. As co-workers, we should be able to teach others and also to coordinate with them. A co-worker serving in a local church should be able to serve and also to teach others to serve. A skillful carpenter can produce something useful out of any type of wood. Similarly, a co-worker should be able to use any saint, no matter what their situation is in life. At the same time, he should be able to work with many other co-workers without any conflict. In his coordination with others, everyone should be able to function according to their portion.

If the Lord can open our eyes to see this matter and to have a fundamental turn, it will not be difficult for the churches to increase twofold in two years. However, if we cannot turn, we will not increase. We will only maintain the status quo because we will limit the work. Hence, we must have a radical and thorough turn. We must be able to teach others and coordinate with others. Whether or not we are capable, we must coordinate with others and serve together with the saints. If some are not capable, we need to learn how to teach the saints and coordinate with them. If we are capable, there is an even greater need to teach others and coordinate with them.

The co-workers who are limited in capacity should not give up. They should never give up. The co-workers who have some capacity must not look down on others. Even the most capable co-worker cannot bear up the entire work. We need to coordinate with others. Regardless of how capable a person is, he is unable to bear a church or even a district. In order to uphold a church, we must coordinate with others.

All the co-workers must change their concept and realize that everyone has some capacity. The co-workers who think that they are incapable must endeavor. If they cannot teach the saints, they should follow and learn from other co-workers. Those who are capable should teach the saints instead of doing the work alone. The co-workers should also perfect the saints, regardless of the saints' ability. It is better for the saints to make mistakes than for them to be idle. In this way everyone will be given an opportunity to serve, and we will learn more. We learn when we do things, but we learn more when we teach others. If we do not teach others, our learning is incomplete. When we teach others, we are forced to consider things thoroughly. We may think that we know how to arrange the chairs, but it is not easy to teach another person to arrange the chairs. Teaching requires skill. We may be able to do something but be unable to teach another person to do it. When we are able to do something and are also able to teach others, we will be truly skilled. Teaching others will also cause us to be dealt with. If we have a strong personality or are peculiar, we will be dealt with when we teach others. It is difficult to successfully teach others without being dealt with. We must never say that a saint cannot be taught because he has no capacity.

CHANGING OUR CONCEPT AND LEARNING TO TEACH OTHERS

There are different ways to teach. For example, a Chinese mother teaches her child in a way that is different from an American mother. I know a Chinese family with three daughters. Because the mother felt that none of her daughters knew how to do house chores, she did all the chores. American families are different. From an early age the children learn to do chores. As soon as a child learns to walk, his parents teach him to do chores. From generation to generation they have taught their children in this way. Chinese parents do not know how to teach their children, because they themselves were not taught. In the United States children do chores from their youth. The children are taught to bring in the newspaper. As the children grow older, they are taught to water the flowers. Initially, the children may make a mess in the garden. After a few times, however, they find the proper way to water the flowers. By the time the children are seven or eight years old, they are taught to sweep the floor or to vacuum. The children are even taught how to set the table for a meal. They place napkins, plates, and knives and forks on the table. In other words, the children all have chores to do.

In some homes the mother has to go to work in the morning, so she leaves a note for her children, telling them what to do. For example, she tells them to wash up, eat breakfast, get dressed, and go to school. When the mother returns home in the evening, she will check to see that the children did as they were told. The children are taught in this way from an early age. Washing the dishes is another example. After dinner there are usually many dishes. The mother will prepare soapy water and let an older child wash the plates, forks, and knives. A younger child is responsible for drying them. Another child must put everything in its designated place. According to their ages, the children are assigned tasks. Every child is assigned a specific job. This saves time and is very orderly. The children do their tasks without any noise or confusion. This kind of training is very good. American parents know how to do things, and they know how to teach their children. In contrast, Chinese parents do not teach their children and often rebuke the children for making mistakes. Our work bears the same flavor. We must have a thorough turn. Beginning from the simplest things, we must teach the saints. We must have a change.

Some brothers said that the situation would change if we lead the saints to pray and have a revival. This method may be useful for a short time, but it will not be useful in the long run. Many Christians have revival meetings; however, after the revival, the excitement ends. Eventually, the saints still do not know

how to do things. We do not have a great need for a revival, because we all love the Lord and contact Him daily. Instead of praying for a revival, we need to learn how to teach others. Our learning depends on whether we are willing to make an effort. We must learn from the American families so that we can do things and also teach others.

THE CO-WORKERS TEACHING THE ELDERS AND PERFECTING THE SAINTS

We need to change our concept, be willing to learn, and be patient. We need to teach others to do what we do. Then many saints will be raised up as apprentices. The first ones whom the co-workers should teach are the elders. The elders may be older and may consider themselves to be qualified and experienced, but they may also admit that they do not know how to perfect the saints. They have been meeting and discussing church affairs for many years. Nevertheless, not many elders know how to bring the saints into the service, because the elders did not learn in this way. The co-workers should teach the elders. The co-workers must spend the time to teach the elders until the elders can do things better than the co-workers, but the elders must be willing to be taught. The co-workers should teach and perfect the elders and the saints to fulfill their respective functions.

A local church is under the administration of the elders, and it receives teaching and shepherding from the elders. For this reason, the elders should endeavor to bear the responsibility of administrating, teaching, and shepherding. Administrating is relatively easy, but shepherding is not easy, because it includes supplying the word, visiting the saints, and contacting people. There are many things for the elders to do. Some elders are very busy with their jobs and attend numerous meetings; hence, they often have the heart but do not have the strength to shepherd the saints. Some elders are older; they are in their sixties or seventies. According to the standard in the world, this is the age for retirement. Their strength is fading, and it is not easy for them to learn new things. These are two problems: the elders who have jobs are entangled, and the elders who are older are short of energy and stamina. The elders who are between thirty and forty are able to learn new things. If we want a church to spread, we must have elders who serve full time and elders who are trained.

The elders need to endeavor in shepherding and teaching. We have studied the Bible many times and have found that a local church should not depend on the co-workers. The early churches relied on the elders. This is not our situation or the situation in the denominations. We rely too much on the co-workers. A family cannot depend on a professional cook to prepare its daily meals. A family depends on the parents for meals. The elders must endeavor to learn to do things, and they must also learn to teach the saints. Otherwise, we will remain in our present situation. Without the co-workers teaching the elders and the elders teaching the saints, it will be difficult for us to have a breakthrough. We must change our system and change our concept. We must teach and train the saints in order for them to be useful. Otherwise, no matter how much we preach the gospel, it will be difficult for us to gain the increase.

The only way out of our present situation is for the co-workers and elders to change their concept and begin teaching the saints how to do things by giving them responsibilities. Then the elders who are older will not be so tired, because they will not be required to do as much; they will teach others and delegate many things to the younger saints. This is the way that we must take. This is also the basic problem that we must resolve. The co-workers must learn how to teach others, and the elders must be willing to learn so that they also can teach others. This is the need in Taipei and also in Kaohsiung. The elders and co-workers can only do so much. We must be willing to ask the saints to come and help so that we will be able to carry out the burden of increase.

THE OLD WAY REQUIRING A CHANGE OF THE SYSTEM

My burden is that the co-workers and elders must give some of their burdens to others. Regardless of how hard they work, the co-workers and elders can bear only so much. Hence, they must raise up the saints to be useful. If the co-workers and elders have a change of concept, it will be easy to change the situation; otherwise, the work will come to a stop, and we will have problems.

Suppose that in a locality there are three elders who truly love the Lord and are irreproachable. However, they are not willing to allocate responsibilities to the saints or bring others into the service. All the responsibilities in that

local church are on their shoulders. The more these elders serve, the more experienced they become, and the eldership becomes a lifelong occupation; that is, they occupy a “position” of being elders. In this situation there is no possibility for new elders to be raised up. Even though these elders love and fear the Lord, are irreproachable, attend the meetings regularly, and are faithful and responsible in taking care of the church affairs, they can do only so much. They must be willing to share the burden and perfect the saints.

Since the three elders have been serving for many years, their local church becomes their territory, even though they do not make this claim consciously. As a result, any co-worker who goes there to serve must do things the way that the elders direct. This means that the elders limit the co-workers. Any co-worker who goes there will be restricted and immobilized. The young saints in that local church will not be raised up and will not gain experience. Although the young ones love the Lord and are in their twenties, they will seem rash and reckless. They will be under the direction of the elders, who regard them as unsuitable to do anything but accept the elders’ directions. Thus, the young saints will leave, and new elders will not be raised up. Under this situation, such a local church does not have a future. The three elders love the Lord, tithe more than ten percent, are in every meeting, and bear all the responsibilities in the church. They are busy serving God with a conscience void of offense, and the Lord has kept them faithful for twenty years; they have made no mistakes. Nonetheless, as a result of their service, the local church is dead. There is no way for the local church to increase. This is our basic problem.

The co-workers first need to learn and then teach. They must learn to teach the saints. Without this change, our work will stop. We will have no way to spread unless the Lord changes our environment by sending us to another island to do a pioneering work. That would give us the possibility of a fresh start to begin the work from scratch. If we do not change our way, we will not learn something new; rather, we will keep the old things and have only old people. The co-workers and elders will occupy their “positions.” They will serve for many years, loving the Lord and being irreproachable, but they will be unable to bring other saints into the service. Since there is no clear word in the Bible concerning the retirement of elders, and the elders love the Lord and have no desire to retire, no one asks them to retire. As a result, if other saints are not brought into the service, the elders will, according to a Chinese saying, “occupy the nest but not lay any eggs.” This will cause problems.

Even though the elders are good, they are unable to bring others into service and cannot teach others. In such a situation a co-worker would be of little help. Although the elders do not make mistakes or commit any sin, the church will not increase, and the second generation will be lost. Hence, we must change our concept. In a family it does not matter how much a grandfather is able to do, he must teach the next generation and let the younger ones bear the responsibility of the family. If we do not change our concept and our system, we will reach a point where we can no longer grow.

In the churches in Taiwan many saints have been baptized, many have been recovered, and the saints are in one accord. This is very good. Nevertheless, there is no increase in the number of saints. After studying this situation, we believe the basic problem is that the responsible saints are good but are unwilling to change and to teach other saints until everyone is brought into function. We must change this trend. The elders must change, and the co-workers must change; everyone must change. Then there will be more saints who can serve in the churches. Furthermore, it will not matter where the co-workers go; whether they stay in one place or go to a new place for the spread, the churches will not suffer any loss.

Without a change we will not be able to undertake the work in large cities. In other words, we will not be able to establish a large church. At most we will produce churches that are as large as the church in Taipei currently is. The co-workers and elders cannot handle more than that. We can produce a local church with two to three thousand saints, but we do not have the capacity to do more than this. In order to increase our capacity, we must change our way. Our capacity should not be limited to what we can do. We must use the younger saints and encourage them to serve. The increase in capacity of a local church depends on the younger saints. We must therefore maximize our use of the younger saints. Although there is no basis for elders retiring, in principle the older elders should be willing to reduce their responsibilities and bring the next generation, the middle-age saints, into the service according to their function.

If we do not have a breakthrough in this matter, the work in Taiwan will hit a barrier. No matter how much more we work, we will merely maintain our present situation. This is our capacity. Without fresh troops, an army has no way to win a battle. Likewise, we cannot spread unless we bring in both new saints and younger saints. However, this does not mean that we should have a

revolution and ask all the senior elders to retire. If the system does not change, even if we appoint new elders, our situation will remain the same. This is not a revolution related to leadership but a change in our system of leading. Those who are serving now should continue to serve, but new manpower must be added. We need to produce new serving ones by teaching other saints and asking them to serve with us.

The districts have the same situation as the local churches. Every district resembles a small territory. The responsible brothers for a district try their best to take care of everything in the district. However, they are somewhat indifferent to matters pertaining to the whole church, since that is not their territory. This is the situation of some families. A son may be capable and keep his room tidy, but he does not care if the rest of the house is messy. It seems as if we care only for our districts; we do not care for the needs of the church. This is our situation.

In recent years the number of saints in district one has decreased instead of increasing. Moreover, there are fewer serving ones. We must study this situation and find the cause of the problem in order to improve. In the past there were many serving ones in district one. Fewer serving ones means that the saints are not functioning; instead, only the responsible ones in the district are functioning. If our situation is normal, the responsible ones will not be the only ones functioning; all the saints will be functioning. This is what we are lacking today. If we can serve to the extent that every saint bears some responsibility, our situation will change.

SPENDING TIME TO PERFECT THE SAINTS AND NOT TAKING THE EASY WAY

In a church as large as the church in Taipei, the elders should bear the responsibility of supplying the saints with a message twice a week in the districts. All the other items of service can be carried out in the districts. The responsibility of giving a message to feed the saints should not be borne by the responsible brothers in the districts. The elders should endeavor to have a word with which to supply the church. The elders should not interfere with the other activities in the districts but should let the districts develop spontaneously. The saints should be trained to participate in all kinds of services and be allowed to bear responsibility. Otherwise, it is not easy for a church this large to function. If everything is directed by the elders, the

church will be limited, and many useful saints will not be utilized. If the Lord were to scatter twenty-five hundred saints to fifty new places, there would be fifty saints in each place. I believe that after a short time there would be five hundred saints in each place. If fifty saints go to Japan, in three to five years there will be five hundred saints. However, if we remain here for another five years, I am afraid that we will still have twenty-five hundred saints because that is our capacity. Hence, unless we have the right view and are willing to change our concept and our system so that every saint fulfills his function, we will not be able to multiply to ten thousand or, much less, twenty thousand saints.

I hope that the senior elders have prepared some younger saints to receive the “baton.” Otherwise, when the elders retire, their church will collapse. The co-workers should also be prepared for this problem. They must begin to train and perfect new elders in local churches where there are no elders. In the local churches where the elders are older and limited, the co-workers should begin to train and perfect new elders who can gradually take over the work of the elders. If the co-workers do not perfect a group of younger elders, there will be a lack in the service of the elders. The co-workers should serve with other saints in order to teach and perfect the saints. Then it will be possible for us to multiply and increase.

Our present need is to change our concept and our system. We must learn to serve and how to serve with others. This responsibility lies first with the co-workers and then with the elders. We have fellowshiped concerning this in the past, but in our practice we continued in our habit and disposition. As a result, useful saints have not been raised up. We must remember not to replace the saints but rather to bring them into the service with us. We should learn to serve, know how to serve, and also teach others to serve. This is contrary to our habit. As human beings, we tend to avoid difficult things and do what is easy. It is easier for water to flow downstream. Our habit has been to take the easy way. Indeed, it is not easy to teach others to do things. Now the co-workers must learn to teach others to serve.

It is relatively easy for co-workers to give attractive messages, but they must spend time to prepare a message that will touch the saints. It is not difficult for a co-worker who is eloquent, knows the Bible, and has spiritual experience to give an attractive message. However, a co-worker who wants to touch the listeners must spend time to learn. The co-workers must learn to

give a message that hits the target. Without experience and learning, they should not expect their speaking to penetrate the inner being of the saints. A person with experience must study how to present a message that not only penetrates the heart but also constrains the saints. The saints need to be constrained. Once they are constrained, something will come forth. If there is no constraining, nothing will come forth.

It takes a great deal of effort to perfect others. Some co-workers do not care much about others. They like to work by themselves. They may say that it is sufficient to know how to work. They do not care how others take care of the work. It is not easy to serve with five or six brothers. We must make an effort. In order to serve with them, we must understand their situations and accommodate their schedules. We also need to consider how to correct them and guide them. Hence, it is not easy to teach others. Teaching others requires much effort and time. It seems that we spend less time and energy to do things by ourselves. However, if we continue in this way, the work will not have results, and we will not have descendants. Our present way is easy, not difficult. A mother who wants to educate her children must spend time and exert some effort. If she is not willing to spend time and exert some effort, it will be difficult for her to keep her children on the right track. Educating one's children requires more than just a few days of work.

There are more than sixty co-workers in the work; however, not many of them know how to perfect the saints, nor are they willing to put in the time and the effort. Some co-workers' functions have not been fully manifested in the work, because they are not willing to put in much effort. The co-workers must begin to look to the younger saints, choose two or three who are suitable to be elders, and spend time to work on them and perfect them. However, there are only a few co-workers who can do this kind of work. The co-workers are mainly doing an ordinary work, even though they are busy. It is not difficult to be busy, but those who are serious in leading the saints will surely have a difficult time. We must change our concept. We should not say that the saints have no capacity. The problem is that we are short in perfecting them. If we will do a perfecting work, their capabilities will be brought forth. Without a perfecting work, no capacity can be developed in the saints. The capacity in the saints cannot come forth without perfecting. They must be perfected to do more than attend meetings, listen to messages, and help take care of some business affairs. These matters cannot draw out the interest and capacity of the saints. If we would be useful to the Lord and are concerned for

His house, we must be desperate in our endeavoring. We must be those who care for nothing but the producing of useful saints. If we endeavor and work in this way every day, it will stir up the interest of the saints.

AN EXAMPLE OF PERFECTING THE SAINTS

Here is a practical example. During the years that I served in the church in Chefoo, I devoted my attention, my heart, and my time to the church. My home was next door to the meeting hall. Every morning I went to the hall at eight and worked on various things. I went home at noon for lunch and a brief rest and then returned to the hall. Before the evening meeting I went home for dinner, after which I returned to the meeting hall and stayed there until ten o'clock at night. I did this seven days a week without any holidays. Nevertheless, none of the church affairs were in my hand. During the Sino-Japanese War, I was arrested and put into prison. After my release from prison, I contracted a serious illness. I was bedridden for more than a year in Chefoo, and later I left Chefoo. I was able to leave because nothing was in my hand. There was nothing for me to hand over to anyone.

During that time one brother was a deacon, and another brother was learning to be an elder. Every day we were together to work on the saints and do things. Therefore, we were able to perfect the saints and produce some useful ones. Every Monday, beginning from eight in the morning, we trained the saints who did visitations, and sometimes the training would last until three o'clock in the afternoon. Three groups of saints did visitations: elders, deacons, and co-workers. We came together with these saints, not to discuss things but to study how to visit the other saints. For example, a co-worker would say that he was burdened for a brother who met with us but was having problems. We would then study the situation of the brother to know how best to handle it. We also considered who would be the most suitable person to handle the situation. This meeting lasted from eight in the morning until three in the afternoon. These elders, deacons, and co-workers received practical perfecting.

There was a brother in the church in Chefoo who was the director of a hospital run by the Presbyterian denomination. He had a heart for the Lord and occasionally came to the meetings, but he had not yet taken this way. We had a burden for him and considered when to visit him, how to visit him, who should visit him, and what to say to him. We considered all these matters.

During that time we learned much concerning how to visit the saints, and the Lord's presence was with us in that training.

One brother had a burden for this director and visited him often. On two different occasions the brother suggested that we visit the director, but we did not feel that it was the right time. After a period of time he suggested that we visit the director again, and we all responded positively and felt to visit the director that afternoon. This time of fellowship was wonderful, and we saw the practical operation of the Holy Spirit in our fellowship concerning the saints. We also decided who should go. Everyone felt that two brothers and I should go. I had never contacted the director before, but the fellowship was that I should be one of the brothers to visit him.

Something wonderful indeed took place that day. The assistant to the director was also a brother. When we came to the hospital, this assistant told us that we had come at the right time because the director had a dream the night before in which he saw me drawing a picture of an ear on a blackboard. The director was deeply impressed by this dream, and all morning long he considered the dream and hoped that the Lord would send Brother Lee to him. So when the assistant told him that two brothers and I were there to visit him, he was excited. When we met him, he told us of his dream. Based on Job, I explained that our ears were made to listen to God's words (33:16). We all realized that the Lord had sent me to open the director's ear so that he might hear the Lord's words. The next Lord's Day he came to participate in the table meeting. The meeting was filled with praises, and the atmosphere was very high. In that meeting the brother had a turn, and he has taken this way ever since then.

The elders and co-workers need to spend time and make an effort to perfect the saints. It is convenient to do things by ourselves, but mothers know that patience and time are needed to teach children to do things. The effort we make is not in vain, because apprentices are produced, and the saints are perfected. Regrettably, we have not been willing to take this way. We always look for a quick and easy way and avoid the difficult aspect of the work. Most of us take the easy way. Some do not know how to teach others, because they themselves never learned. It takes time and effort to teach; it also takes time and effort to learn. We are not desperate to have a spirit of learning, and as a result, we have learned things in a shallow way. In order to learn, we must

study. It is easy to perform routine tasks, but specialized tasks require learning. Our specialized task is to learn how to work with the saints.

Working with the saints is not easy. The co-workers have been serving together for many years and are able to give messages on any topic. However, in order to give a message that touches the saints, they must make an effort. This principle applies to everything we do. A person who is casual in running a business will not make any profit. In order to make a profit, he must make an effort. The co-workers are serving diligently but with little result. If they want results, they must resolve to learn and make an effort to teach others. When the co-workers can perfect the saints to be elders or deacons, there will be results.

NOT BEING PREJUDICED TOWARD OTHERS BASED ON OUR DISPOSITION

Furthermore, we must not allow our disposition to prejudice us toward others. This is a problem that is very damaging. It is a great problem for a co-worker to like one type of saint and dislike another type of saint. We should not like or dislike anyone. We must transcend our personal feelings, and we must spend time to observe the saints. It is wrong for us to like a saint who suits our disposition. If I do not like talkative people, I can easily like a saint who does not speak much, whether or not he functions. However, there may be a talkative saint who does not suit my disposition but whose function has been manifested. Which saint should I spend time to perfect? I should perfect both. One of the co-workers often said that there is no one for him to perfect. Actually, there are saints whom he can work on, but they just are not according to his disposition. He thinks that they are not qualified; therefore, he puts them aside and will not perfect them. This is a basic problem among the co-workers.

Perfecting the saints and producing useful ones are the responsibility of both the co-workers and the elders. The co-workers, the elders, and the responsible ones in the districts and the other serving saints must not be afraid of the trouble or difficulties involved in perfecting the saints. They must also transcend their feelings by teaching and accommodating the saints. Without such a spirit we can do nothing. It is wrong to think that no one is useful. Wherever we are, we must work to the extent that even the saints who seemingly have no capacity become useful. We must make use of every kind

of material; we must perfect the saints. We must coordinate, use the environment, and produce useful saints.

In some places the co-workers and elders are capable, but they work as though the saints cannot be perfected. This is a big problem. We must not allow such a situation to continue. We should let the saints serve. Some of these saints will even do a better job than what we have done. It is intolerable for us to hold the saints down. In particular, the co-workers and elders should never be so careless as to hold the saints down. Even if we are capable, we should train others and not hold them down. In the work and in the church we are not measured by whether or not we are capable; we are measured by how many useful ones we are able to produce. The standard of success does not depend on our ability to do a certain thing. The standard is determined by how many useful ones we can produce. My ability to serve is not the standard; the standard is whether I can perfect another saint to do better than me. This requires that we learn our lessons.

The work and the church are progressing very slowly because we do not serve with the saints in order to teach them. Furthermore, we seldom coordinate with others. Those who have some capacity are passive, and they yield to others. The position of the senior elders and the co-workers is not the important issue. Our concept must be changed, and the system must be changed. The senior elders will continue to serve as elders, but they should not limit or hinder the other saints. Moreover, the middle-aged saints should be brought into the eldership to assist the senior elders. This would be very good. We must not keep things in our hand. We must be willing to hand things over to other saints and to teach them. Then those who are younger will be raised up by the Lord to be useful. Concerning this point, our concept must change, and our system must change. This is not just a matter of having a new way of doing things. It is altogether a matter of changing our concept. When both the co-workers and the elders begin to perfect the saints, our coordination will become effective. May the Lord have mercy on us.

CHAPTER FOUR
RECOVERING THE TESTIMONY
OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES
AND CONSIDERING LANGUAGE MEETINGS

OUR COMMISSION BEING TO RECOVER
THE TESTIMONY OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES

Focusing Our Work on Large Cities

Although for the past forty years we have emphasized preaching the gospel, edifying the saints, and leading them to pursue spirituality, we have been commissioned by the Lord to recover the testimony of the local churches. For this reason, we should focus our work on large cities. However, this does not mean that we will not work in smaller cities. We will still include them, but our focus should be on large cities. The assignment of the co-workers depends on the importance of the work. Places that are of greater importance will require more co-workers, and smaller places will not need as many co-workers.

Because Taipei, Taichung, and Tainan have the most schools, the work must focus on these three places. In addition, it is also necessary to establish a good testimony of the local church in large cities such as Keelung, Hsinchu, Chiayi, and Kaohsiung. Some saints can meet and serve only in small cities because of the location of their work or their home. These saints hope that a co-worker could join them and strengthen them. At present, this will not be possible because there are local churches in many places, and every place needs to be strengthened. Furthermore, there is a great need in East Asia. The testimony of the Lord's recovery in East Asia is crucial, and we cannot neglect it. We must leave the local brothers to bear and uphold the responsibility for the smaller cities. Perhaps the co-workers can visit various cities from time to time, or a conference or training can be held by several cities in order to render them some help.

Strengthening the Local Churches

We have fellowshiped previously that taking the co-workers out of their localities will not solve our problem. We need to change our concept and the system. If our concept and our system are not changed, it will be useless to remove the co-workers. Our strategy will be to focus on large cities, to strengthen the students' work, and to take care of the need overseas. The co-workers do not need to be removed from the local churches in the large cities. They should stay in these cities but not replace the saints. They must lead the saints to serve and thus produce some capable ones. The co-workers should begin with the elders. In local churches where there are no elders, the co-workers should work to produce elders. In places where there are elders, the co-workers should strengthen the functions of the elders by leading the elders to advance and learn more. Under no circumstance should the co-workers pick up the responsibilities of the elders. If the co-workers do not strengthen the testimony in the large cities, the elders will not be able to adequately meet the need. The local elders are busy with their jobs. They have the heart to serve, but their time and energy do not allow them to care for the many needs. There is a great need for co-workers to strengthen the work in the large cities. But the co-workers must not replace the elders or the responsible brothers.

The co-workers should strengthen and lead the elders in the service with the goal of perfecting the saints. The result of such work will be that the responsibilities of a local church will be borne by the elders and the saints. In addition, every co-worker should set aside a few months to travel, either overseas or to other places in Taiwan, in order to help other local churches. This will resolve the matter of taking the co-workers out of the local churches. While they are in Taiwan, the co-workers with a greater capacity and whose function is more manifested should render help to large local churches in order to strengthen the testimony in the churches. However, the co-workers must never replace the saints; instead, they should lead the saints and serve with the saints. The co-workers should not direct the affairs of a local church and should not use the elders to carry out the directions of the co-workers. This is not the way that we should serve. Rather, the local elders should manage the affairs of a local church, and the co-workers should support the elders by helping and strengthening them in order to perfect the saints.

Remaining in One Place for the Building Up of the Church

According to our experience, preaching the word from place to place is not beneficial to strengthening the testimony of the local churches and does not facilitate the building up of the church. In order to build up a local church, we must pour our whole being into it. A brother serving in Taichung must be so involved that he knows the needs in Taichung. He must dive into the work there; he cannot spend his time preaching the word in different places. He cannot hold a conference this week in one local church, preach the gospel for two weeks in another local church, and then spend two weeks in another local church. Such activity is of little use in strengthening the testimony of the local churches. Brothers who are able to work in various local churches should not take this way. If a co-worker wants to help a local church, he must put his whole being into the work there. In order to render true help to a local church, he must know the situation, and in order to know the situation, he must spend a few months there. To hold a conference and then leave is similar to being in Christianity and holding revival meetings. These activities are not focused on the building up of the churches. Sometimes they even damage the church.

Keeping a Work Record to Help Those Who Come Later

We must always dive into the work. Even when we go abroad, we should not stay in a place for five days and then leave. We must put our whole being into the work and know the history of the work there. Hence, the co-workers should keep a record of what they do. In every place there should be a written record in which a co-worker records the important items of his work. In this way the next co-worker needs only to check the written record in order to know what the previous co-worker did and how the work should continue. This does not mean that we must continue whatever a co-worker has done but that we need to know what has happened in the work. In this way the work will have a continuation.

Some might ask why I stop in Manila for two weeks, go to Singapore for twelve days, and then go to another place for two weeks. I went to these places as a pioneer to pave the way for others to continue the work. I did not have the time to stay longer and receive a burden. The place that I am burdened for is Los Angeles, which is in the United States. I have permanent residency there and have put my whole being into the work there. Although I am

working in the church in Los Angeles, I am also working in the whole United States. I am aware of the situation in other places, not just Los Angeles. The work that we are involved in requires our entire being.

Building Up the Local Churches

We should not take the way of an itinerant preacher. We must not work in a superficial way. If a brother is sent to a place to help in the service, he should study the situation in that place before he goes and should gain an understanding of the need. It may seem as if he is merely involved in the service, but in fact, he already knows the situation in that local church and thus is able to work according to the need. If all the co-workers would do the same, our work will have a great impact. A co-worker must first understand the local situation, and then he can dive into the work. The co-workers should not be itinerant preachers, who visit different places to hold revival meetings or edification meetings. We are not criticizing this kind of work. Some believers have been commissioned by God to do such a work; we are not opposed to this. However, this is not our commission. Our commission is to build up local churches in every city. Hence, we must devote our being to a work that is profitable for the practical building up of the church.

Our situation does not depend on removing the co-workers but on our changing our concept and system. If our concept and our system are changed, staying in one place will not cause problems, because the responsibility for the work will be borne by the local brothers who are the elders, and the co-workers will help and strengthen the elders. The co-workers should stay in the same locality because the burden and sphere of the work in a large local church cannot be borne solely by the local elders. If the work in a large locality is entrusted only to the local elders, the testimony will not be strong. This is similar to Peter, John, and James being in Jerusalem. Before Jerusalem was destroyed, the main testimony in Judea was in Jerusalem. These three apostles remained there to strengthen the testimony. A strong testimony influences the churches in other places. Today we are working according to this same principle. Since we do not have sufficient co-workers, we will concentrate on the large localities and will not be able to cover all the smaller places.

LANGUAGE MEETINGS

Bringing In the Local Saints

A matter that is worth our consideration is language. In the early stage of the church in Taipei, we felt that the testimony needed to spread to the local Taiwanese people. In order to reach a people, we must consider their language. Most of the land we have purchased is in the Wanhua district, which has a large concentration of local Taiwanese speakers. However, due to a problem we had in the work, we have not considered Taiwanese-speaking meetings. We must begin to establish Taiwanese-speaking meetings so that local people can be brought in. Any problem in communication, language, becomes a barrier that keeps people out.

There may be a number of ways to meet this need. For example, the church in Kaohsiung has a Taiwanese-speaking district. This is practical, but without a proper leading from the elders, there may be problems in the future that can cause divisions. We need the Lord's grace. Otherwise, the problem we had in the past will repeat itself. With proper care it is good to have a Taiwanese-speaking district. Another way is to begin a Taiwanese-speaking group meeting. We can also have translation into Taiwanese in the meetings of the church. This would also be a way to accommodate the Taiwanese-speaking saints and would not necessarily be needed in every meeting. The brothers need to consider which way to take according to their situation. In order to gain a group of people, we must use the language of that people. We cannot regulate whether a local church should have a Taiwanese-speaking district, a Taiwanese-speaking group meeting, or translation into Taiwanese. Every locality should decide according to its situation. Every local church must consider what it should do; otherwise, it will become a hindrance to the spread.

There is a sister who has many Taiwanese-speaking friends but cannot bring them to the meetings because of communication. The co-workers and elders should consider what to do according to the local situation. We should do our best to bring in the local Taiwanese people. Translation into Taiwanese is good, but it takes up much of the time during the meeting and can be a distraction. Nevertheless, even if there is translation, there are benefits to the saints coming together. The saints will have more blending and fellowship. The elders and co-workers in every locality should bring this matter before the Lord and consider what is best for their situation. If we neglect this matter, it will not be easy to gain the local people, and the church will suffer a loss.

Learning to Receive Others in Kindness without Distinctions

Furthermore, the saints who are originally from the mainland should learn to contact the local Taiwanese saints. They should receive the local saints cordially and kindly. Do not create a barrier that would cause others to feel that we are unapproachable. There should not be a distinction between the “local people” and the “mainlanders.” In the United States I continually emphasize that we must have no distinctions among us. There has been a history of distinction between white people and black people in the United States. However, in the local churches there, there are no distinctions. We must fellowship with the saints so that an atmosphere of having no distinctions can also be produced in Taiwan. In the churches there should not be any distinctions between local people and mainlanders. We are all brothers and sisters in the Lord. We should have love feasts and invite the Taiwanese brothers and sisters to our homes to have meals and fellowship. Spontaneously they will reciprocate, and gradually the barriers and distinctions will dissipate. Differences in language were brought in through Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). We cannot change this fact. However, we should strive to have no differences in spirit, in fellowship, in affection, and in any dealings with one another.

On the one hand, we should find a way to solve the language problem, making an effort to build a bridge for the saints who speak different languages. On the other hand, we should avoid any distinctions. In every local church a door should be opened to the Taiwanese people, and a language bridge should be built for the Taiwanese saints. At the same time, we should continue to labor with the students. Every student learns to speak Mandarin in school, and hence language is not a problem. When the students return home, they can communicate with their family in the Taiwanese dialect. Thus, the gospel can be preached through these young ones. This will have a great influence. Our testimony is for every locality; hence, our work should be directed toward the local people. Of course, since we are in Taiwan, there should be no distinction between the local people and the mainlanders. With sufficient blending, the distinctions will disappear. During this transition time, however, we need to build a bridge so that the local people can enter into the church life. We must bring this matter to the Lord for careful consideration so that we can

solve this problem. Otherwise, a section of the population will be left out. This would be a loss to the churches.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE WAY TO PERFECT PEOPLE AND
FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING
THE NEED ABROAD
NOT HOLDING BACK
IN PERFECTING OTHERS

Our work for the Lord is to teach and perfect others, so we must have a change in concept. When we teach others, we do not hold back what we know. Rather, we do our best to impart all that we know into others. We do not have secrets that we keep from the saints in fear of their excelling in the service and becoming better than us.

In spiritual matters we must give to others and not reserve anything for ourselves. The spiritual principle is that those who give more gain more. Luke 6:38 says, “Give, and it will be given to you.” Water must first flow out of a pipe in order for more water to flow in. The amount of water that flows in is determined by the amount of water that flows out. We should not say that if we give to others, we will have nothing left. The more we endeavor to give to others, the more we will be given.

PERFECTING BY BROTHER NEE

In the fall of 1933 I went to Shanghai for the first time to observe and learn how to serve the Lord. At that time Brother Nee bore the responsibility for the local church in Shanghai. I had just resigned from my job and begun to serve full time. During my stay of nearly four months, Brother Nee did not conduct any special training meetings. He did not tell the serving ones what to do. During that time I had only brief fellowship with him; sometimes I went to see him, or he came to see me.

Brother Nee usually gave a message in the Lord’s Day morning meeting, and we all enjoyed listening to him. Once, about five or ten minutes before the Lord’s Day meeting, I received a note from Brother Nee that said, “Brother Witness, please give the message this morning.” The saints in the meeting had

already begun to sing hymns. While they prayed, I waited for Brother Nee. When he did not show up, I had no alternative but to go up to the podium and give a message.

I did not know until later that Brother Nee stood behind the door and listened to my message. I did not see him and thought that he was not in the room. I did not know that he would ask me to speak, until I received the note. This kind of training was quite severe, but it was also beneficial to me.

Relinquishing Our Hold, Letting Others Serve, and Overseeing

On one hand, we should not be afraid to let others serve, but on the other hand, we should watch them; that is, we must oversee. Sometimes Brother Nee did not correct me directly; instead, he would speak to Sister Ruth Lee. One Lord's Day morning I spoke on abiding in the Lord. After the message Brother Nee told Sister Lee, "Concerning abiding in the Lord, the word *abiding* is not so important, but the word *in* is very important. You must see *in*; otherwise, regardless of how hard you try, you cannot abide. Only when you see that you are *in the Lord* can you *abide in the Lord*." Sister Lee received much benefit from this. Brother Nee knew that I had contact with Sister Lee and that she would convey his word to me. Later, Brother Nee wrote a hymn concerning the vine (*Hymns*, #561), in which the vine typifies our being in Christ. The light of the truth in this hymn is very clear. Once we see that we are "in," we can do nothing but abide, because we are already in the Lord. If we do not see that we are already in the Lord, we will be unable to abide, no matter what we do.

Brother Nee also asked me to give gospel messages. Shortly before a meeting I received a note that said, "Brother Witness, please give the gospel message tonight." This was shortly after I had arrived in Shanghai, and I did not understand his way of doing things. I thought that he was either too busy or sick and could not make it to the meeting and had therefore asked me to take his place. However, he was not sick. While I spoke from the podium, he stood behind the door listening to the message.

That day I received light from the Lord and spoke on John 16:8, which says, "When He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment." In that message I said

that *concerning sin* is a matter related to being in Adam, *concerning righteousness* is a matter related to being in Christ, and *concerning judgment* is a matter related to Satan. I said that there are three main persons in the universe: Adam, Christ, and Satan. “If you are in Adam, your end will be with Satan, but when you are transferred out of Adam into Christ, your relationship with Satan is broken. Hence, today you must realize that you are in Adam and that you have no alternative but to move out of him. If you are not transferred into Christ, one day you will suffer eternal judgment with Satan. *Concerning sin* relates to the fact that you were born a sinner in Adam. When you are transferred into Christ, you are justified. Justification is a matter of being in Christ. If you do not make such a transfer, one day you will share God’s judgment on Satan; you will be with Satan in the lake of fire.”

A few weeks later Brother Nee and I went for a walk. While we were walking, he turned suddenly to me and said, “Brother, not many in China today know the Bible. That day your speaking on sin, righteousness, and judgment was excellent. It is not so easy to see these points.” Upon hearing this, I was shocked. I did not know that he was listening to my message. This was how he trained me; he was truly good at perfecting others.

In 1934 a turmoil arose in the church in Shanghai because of Brother Nee’s marriage. As a result of the turmoil, Brother Nee left Shanghai. One day the three elders in the church in Shanghai came to me and asked me how to handle a difficult situation. I told them that I did not know how to handle it. They said I should bear the responsibility for the church in Shanghai because before Brother Nee departed, he said that in regard to the work and all the affairs in the church in Shanghai, they should ask Brother Lee. However, Brother Nee never mentioned this to me. This was his way of training. Hence, we should not be afraid of handing things over to others. After we hand things over, we should stand behind and watch the situation. This will enable us to see how well the person is doing. On one hand, we should hand things over, and on the other hand, we should watch to see what is being done.

Learning to drive a car is a good example. When a person is learning to drive a car, his teacher sits next to him and hands the car over to him. However, the teacher is more alert than the driver. When they encounter a dangerous situation, the teacher is the first to recognize the danger. In spite of this, the teacher must allow the student to react, because the car has been handed over to him. Then the teacher may need to provide further training. If

a teacher is afraid and never gives the car to a student, the student will never have the opportunity to learn to drive. Similarly, the teacher will never learn any lesson related to how to train a student.

Being Perfected in the Literature Work

I am thankful to the Lord that when I first arrived in Shanghai, Brother Nee gave me many opportunities to learn. For example, I had never done any literature work before that time, and neither had I been to his bookroom. However, he perfected me in the literature work. First, he perfected me in responding to letters. The saints and churches often wrote to Brother Nee asking him questions. Sometimes he would give me these letters and ask me to reply on his behalf. These letters contained more than greetings; they contained specific questions. Second, Brother Nee made me an editor of some of his publications, such as *Collection of Newsletters*. Third, he allowed me to edit articles in the magazine *The Christian*. After being in circulation for several years, this magazine was stopped for a period of time. When the magazine resumed publication, he asked me to bear the responsibility of the editor. He handed me the task and stood behind to train me. This is the way we should perfect others in order to produce useful ones. If we do everything by ourselves from beginning to end, there will be no one to continue the work after we die.

MAKING AN EFFORT TO PERFECT OTHERS AND BECOMING MORE USEFUL

In order for a trade to grow and expand, it must train apprentices. Therefore, the co-workers must have a thorough change of concept. The brothers in the larger cities have been listening to messages for ten to twenty years. Hence, they should be experienced and able to handle things. The saints in the churches in Taiwan are good resources to whom we can hand over the affairs of the church. It is the Lord's sovereignty and His mercy that we have encountered problems and suffered a loss in recent years. For nearly ten years we were engaged in a battle, both in the East and in the West, concerning the truth and ground of the church. Now the saints are finally clear in regard to the ground of the church.

I once told a brother that it was a mistake for me to accept the suggestion of some brothers and invite Brother Austin-Sparks to come to us, because his

visit caused a problem. The brother said that he did not consider it a mistake, because if not for that mistake, we would not have been engaged in a battle concerning the ground of the church, and we would not be able to speak clearly concerning this matter. The churches in this country and overseas are all clear about the truth concerning the ground of the church. This brother's words surely gave me some comfort.

A young American brother, who had not had contact with us in the United States, came to a meeting in Taipei, because he heard that our meetings were based on the teachings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. However, he was not clear concerning the ground and the way of the church. During a Lord's Day morning meeting, he spoke about how he came to be with us. Eventually, he said that every Christian group is the same. This statement sparked a burden in the saints. One after another, the saints stood up and testified concerning the truth with their experience. All the speaking clearly hit the points of the truth concerning the ground and the way of the church. It gave me great joy to see that the saints are so clear concerning the ground and the way of the church. We should have the assurance that after so many years of observing, listening, and learning, the saints are able to bear responsibility. We should be at peace to commit matters into their hands. The saints simply need a little guiding. As long as the co-workers and elders are willing to take the time and are determined to take this way, not only will they be able to produce capable ones, but they themselves will learn more. Teachers always learn more than their students. When we teach others, we learn more thoroughly. When we perfect others to become useful, we also become more useful.

THE STRATEGY OF OUR WORK

The work, especially in East Asia, should mainly focus on large cities. We should not spread out to smaller places. Our commission from the Lord is to recover the testimony of the local churches in this age. We are not commissioned with a ministry of studying the Bible, a ministry of edifying people for the sake of spirituality, or with a ministry of preaching the gospel or doing an evangelistic work abroad. The commission that we have received from the Lord is to recover the testimony of the local churches. We must work out a strong and shining testimony of the local churches with a large number of believers. Such a testimony will allow the Lord to have more outlets.

However, we should not despise other Christians involved in other endeavors; rather, we should respect them. Whether or not they are willing to receive the ground of the church is not a problem. It is the Lord's grace that some believers desire to preach the gospel among the aborigines. It is right that they go. Some believers are burdened to preach the gospel abroad, others desire to build up Bible-study groups, and still others are burdened for the growth in life. These activities are not in opposition to the commission that we have received from the Lord. Other believers can carry out their respective commissions, but our commission is to build up the church life in every locality. This testimony is not easy to work out, and the Lord did not commission us to do any other work. Hence, we must focus our energy on large and central places. In this way we will gain numerous people, and the testimony will be bright. The work must focus on central places.

We also need to work with students, and the co-workers who are manifested in the work should go abroad. However, this does not mean that they should move overseas and not return. While the co-workers are in Taiwan, they should help in the larger local churches. Every year they should spend nine months in Taiwan and three months abroad. At least a dozen co-workers should be able to go abroad. Some may spend a longer time abroad, maybe half a year. They will be able to work in coordination with the local churches domestically and overseas for the spread of the Lord's testimony by training and producing useful ones.

THE NEED AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WORK ABROAD

The places abroad that need our help are Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Manila in the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia. Malaysia is divided into two areas: the center of one area is Penang, and the center of the other area is Sarawak. In addition, Thailand, mainly Bangkok, and Indonesia also need our help. Altogether there are nine places, and every place needs co-workers to render them help. We need a dozen brothers to take turns in bearing the work in these places. A co-worker who goes abroad should fellowship with the other co-workers when he returns. Through the fellowship it may be that when a co-worker returns, he visits the various local churches in Taiwan to supply the churches. Or he may remain in one large local church to serve there.

This arrangement of the co-workers spending time abroad will take care of the need by rendering a considerable amount of help. Moreover, it will not have a negative effect on the work in Taiwan; rather, it will be beneficial. The co-workers being away will give the local elders the opportunity to serve. I hope that all the co-workers will be perfected to go abroad. Taiwan has been the center of the work in Southeast Asia, but this does not mean that Taiwan controls the churches in other places. We must be clear that the work is regional, but the church is local. Every local church should take care of its own administration; however, the work, being regional, has a center. In the early days we considered Taiwan as the Jerusalem, the center, of the work. The co-workers should go out from here to labor in other places.

There are three kinds of work among the co-workers. The first kind of work is to serve in a local church, to help that church, by diligently training and perfecting the saints. The next kind of work is to go abroad and minister to, serve, the churches. The third kind of work is to visit local churches in Taiwan. The co-workers who serve in this way can be likened to a mobile support unit. They can visit a local church if there is a need, and then they can visit another local church if there is a need. The co-workers should spend their time to do these three kinds of work. Some co-workers may work only in a local church. Some co-workers may work in a local church and also set aside time to work abroad. Other co-workers will spend time laboring abroad and visiting the local churches in Taiwan that have a need. Only a few co-workers are needed in the third kind of work.

The co-workers who work in a local church should not replace the saints in their service; rather, they should work in coordination with the saints. The co-workers should help the saints, lead the saints, and raise up the saints. As the co-workers become skilled, they will be able to go abroad and serve. The nine places that we mentioned are open to the Lord's recovery. They are willing to receive the help from the work.

The brothers in Indonesia sent an invitation, but they did not say that they need my help or ask me to spend time with them. They wrote to me, saying, "We would like to hand over the work in Indonesia completely to your ministry. All you need to do is to come and start the work, and later you can arrange for the co-workers to come. We will accept whatever arrangement you make. We would like to hand over this whole region to the work." The brothers in Japan said the same, and the brothers in Hong Kong also said the

same. Hence, the need abroad is great. But we cannot go immediately, because the churches in Taiwan are not ready to let the co-workers go. We must take one step at a time.

This fellowship is related to taking one step at a time. I hope that through this fellowship not only the co-workers but also the elders will understand our situation. Although the elders are not directly involved in the work, the work and the churches are the one testimony; they are intimately related. Hence, the elders also need to know the situation. I hope that when the elders return to their respective localities, they will fellowship with the local saints so that the saints know the development and the line of the Lord's work. It is the Lord's mercy that every region in East Asia, except mainland China, is open to us.

THE CO-WORKERS ENDEAVORING TO LEARN AND TO BE USEFUL TO THE LORD

Presently, we do not have many co-workers who can go abroad. The co-workers must endeavor to learn in the word and in the building up of the church. The regions abroad are open to our work, so our sending the co-workers can be likened to sending our cargo. A co-worker's work concerns all of us, not just him. We must not "ruin" the reputation of our cargo. When the co-workers go abroad, they must do a better job than they do in Taiwan; they must be able to help the churches. We should gain the trust of the saints, and we should be useful to the Lord.

All the local churches need our help, but we cannot meet the need by merely holding a two-week conference. The churches also realize that this way is of no avail. Hence, they do not invite itinerant preachers. The churches have learned the lesson and realize that giving a few messages might be of a little profit, but nothing is accomplished afterward. All the churches have entered into the stage of building. Hence, we must be diligent and dedicated and do a thorough work. The co-workers must be serious and learn, because the need abroad is great. When a co-worker is definitely manifested, we will be able to send him abroad to labor. However, we should do this gradually and take one step at a time. Presently, there are about a dozen co-workers who can go abroad. Most of them will go for three months, and a few can go

for six months. I hope that the co-workers understand this need, pray for this, and fellowship with the elders in the local churches concerning this.

THE EAST AND THE WEST RENDERING HELP TO EACH OTHER

The development of the work in the Western Hemisphere depends on the Lord. We cannot send co-workers there. Perhaps some American brothers can go to the Philippines or Indonesia. However, it should be their responsibility to go to Europe. The door to Europe is open. The brothers in America can also go to New Zealand. If the brothers in America are willing to migrate to New Zealand, the New Zealand government will cover the expenses of their travel and relocation and will even give them a plot of land with a loan for them to farm it. It is easy for Americans to migrate to New Zealand. New Zealand has rich soil, good climate, and bountiful produce but a small population; it needs to be developed. However, New Zealand welcomes Caucasians more than any other race. The same applies to Australia. For this reason, the burden for New Zealand and Australia falls on the saints in America. Some American brothers should migrate there. Some saints have already moved to France. The burden for Europe, New Zealand, and Australia rests mainly with the American saints.

The work in East Asia is enough to keep us busy. Of course, this does not mean that the brothers in the East should not go to the West or that the brothers in the West should not come to the East. It is good to exchange co-workers between the East and the West, because this is a kind of fellowship and help. As we advance spiritually, the brothers in the West can come to help us, and we can also go to help them.

The churches in the East and the West are advancing because we share the same life and the same leading. As we come to understand and know one another more and as we also grow in life, there will be more traffic between the East and the West. Some co-workers in the East may go to the West, and some from the West may come to the East. Our present situation, however, does not allow this, and besides, the need is not yet that great. Hence, the co-workers here should use Taiwan as a base for their going to the places in East Asia for the spread of the work. I believe that this will surely bring in the blessing. I hope you will not feel that this burden is too heavy. We must be in one accord so that all the churches reap the benefit.

CHAPTER SIX

FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING

THE NEED OF THE CHURCHES ABROAD

HOLDING TRAININGS FOR

LOCAL AND OVERSEAS SAINTS

AND ENCOURAGING OVERSEAS SAINTS

TO STUDY IN TAIWAN

If the churches in Taiwan continue to advance, and the co-workers are willing to receive the burden to help the churches abroad, there will be substantial results. It would also be good to have a joint gathering or training every year or every other year for the saints from various local churches in Taiwan and abroad to attend. Each term of training could be either three weeks or a month. The saints from various churches can come together to participate in the training, just as the children of Israel kept the Feast of Tabernacles. The brothers and sisters who are serving the Lord can come together at least once every two years to have a training in which they live together and meet and fellowship together. This training could also be held every year. I believe that this would be a great help to the churches.

The co-workers who go abroad to labor for the Lord should take note of the saints who are seeking and promising. The co-workers can even encourage the young saints in Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia to come to Taiwan to study, attend meetings, and learn the language for the purpose of translation. When these young ones finish their education and return to their countries, they will be a great help to the churches. The co-workers going abroad and the young overseas saints coming to Taiwan will cause the work to progress. It will double the results with half the effort.

TITHING FOR THE CHURCHES ABROAD

The co-workers going abroad and the young saints coming to Taiwan will increase the burden of the churches and the co-workers in Taiwan. The spiritual and material burden will be heavier. For this reason, the churches in

Taiwan should begin tithing for the churches abroad. This means that no matter how much the churches receive in offerings, they should give one-tenth to the Lord. In the Old Testament the Levites received the tithe of the Israelites and then gave one-tenth of what they had received to the Lord. This was pleasing to the Lord. Never think that your church does not receive much and therefore cannot tithe. This is a selfish thought. The Bible says, "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38).

Beginning from January of 1971, all the churches should offer ten percent, no matter how much they receive. Suppose a local church receives ten thousand New Taiwan dollars, but it needs twelve thousand. What should this church do? The elders should still endeavor to offer one-tenth and then commit the lack to the Lord. This is according to the Lord's word in Malachi 3:10, which says, "Bring the whole tithe to the storehouse that there may be food in My house; and prove Me, if you will, by this, says Jehovah of hosts, whether I will open to you the windows of heaven and pour out blessing for you until there is no room for it." The Lord said that we should prove Him by our giving, and He will open the windows of heaven for us. We should not wait until we receive a surplus in order to give ten percent; rather, we should first set aside ten percent by faith. If the churches would practice this, the offerings would increase. Giving in this way will double what we receive from the Lord. Give to the Lord, and He will give to you. This is the way for the saints to be blessed and, even more, for the churches to be blessed.

Regardless of whether we have enough to meet our need, the churches in Taiwan must offer one-tenth by faith to the Lord. The Lord will bless this. This will not only test us but also confirm the experience of the saints throughout the generations. No one has ever suffered a loss because of loving the Lord and offering material blessings to Him. Without exception, what the Lord gives us in return is more than what we give to Him. This applies to individuals and also to the churches. We must look to the future. If every church would practice this, we will bring in the Lord's blessing.

The churches in Taiwan should give for the needs in South Korea by helping the saints there to purchase land for the construction of a meeting hall. Such a project cannot be accomplished within a short time; nevertheless, we should ask the Lord to lead us in this matter. By the Lord's leading, we may have a gathering of all the churches in East Asia every year or every two years. The financial need for such a gathering would be large. The burden

would be too great for the churches to meet this need within a short time. Perhaps the churches can make an offering every month to meet this need. This does not have to be a rigid practice. If the churches are so led, they can send the offering to the business office of the church in Taipei, designating its use for the East Asia conference. In this way funds will gradually be accumulated, and it will be easier to bear the financial burden at the time of the conference. We must meet this need for the Lord's sake.

Here is another example. There are two halls in the church in Taipei that can each accommodate about a thousand saints, but both meeting halls are in need of renovation. We need a place that can hold two to three thousand people for a training. In the future we will need to rent a hall that is large enough to hold ten thousand people in order to hold a conference. Of course, we may not be able to build such a large meeting hall in Taipei. Nevertheless, the church in Taipei should have a meeting hall that can seat two thousand five hundred to three thousand people so that we may regularly carry out trainings there.

BEARING THE BURDEN FOR TRAININGS AND CONFERENCES

The co-workers should not depend on me for the trainings. I cannot bear such a heavy burden. Ever since I returned on November 21, 1970, I have been in numerous meetings with no rest. Furthermore, the burden of the Book Room is also upon me. I often stay up until midnight to review manuscripts. Therefore, the brothers need to receive this burden. Regardless of whether I am present, they must hold an East Asia conference at least once every two years. Such a conference will greatly benefit the churches. If my energy and time allow me to travel, I will return to help with the conference. In any case, it is necessary that the co-workers bear this burden.

It would be more suitable to have an East Asia conference during the holidays. The summer holiday may be more suitable because a substantial number of saints either work in schools or are students. Most of my work in the United States is done in the summer. That time affords the best opportunity for me to work. According to past years, the work accomplished during the summer is often more effective than what is done during the rest of the year. From June to September I will be in conferences, and the schedule for these three months will be very tight. However, the results reaped during

these three months will be equivalent to the results for the rest of the year. For this reason I will not be able to come to Taipei during the summer. Therefore, the brothers and sisters need to receive the burden to pray for the international conference.

A time of joint training is needed; it would be a great help to the churches. Last week the saints from various places in Taiwan came together to be trained. That training was a great help to all the churches. The strengthening from that training issued in positive results in the recent gospel meetings. Of course, a foundation must first be laid in every local church. Based on such a foundation, the trainings and conferences cause the saints to be burning. At present, the churches in Southeast Asia and Japan are somewhat established. If the co-workers can go and strengthen the churches there, an international conference would have a greater effect on the saints. Therefore, such a conference is indispensable. The brothers should have more fellowship concerning this matter to confirm this need.

THE DIRECTION OF THE WORK

The co-workers must always remember the direction of our work. On one hand, the co-workers should strengthen the local churches, help them to spread, and perfect and cultivate the saints. On the other hand, the co-workers should encourage the churches to attend the international conference and help the churches to prepare for the conference. The co-workers and the elders must understand our current situation so that they endeavor in this direction for the sake of the Lord's testimony.

The Lord will bless and propagate His work, so the churches need to receive this burden and give one-tenth of their offerings. The elders may decide to send the offering to Taipei. The general business office of the church in Taipei can open an account to take care of the offerings from the churches. Whenever a need arises in relation to the international conference, these funds will be available for use. If the churches are led to use their offering in a certain way, they should do so. For example, the church in Kaohsiung may feel to help the church in Taitung and give its offering to Taitung. Or the church in Taitung may feel to give its offering to Hualien. Even if a local church is not led to give to a specific need, in principle it should not keep its offering. The church should send it to a fund in the general business office in Taipei. However, this fund is not for the general business office; the business

office merely oversees the use of this fund on behalf of the churches. When there is a shortage in funds for the international conference, the general business office can designate a portion of these funds for use. However, we should not depend entirely on this fund to meet the needs for the international conference. There may be a need for the churches to give more. In short, every church should give one-tenth of their offerings.

PAST PROBLEMS

The work in Hong Kong began in 1937 when Brother Weigh Kwang-hsi was led by the Lord and confirmed by the work to begin the work there. In the spring of 1950 Brother Nee visited Hong Kong from mainland China for the last time and brought a revival to the church in Hong Kong. During this revival the brothers and sisters willingly handed themselves over. At that time Brother Nee sent me a cable, asking me to go to Hong Kong and make arrangements for the elders, deacons, and all the services in the church. I stayed in Hong Kong for one and a half months and made arrangements for the services of the elders and the deacons. Since the church did not yet have a meeting hall, we formed a purchasing and construction group. We then bought a piece of land on Observatory Road and began the construction of a meeting hall. From 1950 to 1956 the saints progressed according to the leading in the work. Many blessings were brought in during that period of time, because of the one accord among the saints.

From 1956 to 1958 one of the elders there was dissenting concerning the leading in the work; he desired to take another way. When the problem in Taiwan broke out, this brother spoke with the dissenting brothers in Taiwan and supported them. In 1961 he began to publicly accuse me of speaking heresy. He could not accept the teaching concerning the Son being the Father, concerning the Son being the Spirit, or concerning the New Jerusalem not being a place but a person. He was also strongly opposed to our practice of burying our oldness. In 1968 his opposition became stronger. He considered burying our oldness to be heretical and said that it was an act of nailing the Lord Jesus to the cross again, which violated the Lord's Person. In August of 1970, while the co-workers were absent, he called a meeting of the whole church, in which he openly declared his opposition and claimed that I spoke heresy. Another elder in Hong Kong felt the severity of the situation and called Brother Weigh Kwang-hsi and other elders, who were in the United States at the time, to discuss how to deal with the situation. In September

three brothers returned to Hong Kong, and the dissenting brother was stopped from doing anything further for the time being. When he continued his opposition, Brother Weigh called me long distance and said that I should go to Hong Kong as soon as possible. After much fellowship with the brothers in the United States, I went to Hong Kong on October 15.

The six elders had announced a conference beginning on October 16. However, the dissenting elder called a meeting on October 15, in which he stirred up the saints. On October 16 the saints took over the meeting hall and declared that they were chasing away heresy. As a result, we decided not to have the conference.

The Lord used this situation to sanctify the church in Hong Kong. This opposition appeared to be related to the truth. However, it was not about the truth but about a brother wanting to do another work and have another move. His actions were the same as the opposing brothers in Taiwan. All the brothers and sisters are clear that it was not a matter of the truth but of someone desiring to establish a territory and do his own work. The most fearful thing in the work is for someone to have ambition and establish another territory. There was nothing controversial in the aspect of the truth. This ministry does not speak heresy. It does not say that the Lord Jesus is a sinner or that the Lord Jesus is not God. Accusing me of speaking heresy was an excuse. The dissenting ones were not willing to receive the leading in the work. They put out their own teachings and established a territory for themselves. This was the basic problem. Nevertheless, the Lord used the turmoil that they stirred up to sanctify His church.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE FOCAL POINT
OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK
AND PERFECTING THE YOUNG PEOPLE
BRINGING YOUNG SAINTS INTO THE WORK

We must pay attention to a fundamental point in the young people's work, which is that we must bring them into working with us. We should not replace others in whatever we do. However, we often do the work by ourselves and thus replace others. This is the natural way to work. Those who have truly been trained will not take this way. The trained way is to always teach others and work with others. It is necessary for us to apply this principle to the young people's work.

Many serving ones have fellowshiped about how to lead the young people's meeting. They are searching for a way to preach the gospel in the schools. If it is necessary that we go to the schools to do the young people's work, the work has already failed. A normal situation would be that many students are saved, but no co-worker has ever entered the gate of the school. No one knows that he has brought many students to salvation. This is skill. If we desire to do the students' work, we must learn this skill. A serving one who has not learned to work in this way is natural and untrained.

PRODUCING BURDENED SAINTS
IN THE SCHOOLS

We need to be aggressive and learn how to preach the gospel in a school without ever setting foot in the school. A brother serving with the young people in a locality should find out if there are any brothers or sisters in his target school. There are saints in almost every school in Taiwan; they are either students or staff. This is the Lord's mercy to give us such an excellent condition. Suppose the serving brother finds a young brother who attends the school. The co-worker should spend time with him by fellowshiping with him, having meals with him, and leading him to pray until the young brother

begins to love the Lord, is revived, and becomes willing to preach the gospel in his school.

The co-worker should not go to the school to preach the gospel. Once he goes, he has failed. Instead, he should let the young brother do the work. The co-worker must work on the young brother until the young brother is raised up. The co-worker should not go to the school; rather, he must work on a young brother until the young brother is more zealous and more serious about the work than the co-worker is. Thus, even if the co-worker would stop serving, the young brother would continue to believe and work. The work must become the young brother's and no longer the work of the co-worker. Then the co-worker has achieved his goal.

SERVING UNTIL THE WORK IS NO LONGER OURS

The co-workers must always apply this principle no matter where they serve. A co-worker has failed in the service when he is always asking others to help him. The work must belong to the local saints to the point that they are, at most, asking the co-workers for assistance rather than relying on them to do everything. The work came to Taiwan from mainland China through me, but now it is your work, and because it is your work, you ask me only to help. The Western missionaries who went to China did not work in this way. Rather than raising up others, they were always asking others to help them. Hence, the work was entirely in their hands.

Some co-workers serve like the Western missionaries. When they go to a certain place, an impression is conveyed that the elders or deacons should help the co-workers or that those who come to serve are doing the co-workers a favor. Only when the service is in the hands of the saints, and they are asking a co-worker for help to carry out a service, is it a success. A co-worker must be able to raise up useful saints who can serve. Then he has succeeded.

SPENDING TIME TO SUPPLY THE SAINTS

In order to produce a useful brother, we must spend a few months to labor with him. This is the secret of our work. We must work on the brother until his burden is only to bring people in his school to salvation. If we can achieve this, our work will be a success because it will not depend on outward things,

such as asking for permission to preach the gospel in a school classroom. Some serving ones want to organize a gospel club in the schools or put up posters. We may do these things, but they are not very practical. The practical way is to labor and gain one person, working on him until he is burdened to preach the gospel in his school. In other words, we should let him preach the gospel. He can save one classmate, and the two can begin to meet together. When he feels that he cannot meet the need, he will ask for help, and we should assist him. Perhaps he will bring a classmate with him. We should teach the two of them to coordinate together and to meet. However, we do not need to meet with them at school. We must learn this basic lesson.

When the young saints ask for help, we should be ready to help them. If we cannot help them, they will not ask for help again. A co-worker must develop the skill of helping the saints, or he will be useless. If the young saints learn something that they can apply, they will return for more help. Then the co-worker can give them further direction. At this point, the work will be borne by both the saints and the co-worker. The work will belong to both, because the saints carry it out at school, and the co-worker helps as needed. If we work in this way, it will be easy to gain a school.

A co-worker who goes to a school in order to preach the gospel will accomplish little, because when he leaves the school, the work will end. However, if a co-worker can serve according to this fellowship, the work will continue after he leaves, because it is borne by the students. This way of service must be the foundation of our work and should be applied to all our service, such as the brothers' house or sisters' house, the publication work, and coordinating with a local church. All our service must be built on a solid foundation. Without such a foundation, our service is outward. We must diligently learn to produce useful saints in the schools. Then no matter where we are, we will succeed in every situation, and we will gain double the result with half the effort.

LETTING THE YOUNG PEOPLE SERVE AND SUPPLYING THEM

In every school we must produce young saints who are so burdened for the gospel that the work becomes theirs, and we only assist and supply them from a distance. Perhaps a co-worker serves with a group of at least ten young saints who do not know how to meet when they come together. The co-worker

should instruct the young saints how to meet and if necessary should also supply them. However, the supply should not be in the way of leading the students in a meeting or replacing them in the meeting. The co-worker should not decide on what day the students meet, direct them to invite their friends, take the lead in their meeting, or give a message in their meeting. If he functions in this way, he is replacing the students. Even though he will spend much time and energy, none of the young saints will be able to serve; instead, they will support the co-worker with their presence. By the Lord's mercy, this kind of work may still bear some fruit. The Lord's grace is abundant. Wherever the Lord's word is, there will always be a certain amount of blessing. If we preach the gospel and speak the Lord's word, the Holy Spirit will always work. However, that is not the best foundation for our work.

Our work is to produce a saint who is more burdened than we are. We should work with him until he is on fire for the gospel. He should be so burdened for the gospel that even if the director of his school opposes Christ, he would find a way to preach the gospel. Our work is a success if we do not go to a school and ask the director for a room in order for the young saints to meet. This is what it means to be a capable worker. We should let the brother whom we have perfected lead his classmates. When he asks for help, we should be ready to assist him so that he can take a step forward. If we work in this way, the young saints will decide when and where to have a meeting. They will take care of their own meeting and bear the burden for the meeting. Apparently, their meeting is their work; in reality, it is also our work.

If this is the way we serve, every school will be open to us. Both university students and junior high school students can be gained in this way. Instead of replacing the students, we should serve with them and let them serve. It is not a problem for them to make a mistake. We should watch over them from a distance and render help to them when necessary.

TRAINING THE STUDENTS

If the co-workers grasp this principle and practice it diligently, they will succeed and the work will be light. Many of those who serve in the young people's work expend much energy. They are like generals who fight the battle on their own instead of letting the soldiers fight the battle. A good and skilled general never fights the battle himself. The soldiers fight the battle, and the general directs the troops. If we do not labor in this way, we may gain results,

but the effect will be minimal. The more students we can train to fight the battle, the greater will be the results.

We should regard the students as soldiers. If we learn this secret, our service will be ten times more effective. To engage in battle does not require a great skill, but to teach others to fight requires skill. In order to teach others, you must be the first one to learn. The more people you teach, the more you must learn. If we could adopt this way of serving, it will be easy to spread the work. There are probably three hundred and twenty thousand students in Taipei. If we gain one-tenth of them, we will have thirty-two thousand students. God is not asking too much from us. He asks only for one-tenth, but this one-tenth is thirty-two thousand. If we continue in the old way, we will not be able to gain this many.

The co-workers must also learn to supply others. They must endeavor in this. The military emphasizes training, supply, and then command. Unless a person has been trained, he cannot command troops in a battle. We must learn the scientific way of serving. The scientific way is contrary to our natural inclination. We must learn many things in order to take this way.

Any co-worker who adopts this method in his service will gain results within two years. Although we do not have many co-workers, I would still encourage all the co-workers to put as much of their time as possible into working with the young people. This does not mean that they should not care for other services in the church, nor does it mean that they should not assist the elders. This simply means that eighty percent of their time should be spent with the young people. However, the co-workers should not do the work themselves; they should carry out the work according to this fellowship. Then there will be a work in the universities, a work in the junior high schools, a work in the high schools, and a work in the vocational schools. If we practice according to this way, the work will continually grow.

We must let the students have their own meetings. We must even let go of the junior high students and let them have their own meetings. At the same time, we should actively supply, care for, and guide them from a distance. The university students may not require as much of our effort and time. The younger the students, the more time and effort we will need. This does not mean that we should lead their meetings. No, we should still let them have their own meetings. Guiding the students can be compared to flying a kite. A

person holds the string that is attached to the kite, not the kite itself. The students carry out the work, and we supply them. The way we serve and the supply we render are the focal points of our work. These two matters are not easy to learn. No matter what the situation is, we must always have something solid with which to supply others. This supply cannot be met by giving one message a week. What we supply should meet the students' real need. Initially, this may be difficult, but the more skilled we are, the easier it will become. Furthermore, it is very effective.

BEING CAUTIOUS AND SOBER-MINDED CONCERNING COORDINATION

Coordination in the church can be troublesome. There is a district meeting that is very close to the National Taiwan University and also very convenient. The responsible brothers in this district welcome young people and are zealous. This is a help to the students' work. However, the middle-aged or older saints do not always understand the psychology of the young ones. These older saints might extinguish the fire in the young people. The help that they render may become a hindrance.

Some may say, "If this is the case, there is no need for the church's coordination. The saints in the district labor to cook meals and spend time with the students, and all they receive is criticism." This word is not negating the coordination and help from the church, but sometimes the result of our labor is contrary to what we hope for. A person may put a cup of hot water in the refrigerator in order to keep the water fresh, but this also causes the water to cool down. Your intention is not for the students to cool down, but because you do not understand their situation or circumstances, they become cold. I hope that you understand what I am saying. The young people's work sounds simple, but it is not simple. The young people have their own psychology. If you understand their psychology, they will work very hard for you and do whatever you tell them to do. If you do not understand their psychology, they will not rise up even if you render them help. Some of the saints in the district do not understand the young people. Therefore, they cannot meet the need of the young people's work.

Those who serve with the young people must be discerning. Second Timothy 4:5 says, "Be sober in all things." Not all the saints in the district can render real help. Sometimes their help may be a hindrance. Therefore, those

serving with the young people should be cautious; that is, they should be sober and consider the situation thoroughly. This does not mean that they should oppose the church's coordination but that they should be cautious and sober-minded.

To be cautious is to be sober; it is to see things clearly. There is a fog covering every situation, which makes people unable to see things clearly. Those who are sober are able to see clearly and know what the issue will be. In such a situation the help that is needed from the responsible ones in a district may not be significant. Sometimes the work with the young people can progress without much help. Our purpose is to produce many young saints who can be set on fire. If the coordination from a district is appropriate, it will be beneficial, but if the coordination is inappropriate, it will become a hindrance. We need to be sober in our coordination with others.

One thing that is definitely helpful is to have a place for hospitality, that is, a brothers' house or a sisters' house. Such a place does not require much effort and will not compromise the effect of the work, because the young people do the work.

EXERCISING FAITH CONCERNING FINANCIAL MATTERS

In the young people's work we should not always mention financial matters. It is not always profitable for the church to provide the finances for the work. The situation in Hong Kong over the past few years is a good example. If it were not for the young people's work, the testimony of the church might have been lost during the turmoil. The saints were able to maintain the Lord's testimony because of the young people's work. When the young people's work began, it did not rely on financial support from the church. The elders were willing to support the work financially, but those who bore the responsibility of the young people's work turned them down. If the serving ones had accepted their money at the time, the young people's work would have been affected when the turmoil came. The serving ones looked to God and were not influenced. This, however, does not mean that they were independent of the church.

The financial support for the young people's work does not have to come from the church. The proper way to deal with financial matters is to learn to

depend on the Lord and to exercise our faith. Our work should not be detached from the church, but we should exercise our faith. Although the church can rise up and care for a burden, we do not need an arrangement; rather, we need to learn the lesson of faith. We must lead the young people to live before the Lord, not to rely on the church.

These are matters of our practice in the work. We should never have an organizational arrangement or depend on an organization. Rather, we should lead the young ones to look to the Lord and exercise their faith in all things. The church should also pick up the burden by faith. However, if the church does not pick up the burden, the Lord has other ways; He is living, and He cares for the needs of His children. The natural concept is to go to the schools, coordinate with the responsible ones in the districts so that they open their homes and cook for the students, and ask the church to provide the finances to support and supply the young people's work. All these ways are natural and ineffective. We must go against this natural way and be one with the church. We must honor the church but not do a natural work. If we learn this lesson, the effect of the students' work will be unlimited and immeasurable.

THE STUDENTS BEING BALANCED

We should not force the students to attend meetings. There is no need to compel the students to join any meetings of the church; rather, we should work on them until it is their desire to attend the meetings. Then their attendance will not be a matter of compliance to our demand. The serving ones must help the students to allocate time for their studies. The students must study diligently, and we should encourage them to spend time studying. We should work with each student according to his situation. In principle, the students should be able to set aside two hours a week for the meetings. No matter how busy a student is, he needs other activities for relaxation. Every human being has a need for enjoyment, and when the students attend the meetings, this need will be met.

The students also need to be enlightened. They should not merely come to meet for enjoyment but also to receive practical help. The serving ones must find the best way for the students to meet. They do not necessarily have to bring the students to the church meetings. We must be very flexible. The students who attend night school can have a meeting during the day, and other students can have a meeting at night. Furthermore, the students do not

have to wait until the Lord's Day in order to meet. They can meet any day of the week. We should exercise to be flexible in this matter.

TEARING DOWN REGIONALISM AND BEING COORDINATED

A brother asked whether district one should coordinate with district three. Sometimes there is a need for coordination. However, coordination should not be organizational or formal; it should be living. We must tear down any sense of regionalism and not become isolated. The districts should be open; we should never say that a particular area belongs to district one and that another area belongs to district three. May the Lord have mercy on us. We should not designate a school as belonging to one district and another school to another district. This concept must be removed. We belong to the same local church. It would be very sad if we cannot tear down a sense of regionalism related to the districts.

A co-worker serving in a district should not think that the result of his work belongs to that district. We must drop this concept. At present, those serving in a district have difficulty coordinating with other districts. In the work, however, we must not limit the students. If the students feel to serve on the campus of National Taiwan University, they should have the freedom to do so. If they feel to serve in district one, they should also have the freedom to do so. Whether the result of our service is manifested in a school or in a district does not matter, because the result belongs to the church. Hence, the serving ones from different areas of the work can fellowship without prejudice concerning the service of a student. There is nothing difficult to resolve. The only thing that needs to be resolved is selfish intentions that result in regionalism. Regionalism must be removed. This applies to all the churches. We should not set up separating walls between the serving ones.

HAVING AN ENLARGED VIEW AND PRODUCING USEFUL SAINTS

I hope that you will bring these matters of fellowship before the Lord. We must learn how to apply these matters and be flexible. The basic principle is to produce useful saints, and we should be flexible in everything else. Furthermore, there should not be any differences between the churches or

between the districts. There should be absolutely no distinctions. Even if I am serving in a district, I should be able to help another district. The elders should have a broadened view. Do not say that since a serving one is assigned to my district, he should not help in another district. Our view must be enlarged. Then the Lord's blessing will be multiplied.

The basic principle is to work to produce useful saints who can carry out the work. We must also work with the elementary school students, because they will be gospel seeds in junior high school, high school, and college. When we gain the young people as gospel seeds, the work will multiply and increase in every level of education. If the co-workers work in this way, the work will go on unhindered and without limitation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A SPIRITUAL WORK WITH THE EFFECT OF LIFE

HUMAN LIFE NEEDING PROPER RECREATION

Human beings are limited. In particular, they are limited in how much they can work. Hence, it is God's ordination that human beings have relaxation and rest. This also applies to young people and their studies. We should help young people understand that spending a great amount of time to study does not necessarily increase one's learning. Whether a person learns depends on whether he studies diligently. When a young person makes a schedule of his activities, he must include some time for relaxation. Often those who regularly attend the meetings succeed in their studies because the meetings become their relaxation. In every school curriculum there is time allotted for physical education, which is a kind of relaxation. By including relaxation in his schedule, a student will be able to study effectively.

A school cannot confine its students to a classroom, requiring them to study twenty-four hours a day. The young people must understand that spending a large amount of time studying does not necessarily mean that they will study effectively. If the students make proper use of the meeting time, by considering it as a time of enjoyment and relaxation, their schoolwork will not be negatively affected. There have been many brothers and sisters who loved the Lord and who were also diligent students. They were good students, and they did not let their studies affect their attending the meetings. We must help the young saints in this matter so that they do not think that in order to be good students they must spend all their time studying. Studying until four or five o'clock in the morning will not make them good students. Such a schedule would make them useless the next day because, as human beings, our energy is limited. Human beings must work during the day and sleep at night, and we must have appropriate relaxation.

A student must be focused when he studies. Some students are capable, and a few are gifted, but all students must learn to focus. They should not depend

on cramming in order to succeed. We should help the young people understand that their whole being should be focused on their studies. Then at an appropriate time, they should sleep and have some physical exercise and some enjoyment. Our enjoyment should not be going to movies but attending meetings. The meetings should be the enjoyment and relaxation of a Christian. Our young people will be greatly benefited if we can help them in this way to change their concept.

NOT FEARING DIFFICULTIES AND WORKING TO ENLIVEN PEOPLE

Some brothers say that the work must focus on a “nucleus” of committed saints. However, a co-worker who truly knows how to work will work in a way to enliven every saint. We must spend less time holding meetings to make decisions. In particular, the time for the elders’ meeting should be reduced, and it should be held less frequently. The elders should spend more time working with the saints. Every elder should visit the saints. Even if we have different ways to visit the saints, as long as it is living, it is good. There is no need to insist on uniformity.

It is important that we work until a person is enlivened. We should even let the junior high students hold their own meetings. A junior high brother may have many meetings in his school. Perhaps a young person would gather five or six friends and have a meeting and then gather five or six more for another meeting. Eventually, there may be four to five meetings in his junior high school so that many are led to salvation. This will increase his interest and burden to serve. There should be no set pattern for these meetings.

Furthermore, we should not be deterred by difficulties. In Matthew 25:24 the Lord is portrayed as a hard man, reaping where he did not sow, and gathering where he did not winnow. To reap where one did not sow indicates that the environment is not easy. There is no work that is without difficulty. However, we do not fear the difficult environment because the more difficult the environment, the more effective the work. Do not be subdued by the environment or look at difficulties in the environment. No matter how high a mountain is, it will be leveled. If a surface needs to be elevated, it will be filled in, and if a road needs to be made straight, it will be straightened. In short, nothing is too difficult. Every difficult situation can be conquered. We need

such a spirit for the work. Especially those who are involved with the young people's work need such a spirit, because the young ones can be very active.

During our first few years in the United States, we noticed that many American families brought their whole family, young and old, to the meetings. The families would all sit together in the meetings. The Americans considered this to be pious. The American mothers were strict disciplinarians and taught their children to be obedient. Hence, even though many children were present, there was little noise in the meeting. Later we found out that two hours was too long for the children to sit in a meeting. This made them resentful when they became older. As a result, we let the adults meet while some young people took care of the children. In other words, a children's meeting was held concurrently with the meeting for the adults. When the parents came for a meeting, they would hand their children over to the serving ones. Thus, a child was in the hands of serving ones until he turned twelve years old. When he started junior high school, he was encouraged to attend the meeting for the adults.

According to this example, we should spend time to study our situation and find a proper way to do the work. A difficult environment does not mean that there is no way to work. It may not be bad to focus on a "nucleus," but it is not appropriate to depend on this. If we continually have elders' meetings and nucleus meetings but are unable to enliven all the saints, we will achieve nothing. Therefore, we must put our time and energy into the service. It is sufficient to have a brief meeting when a need arises. We must try our best to put our time and energy into the work, not into meetings related to the work.

A LIVING WORK CARRIED OUT IN THE SPIRIT

We must do a living work, and we must live in the spirit and in life. This should not be merely a saying among us; it should be the way that we work. We must live in the spirit and experience the life within us. No matter how busy we are, we must remember to live in the spirit. Our activities do not ensure that our work will issue in life. In order for our service to issue in life, it must be in the spirit and in life. No matter how busy we are, we must not be disconnected from the spirit of life within us. We must maintain the inner sense of life. Ever since I began serving the Lord, I have not had much idle time in the work; rather, the more I work, the more work there is. Especially

since the work in the United States opened up, the need in the work has continued to increase. Even thirty serving ones may not be able to cover all the needs. The more we work in the spirit, the more we are blessed by the Lord and the more work we will have.

By the Lord's mercy, none of my messages, especially those given in the United States, are old; instead, every message is new. There is a brother among us who has been listening to messages since we began in China. When I went to the United States, he thought that I would present the messages we gave in China. Therefore, in order to coordinate with me, he prepared many books concerning edification of new believers and basic practices of a Christian. However, the messages that I released in the United States were entirely new, but they were not without a foundation. The messages that I gave last year were concerning the seven Spirits. Those messages were new.

In the summer of 1969 several small local churches near Cleveland gathered together and held a conference. One day as I stood up to speak during that conference, the inspiration concerning the seven Spirits came to me, so I released messages on the seven Spirits. The saints who attended that conference, most of whom were Americans, felt that those messages on the seven Spirits were unprecedented, fresh, and living. From that time onward, I have released more messages concerning the seven Spirits.

SPIRITUAL WORK NOT BEING AN OUTWARD METHOD

Spiritual work is not a matter of methods. The fellowship in the churches has been to encourage the saints to read spiritual books. However, the emphasis in most of the fellowship has been on how to promote and how to organize study groups. These methods are not useful, because the saints do not feel the need to read spiritual books.

When I was saved, there was no church in my locality, and there was no one to help me. I did not know which spiritual books were better, and I did not know where to buy them. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit operated within me and caused me to search everywhere for spiritual books. When I found a spiritual book, I read it immediately even if I had to stay up the whole night. I devoured and digested every book. At that time no one encouraged me, but I had a strong desire for spiritual books. Hence, leading the saints to read

spiritual books is not a matter of outward methods. We must produce a need, a desire, in the saints' spirit for spiritual books.

None of our books are difficult to read or understand. Hence, even a newly saved junior high student can read and understand them. Furthermore, the style of our publications was decided upon by Brother Nee. Our style of writing is not only easy to understand but also clear in meaning; it is able to touch people. If we change the way we write our publications, we will lose the touching power. The style we use causes people to feel that what they are reading is supplying them. This can be likened to a person eating food. Although he does not focus on the plate, the food is presented to him on a plate. The Lord gave us this style, we have used it for decades, and its influence is not superficial. Furthermore, spiritual matters should not be classified as either deep or shallow. We may consider the truths that a new believer can comprehend to be shallow, but the apostle Paul would understand these truths in a deep and profound way. Hence, whether a spiritual book is "shallow" or "deep" does not matter. This applies to the Bible. It is hard to say that one book of the Bible is deep and that another is shallow.

The preciousness of Andrew Murray's *The Spirit of Christ* lies in its being very practical, not merely doctrinal. This book is concerning the Lord Christ as the Spirit and our spirit. Brother Nee admired this book. More than thirty years ago, he told me that if someone could translate this book into Chinese, he would be willing to cover the cost for printing. In 1950 when we met in Hong Kong, he said this again. For this reason, when we began to put out *The Ministry of the Word* magazine in 1951, we translated this book. Some believers criticized our translation and said that it was difficult to read, even though the translation matched the original text. Any attempt to change the translation would involve changing the meaning of the content. The vocabulary and the phrases used by the author are understandable, being neither too difficult nor too deep. The sentence structure and the expressions are somewhat deep and mysterious because the content of the book relates to the things of the Spirit, which are fine and detailed. Therefore, the author could not rely on simple words alone to convey them.

We are the ones who will suffer loss if we think that this book is too difficult to read and therefore do not read it. We need to read this book at least three times. The longer sentences can even be read five times. We must make an effort to read this book. Whether or not this book is deep depends on our

spiritual hunger. Nothing is too deep for those who genuinely pursue life. We must not use methods to promote reading our publications. We must do a living work.

Similarly, the young people's work is not about a method but about a living work. Those who desire to carry out a work at a school must first enliven a saint who is either a teacher or a student in the school. Teachers can be a help to the young people's work, but they are not the basic components for the work. The young people's work must be done by the young people. They must preach the gospel in their schools. The young brothers and sisters in a school are the basic components of the work in their school. The co-workers must work until the young saints are enlivened so that they can do the gospel work in their schools. The young saints need to be living, and they need to have a burden. The co-workers must enliven the young saints, not with methods but with the Spirit. Only the Spirit can enliven the saints so that they become burning and burdened for other people. When the young saints are burdened, the co-workers can perfect them in the gospel. If the saints are able to apply what they learn, they will be open to the co-worker and trust him.

When the young people preach the gospel, they may encounter difficulties. If the serving ones can give them suitable advice, the young people will trust the serving ones. The serving ones must not be careless in giving advice. The advice that the co-workers give enables the young people to do the gospel work. The more the young people work, the more interested and burdened they become. Soon they will bear the burden for their school. This is not a method but a work to enliven a person so that he is living and burning. The work we did in the past succeeded only if we promoted it. If we did not promote it, the work would come to a standstill. Such a work was based on a method. A work that is based on life is different. Even if it is not promoted, it continues, because life is living and multiplies. We must learn to do a living work. All the churches should learn this kind of work.

THE URGENT NEED

Exercising our spirit by calling on the Lord's name, singing prayerfully, and pray-reading were given to us by the Lord, and they make it easy for us to release our spirit. Our urgent need is first to have healthy words to supply the church. Second, we all need genuine growth in life. In particular, the elders should grow in life so that they may supply life to the saints so that the saints

also can grow in life. Third, the co-workers, elders, and serving ones must rise up in the matter of shepherding. This is one thing that we really lack. Because of our lack in shepherding, many have been baptized, but few have remained. This lack cannot be remedied by my speaking. It is the responsibility of the co-workers, elders, and serving ones. We must seek the Lord concerning how to make shepherding practical and prevailing among us.

All the elders should promote shepherding, and even the co-workers should consider how to bring the saints who meet regularly into shepherding and visiting. In Taipei there are twenty-five hundred saints who meet regularly. All these saints should visit and shepherd other saints. They should be coordinated together as a corporate body to carry out the visitation. They can pursue the Word and grow in life, and at the same time they can bear the responsibility of shepherding and feeding. This is the way to recover many saints and supply new ones. Furthermore, if this is our practice, the new ones will have the same practice.

Healthy words, growth in life, and adequate shepherding are the urgent need in all the churches. The churches have an adequate practice of meeting, releasing the spirit, and blending. The present issue is how to enrich the content of the church life. In order for our church life to have content, we need three things: healthy words, growth in life, and shepherding. As we shepherd the saints, the number in the meetings will increase spontaneously. As we pursue healthy words and the growth in life, the content of the meetings will become richer. From this time forward, the elders and serving ones in every local church must spend adequate time to be filled with healthy words. Do not depend on the full-time co-workers, considering them to be the suppliers of the word. This concept has to change. The elders and the responsible saints are also suppliers of the word. First Corinthians 14:31 says that we “can all prophesy one by one.” We must practice speaking healthy words.

The books published by The Gospel Book Room, *The Ministry of the Word* magazine, and other publications that we have translated are up to date with this burden. As long as we are willing to spend time to digest these books, we will produce “milk” and become “nursing mothers” to feed the saints. Then healthy words will not be lacking among us, and we will grow in life. We may also use books concerning crucial truths in the Bible, edification of new believers, and basic training. But we need to use them in a living way.

CHAPTER NINE

SHEPHERDING, GROWING IN LIFE, AND SUPPLYING THE WORD

In 1949 we began the work in Taiwan with a small number of saints. At the time, the people whom we gained were mostly young ones, whereas today we gain mostly adults. There is a big difference between the two age groups. When the work started, the number of saints increased. However, in recent years there has not been a noticeable increase. It is worthwhile for us to study the reason for our lack of increase.

BRINGING THE SAINTS INTO FUNCTION

There may be many reasons for our lack of increase, but the main reason is that the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones have not been able to perfect the saints. Not being able to perfect the saints is a lack. The saints are capable, but they are not being perfected. Unintentionally, the brothers are serving in a natural way, according to their temperament. As a result, the saints are not being perfected.

For example, there is a district in Taipei with enough capable brothers to administrate ten local churches. In other words, if the saints in this district were perfected and sent to ten places to sow the seed of the gospel, after several years there would be ten local churches with a manifold increase. It is regrettable that these capable ones have still not been brought into function. The co-workers are able to work, but they do not know how to perfect the saints. The elders know how to administrate, but they do not know how to perfect the saints. The same is true with respect to the responsible ones in the districts. This indicates that the brothers know how to serve, but they do not know how to bring the saints into the service. If a father and the older siblings do all the work in a family, the generation that comes after them will follow their pattern. The basic principle in the work and in the church is the same as the principle of a family. In a family the mother cooks whether or not she knows how to cook. The church is a family, and everyone in this family has to “cook,” regardless of how well they can cook. This means that every member in this family must function. Those with greater capacity have to function

according to their capacity, and those with lesser capacity should function according to their capacity. In a family even a blind member can function. The problem in the past has been that the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones in the districts served with those saints who matched their taste and not with those who were not according to their taste. Neither did they serve with the weak and less capable saints. In the end, no saint was brought into function. We must bring every saint into function.

A carpenter can use any kind of wood to make a desk. He only needs to prepare and cut the wood. If we have this kind of spirit, the work will increase. However, our situation is that we reject different saints and select only those whom we consider to be capable. Our consideration of who is capable is based on our disposition; that is, we select whom we like. This limits the number of saints who can be perfected because too many are eliminated. Hence, the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones must change their attitude.

If the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones will go elsewhere and meet, they will give other saints the opportunity to serve. If they would hand an entire district over to the saints, the doors of the meeting place would not close. The co-workers, elders, and responsible ones should be able to form teams and go out. We have information cards for thirteen thousand saints in the church in Taipei. Three thousand of these saints meet regularly, and more than ten thousand do not meet. If the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones would meet and pray for these ten thousand and leave the district meetings to the saints, letting them serve and make decisions, the result would be surprising. Even in a family, when the parents and older siblings are not present, the younger siblings take care of everything. The elders should not make any arrangements but let the saints take care of everything and see what the results will be. The co-workers, elders, and responsible ones should leave the saints who meet regularly and pray earnestly for the ten thousand who are not meeting. They should not touch the saints who meet regularly but focus on visiting the saints who have not been meeting. If we would practice this for one or two years, there would be four to five hundred more saints in the meetings. This is an obvious way to gain the increase, but it is not the best way. The best way is to take the saints who are in the meetings and form them into groups. A district with four to five hundred saints can be formed into ten groups, and these groups should go out for the gospel. There may be a few saints who are unable to go. These ones can stay in the districts. After two years of going out for the gospel, ten new local churches would be raised up.

CHANGING OUR CONCEPT, OUR DISPOSITION, AND OUR WAY

Presently, the saints are not being brought into function, but they are all gathering together. We have many “hens occupying the roosts but not laying eggs.” If those who occupy the roosts would step aside, other hens would be able to lay eggs. This is the purpose of our fellowship. In order for the saints to be brought into function, both our concept and our disposition must change. Then the way we work will also change. When our way changes, we will be able to bring the saints into function.

We are not able to push the work forward; we can only maintain our condition. In addition, there is no possibility for the work to spread. During the past four years, we have reached our capacity. The co-workers and elders in the churches and the work have reached their capacity. The work cannot spread, because of their disposition and way of working. Consequently, the things in their hands are always limited. This is the situation of the church in Taipei. This situation will continue unless the co-workers and elders are willing to change their disposition, concept, and system. Even if they try to do more and also preach the gospel, our number will not exceed three thousand saints, because all the service is in the hands of the co-workers and elders; that is, a few hens are occupying the roosts. The co-workers and elders must change their concept. If they do not change their concept, they must at least change the system. To change the system means to remove the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones. This does not mean that the elders will no longer administrate the church. The elders will continue to administrate the church but not in the present way. If they are willing to delegate the service, others will be brought into function. The saints will spontaneously begin to handle the church affairs. When the parents are away and no one prepares dinner, spontaneously the children rise up to feed themselves. In this way, the capacity of the saints will be manifested.

The co-workers, elders, and responsible ones need to be enlightened and receive this frank word. If I do not speak frankly, I am deceiving you. We have reached our capacity. Regardless of how much harder we work, we will not increase. A container can hold only so much water. We do not need to add more water; rather, we need to expand the capacity of the container. We do not bring the saints into function, because we unconsciously think that they

are limited in their capacity but that we are not. Although we do not say this explicitly, we harbor this thought unconsciously. This is the reason that the saints cannot be brought into the service. We must consider these matters before the Lord.

HAVING A BURDEN FOR THE WORK

Furthermore, the co-workers work merely for the sake of working. They do not have a genuine burden for the work. The administration by the elders is merely organization without shepherding. This is our present situation. We recently held a conference in a gymnasium, and all the co-workers were present. That should have been an opportunity for them to serve. Since the co-workers did not bear the responsibility of giving the messages and many new ones were at the conference, the co-workers should have risen up. We must be equipped with a spirit to contact the saints immediately after a meeting. However, there was no burden for the saints. This was the case not only with the co-workers but also with the elders. The elders should be aware of the saints who have not been meeting for a long time and welcome them when they come to a meeting. For this reason, the elders should take care of visiting the saints.

Our way and our system led to our present situation. We have fallen into a state of working and doing things without a burden. Most of the saints in the conference were serving ones. It was the best opportunity for them to serve. However, no new ones were added. We use methods and have regulations to the point that no one will do anything without being directed. One day we will fall completely into organization, method, and arrangement instead of walking according to the spirit, and no one will have a living burden and do things in a living way.

The elders in the church in Taipei carry out the administration of the church in a very good way. However, they spend most of their time discussing church affairs, not shepherding and teaching. The administration of the church, according to the Bible, should focus on shepherding and teaching. The elders should spend more of their time on people, shepherding the saints and seeking the lost ones. The saints have stopped coming to the meetings because our shepherding is poor and our work is not living. In the work we should not rely on methods or arrangements. If we do, it will be difficult to propagate the work.

PAYING ATTENTION TO GROWTH IN LIFE

We do not pay enough attention to the saints' growth in life. The elders should be aware of their own growth in life, of the growth in life of the saints, and of the growth in life of the responsible ones. This does not mean that the elders should invite the saints for fellowship or that the districts should have love feasts. These are merely methods. The elders must first learn the lessons of life, and then spontaneously and automatically they will fellowship concerning life. There will be no need for arrangements. Fellowship does not refer to making decisions about services or a meeting schedule. Such decisions do not matter. The elders need to learn genuine lessons in life. If a responsible one is not doing well, the elders should fellowship with him and supply life for his progress. Then the responsible one will be able to supply life to the saints. The saints need more growth in life.

SPENDING TIME IN THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The co-workers and elders need to spend more time in the ministry of the word. We should not assign one person to be in charge of giving messages, but a district with a regular attendance of four to five hundred saints needs the supply of a living word. Both the co-workers and the elders must be desperate to study the word so that they can minister a word of life. It is the responsibility of parents to satisfy the hunger of their children. The co-workers and elders must give their whole being to give a living word. They can at least spend time before the Lord studying our publications, which contain many messages, so that they can present the word of the Lord to the saints in a fresh and living way. Every week the elders and co-workers must supply the saints with the word so that the church can develop and be full of content. We cannot ask the saints merely to pray-read and shout. It is right to release the spirit, but to merely shout and pray-read fifty-two weeks a year is not right. We must present something solid, just as parents feed their children every day.

The churches are not progressing because we are not practicing visitation and shepherding, we are short of the supply of life, and we lack the supply of the word. In addition, the churches are not developing because the elders have not handed the services over to the saints, and the work is not advancing. Hence, we must rise up and make a radical change. The elders must give themselves to shepherding the church of God. They must find a way to

shepherd the church so that the saints grow in life. The co-workers must minister the word. If the co-workers cannot minister the word, the elders must make up the lack. Please forgive me for giving such a frank word. The co-workers who are not able to supply the word should not consider themselves as co-workers. If they cannot help the saints to grow in life or supply the saints with the word, what else can the co-workers do? It may be that they can only serve with the saints. However, the saints do not need help with the service; the co-workers do not need to be involved with the services in the churches. The services should be completely turned over to the saints. The saints can do the cleaning and ushering in their spare time. They can even give hospitality. We should seriously consider these matters before the Lord.

HAVING A PURE MOTIVE AND DOING OUR BEST

We must have a pure motive and only take care of ministering to the saints. The co-workers do not need to lead the young people's meeting. The young people can lead their own meetings. It is unnecessary for the co-workers to do what the saints can do. Even if there are more regular services, such as ushering during the meetings, the co-workers do not need to be involved with the services. The saints can handle the services. We often declare that the whole church should serve and that all the saints should serve. However, only a few saints are serving. We need to fellowship concerning this so that the churches have a way to go on. The full-time serving ones need to give the saints a living supply. We must change our concept. If a co-worker meets in a district where there is no supply of the word, he should immediately minister the word and not wait for others to arrange for him to supply the word. For example, at the end of the Lord's Day morning meeting he should stand up to minister the word for twenty minutes so that the saints are fed, even if no one invites him or arranges for him to do so. If he does this, who can say that he is wrong? It does not matter whether he is assigned to take care of a district. What is important is that the district he attends is living.

When the co-workers go to serve in a locality, they should be like rainwater that can seep through any crack. They should serve with young people and also with older saints. They should serve according to the burden, whether or not they are assigned. If they serve in this way, we have hope for the future.

Our attitude should be to serve wherever we are. We can always contact the saints individually. If we cannot contact the saints individually, we can contact unbelievers. Only by serving diligently can the work propagate.

CHANGING OUR CONCEPT AND SUPPLYING LIFE

The Lord does not want us to be officials in the church or in the work; rather, He desires that we always supply life, just like air always fills a container. We must change our concept, not be complicated, and supply life. If we do not have the opportunity to speak in a meeting, we can still supply life through prayer. This is the kind of spirit that we must have in our service. Our situation has come to a standstill. When the service is handed over to the responsible ones, it is restricted. When the administration of a church is handed over to the elders, the church is restricted. We should not restrict the matters that are handed over to us, nor should we fight to receive things. We should only endeavor to supply life. If we are burdened for the young people's work, we should serve them diligently.

Please forgive me for speaking frankly. When I am in the United States, I do not serve only the church in San Francisco and the church in Los Angeles. I serve all the churches in the United States. The brothers in Taipei, however, serve in one district and are unable to travel. According to our information, there are only five to six hundred saints who regularly attend the meetings. The brothers should be able to travel. We are not changing our way. From the beginning of the work we repeatedly charged the co-workers to travel for the perfecting of the saints rather than to replace the saints or serve on their behalf.

We have been working for many years, and yet we do not have any who can follow after us. We must change our concept and pay attention to the crucial matter of ministering the word. We do not need to give useless messages; we should not speak on loving God today and denying the self tomorrow based on whims. We need the line of life, and we need to consider how to advance in the work. If we cannot produce a message, we should search for material in our publications. We do not need to give pretty messages. We need messages that meet the present need and are a supply. All the full-time serving ones should give themselves to labor in and study the word. It is a shame for us to spend our time aimlessly. Some co-workers think that they can accomplish something, but they cannot. Other co-workers stay within their measure.

They are obedient but have not accomplished anything. If a certain district has four full-time brothers who neither supply life nor minister the word, the brothers are not doing a proper work. With four brothers serving full time, many things can be accomplished if they are diligent to function. They should not care for who is in charge, nor should they care for the system. They should work in order to have a result, and they should use every opportunity to supply life. All their service should be living.

Furthermore, we should not have complicated situations. We should be open and seek to improve. Only when we change our concept, our disposition, our way of doing things, and our system will we be delivered. Otherwise, with our present concept, disposition, and way of doing things, the work has reached a standstill. No matter how much more we do, we can only maintain our situation, because we do not bring the saints into function. Even if we recruit some capable saints, we do not know how to bring them into function. If we change our concept, our disposition, and our way of doing things and then bring the saints into function, the number of saints will increase, and those in the meetings will also increase. Some saints are unwilling to come to the meetings, but if we change the way we do things, they will have a desire to come to the meetings.

DISTRIBUTING RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE SERVICE AND SHEPHERDING

We should not serve as if we were government officials. The elders do not occupy the highest position in the church; instead, they are servants. May the Lord have mercy on us. The elders must give themselves to serve until there is feeding and shepherding in the church. The elders have spent enough time in the affairs of the church, but the saints are neither being supplied nor educated. This can be likened to parents who consider how to clean and upgrade their house but do not provide food for their children. There is no need to pay so much attention to “cleaning our home”; we should rather consider how to feed our children so that they can progress in a good way. This is our urgent need. The elders often spend hours discussing the business affairs of the church, but they only briefly mention matters concerning visitation, shepherding, care, and the supply of life. This also applies to the co-workers. Their service tends to be a routine. Our service must be living. In the meetings we should not follow the old way; we should be led by the Holy

Spirit. The Lord can use any saint to enliven a meeting. Hence, there is no need for the co-workers to make so many arrangements. Often when the co-workers try to lead the meeting, they kill the meeting. The saints do not need arrangements in order to be enlivened.

If the young people's meeting is led by the young people and not by co-workers, the young people will be willing to attend the meeting, and even if they do not know how to have the meeting, they will learn. The co-workers' service must not replace the young people. The co-workers must let the young people serve. Do not even stir up the young people. The co-workers should not keep things in their hands, because this causes the young saints to be passive. Even if the young saints ask the co-workers to help, the co-workers should still not replace the saints. The co-workers must insist that the young saints serve.

The co-workers, elders, and responsible ones should not try to do everything but rather should bring the saints into function. Bringing the saints into function is the basic principle of our service. Every saint who comes to the meeting is useful, and we must perfect him. A co-worker who knows how to work would visit the saints who are not in the meetings. At least half of the saints who are in the meetings must be brought into their function.

We should be practical and make a list of the services in the district. Then we can fellowship with the responsible ones to find out who among the saints can bear responsibility. We can then arrange for the different services to be given to the saints. The details related to the services should be decided by the saints who are responsible for the service. For example, two brothers and a few sisters can be given the responsibility of hospitality. They will be responsible to find other saints to help with room and bed assignments and cleaning. This way of delegating is very simple and easy to carry out. The elders need only to have oversight and make sure that the services are properly taken care of. If a saint is not thorough, the elders need not intervene personally. They can let the responsible ones take care of the situation. When the church in Los Angeles received more than one hundred visiting saints, four brothers were responsible for serving meals. The brothers asked different saints to take care of various tasks, such as obtaining chairs and tables, preparing plates and bowls, planning menus, and making purchases. All the saints who were available were employed. The saints who were responsible for lodging arrangements sought out other saints to help them. This way of

doing things is very easy. The elders did not get involved in any of the services, yet everything was carried out appropriately. In all the districts in Taipei there is an abundance of useful saints. The elders should hand over all the services to them and oversee from a distance.

The elders should spend most of their time shepherding and supplying life to the saints. The co-workers should have time to propagate the work and should study to minister the word. We cannot let the saints come to meetings week after week without receiving any supply in the word. The co-workers should study the messages that we have released and coordinate with one another to minister the word for the supply of the saints. This is the practice in several churches in the United States. In every meeting there is always the supply of the word of life. This is easy to do. Hence, the co-workers and the elders should let go of other things. They should not keep anything in their hands.

Furthermore, the co-workers and elders should not be rigid in their practice. It does not matter how the saints are formed into small groups. We are too rigid and regulated, and we rely on methods and arrangements. We must tear these down. We must let the saints have the opportunity to serve. The elders should only oversee from a distance. The co-workers should grasp the opportunity to supply the word. They should follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to release a living word. If a local church does not have a co-worker, the elders should do their best to meet the need in the word. Otherwise, the meetings will be poor, and the saints will starve. In short, the elders should oversee, and the co-workers, together with the elders, should do their best to render a supply in the word and maintain the line of life.

There are two lines in the supply of the word. One line is to bring the new believers from knowing regeneration to knowing the indwelling life, and then to following the sense of life, that is, enlivening the new ones step by step. The other line is concerning the leading of the local church. This line can be compared to blowing the trumpet. The church's going on is dependent on the supply and leading through the word. However, in order for the word to come forth, there cannot be only a few saints functioning; all the saints need to function. Depending on regulations and methods and not doing anything without being directed prevent us from following the mingled spirit and prevent the divine life from growing.

We must do our best to let all the saints serve. Otherwise, we are old hens occupying the roost but not laying eggs. Our method and our disposition have brought us to a standstill, to a point where we have reached our capacity. Unless we change our disposition and our practice, we will have no way to go on and no way to spread; we will remain in our current situation.

Young sisters can preach the gospel to their classmates and bring them to salvation. This is very simple. We should never think that only certain qualified saints can be involved with the gospel and that only a handful are capable. Young sisters can go before the Lord in desperate prayer. They can fast and pray for their class. When two classmates are saved, the sisters can begin a meeting with them. At that time the co-workers should grasp the opportunity to supply the sisters with life. Gradually, the new ones meeting with the young sisters will increase. Our present way of serving is mechanical because we are halfhearted. We must enliven the saints. If the Lord gives a brother the burden to lead a few junior high students, he should pray for them desperately until they are burning. As a result, each of the students will bring at least one classmate to salvation, and there will be a hundredfold increase. Although the brother is serving a few junior high students, he is supplying the Lord's Day meeting with life and thus even the young people's meeting. He also needs to go to different districts to take care of different needs. This should be the way that we work. It is very simple.

LETTING GO AND LETTING EVERYONE FUNCTION

Education begins in elementary school. If a person continues year after year, he will graduate from college or even finish with a Ph.D. Many saints have not had their function developed. They can be likened to someone who has been studying for many years and yet has not graduated from elementary school. The co-workers and elders consider the saints and feel that no one is capable; therefore, they do everything themselves. The more they do, the more experienced and skillful they become until they are the experts. The co-workers and elders are the only ones who know how to serve. Now we need to let go and let the saints serve so that they have the opportunity to learn. The church in Los Angeles is a good example. Whether in meal service or giving hospitality, the saints take care of everything without being instructed by the elders. Even if the saints make a mistake, it will not be serious.

Some co-workers said, “Those dissenting co-workers were raised up by Brother Lee’s work. If Brother Lee had been more careful, these things would not have happened.” However, if from the beginning of the work in Taiwan, I did not let the brothers serve, I would have annulled the function of many saints, and the churches would not have had much increase. I can be likened to a mother who had twenty-eight children, and although some have died, many remain. There are still many local churches in Taiwan. Therefore, let the saints make mistakes; the mistakes will not be too serious.

We need the Lord’s mercy in order to be open to this fellowship. Who is without mistakes? Which one of us always does things right and never makes a mistake? Only the Lord Jesus is without mistakes. May He have mercy on us. When we begin to serve in this way, some saints may oppose us, but we should not stop out of a desire to avoid making mistakes. We must change our concept. It is not good if we cannot accommodate others or coordinate with others. Rather than giving directions to others, we should concentrate on leading people to salvation and to loving the Lord for the spread of the church. Even if a brother does not follow this fellowship, this is not a cause for stirring up trouble. The opposers shouted slogans, saying that they had seen Christ and that Christ is everything. If they truly had worked in the principle of “Christ is everything,” there would have been no need for slogans. Everything else is trivial. However, they focused only on trivial things. We cannot do this. We should be strong in spirit, follow the leading of the Spirit, and have a pure heart. We have always worked together. There has never been the feeling that some co-workers belong to this region of the work, and others belong to another region of the work. Hence, our vision must be clear, our heart must be pure, and we must release our spirit.

If a co-worker wants to serve in a university where there are no saints, he should pray earnestly until there is at least one student there. If there are already several saints on campus, he should find them, fellowship with them, and bring them into function. Then he should let them serve. If he leads their meeting, he is replacing, not leading, them. He should supply and teach them from a distance. To use a military example, he should supply them with ammunition, teach them how to shoot, and identify a strategic plan for them. It may appear to others that the students are the ones engaged in battle and that the co-worker is doing nothing, but the work has become the burden of the students. Some co-workers said that they are not able to do this. Being able or not being able is a relative matter. Even a person who cannot speak

well does not refuse to speak. Everyone, whether smart or foolish, can speak. It does not matter whether a person speaks well or speaks poorly. A person who speaks well accomplishes something, and a person who speaks poorly also accomplishes something. This is the way that things are accomplished in the work. Only when we change our concept and disposition will the work have a future.

From now on the affairs of the church should be turned over to the saints; the affairs of the church should be under their care. The co-workers must not replace the saints. There are many saints in every church. The co-workers must not give the saints directions but rather entrust them with responsibilities. The co-workers and elders should just oversee the services, rendering appropriate adjustment and encouragement. Furthermore, the co-workers in every place should bear the responsibility of ministering the word. They should not minister doctrine but should make an effort to use appropriate material and learn to give a message. If one co-worker is unable to do this, two or three can come together in coordination. They can dive into a message and study how to digest it so that they can supply the saints. Every week the co-workers should have a rich word with which to supply the saints.

The full-time co-workers should do their best to propagate the work in schools. There is no need to wait for others to make arrangements. They should spend more time with the schools and not with the church affairs. The co-workers should do their best to supply the students without leading the students' meeting. The meetings of the church are the meetings of the saints; hence, the elders and co-workers should not lead the meetings. They should help the saints understand that the meetings belong to the saints. The elders are responsible for oversight, making sure that the meetings are carried out properly. They should teach and correct if anything is improper. The co-workers should endeavor to minister the word and supply life.

The elders should also endeavor to utilize more of their time for shepherding and less time for church affairs. Since the affairs of the church have been handed over to the saints, the elders should let the saints be responsible. These are the main points that we should grasp. We must not fall back to our old ways of keeping everything in our hands and doing everything ourselves. The elders should take care of shepherding and deal only with crucial matters, leaving the ordinary affairs to the saints. The church meetings should also be handed over to the saints. The co-workers should endeavor to

supply the word. If they have more time, they should endeavor to propagate the gospel in the schools. After the services are handed over to the saints, the elders should oversee diligently. The elders should turn over the responsibility of a certain service to two or three saints who can train and instruct other saints. The elders do not have to be concerned with these details. The elders need only to oversee and observe. When there is a mistake or an act of negligence in the service, the elders should render appropriate help.

Furthermore, we should not be rigid in forming small groups by assigning someone to be responsible or someone to take the lead. Rather, we should let the saints serve voluntarily. We should let the saints endeavor to look for backslidden saints and to preach the gospel and bring in new ones. The elders should not lead in the bread-breaking meeting or the young people's meeting. The elders should let the saints lead the meetings. The elders need only to oversee from a distance and render appropriate correction, guidance, and encouragement when needed. This is different from what we have done with small groups in the past. In the past, based on the information cards, we formed the saints into groups. As a result, only a few saints met together; most never attended the meeting. This time the saints who sign up will be formed into groups. The saints who sign up later will be formed into more groups.

CONCLUSION

The co-workers and elders must see the urgent need of shepherding, growing in life, and supplying the word. These are the three items that we lack the most. We must lead the churches into shepherding, growing in life, and the supply of the word. We want a living word, not routine messages. In every church there should be one to two meetings a week with a living word. As long as the co-workers are willing to endeavor, they will be able to meet this need. They must not carry out a routine. Concerning the church services, all the affairs in the churches should be taken care of by the saints. Not only should the saints do things, but they should take up the burden and the responsibility for the things that they do. The meetings belong to the saints. The co-workers and elders are present to render a supply. Even the spiritual services belong to the saints. Eventually, every saint will learn to shepherd and to teach.

CHAPTER TEN

PERFECTING THE SAINTS AND ESTABLISHING THE CHURCH SERVICES

LEARNING TO ADAPT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

The fellowship in this chapter is concerning the work and is mainly related to the brothers. Most of the co-workers have a particular way of doing the work. When a co-worker goes to serve in a locality, he wants the elders and the saints to hand everything over to him. If the elders hold something back, the co-workers feel that they cannot work, because they are restricted. This attitude must be torn down. This is the reason that the work does not have an effect among the saints.

However, even if the elders were to do whatever the co-workers tell them, I question how much the co-workers would be able to achieve. The co-workers serve in a way that causes everyone else to become “unemployed” because they must be directed by the co-workers. Furthermore, the co-workers may not be able to properly exercise their function. As a result, not only are the saints idle, but the Lord’s work is hindered. It is very difficult for a person to change his temperament, habit, and style of work. As soon as a person becomes the master of a domain, everyone must listen to him. This creates problems in the coordination.

Therefore, if we do not drop this concept, our work will have no effect. The co-workers will not be able to coordinate with others, nor will others be able to coordinate with them. This is an existing problem among us. The co-workers have this flavor in their work. Forgive me for saying this: Not every saint is qualified to be a co-worker when he begins serving full time. Actually, all the brothers and sisters who serve together are co-workers, but this does not mean that they can take the lead in the work. Some saints think that the co-workers are apostles. This is not true. Every saint is a disciple, and every disciple is a co-worker. If the co-workers want to be useful in the Lord’s hand, they must adapt to their environment and not expect the environment to adapt to them.

Some brothers said that there are many capable saints in the church in Los Angeles and that the serving ones there are also capable. When I serve, I do my best to bring the saints into function. The church in Los Angeles is the fourth or fifth church that I have served. When I was in northern China, there were many capable ones there. There were many capable ones in Shanghai, and there were even more capable ones in Taiwan. However, initially the serving ones are not necessarily capable. The truth is that the saints who are brought into function become capable, but those who are not brought into function remain limited. When we perfect the saints, we do not necessarily need to take the lead. Even without our taking the lead, the saints can still be perfected.

Therefore, the co-workers must not depend on others' being accommodating. The co-workers must be like rainwater, which can seep through any crack. In the past we have said that the co-workers should be accommodating of others to the point that they are like glue. Glue can be applied to a horizontal surface as well as to a vertical surface; it can be applied to an area under a table as well as to a surface that is slanted. Moreover, glue can be applied to objects of any shape, whether they are pointed, round, or rectangular. The co-workers have no alternative but to be like glue, which can be applied to any surface, in any condition, even if the surface looks messy. They can be accommodating in their function when they are in a locality where the church affairs are in order, and they can also be accommodating in their function when they go to a locality where the church affairs are not in order. Wherever they go, they need to function as glue, no matter what the situation is in the locality. The function of the co-workers is to be accommodating like glue. They should be accommodating whether or not the elders restrict them.

From this time onward, we should be more direct in our dealings with one another. Whoever is not willing to go to a certain place to serve should be compelled to go, and whoever is not doing an acceptable work should continue serving until his work is acceptable. It is not right for a co-worker to do poorly in his service or to do an average job. He must serve in a satisfactory way. A co-worker who is afraid of being restricted by the elders should be asked to serve with the strongest elders so that he can learn the lesson. The elders in some local churches are very restrictive, but they have been sovereignly prepared by the Lord. When the co-workers serve, they must adapt to their environment and not expect the environment to adapt to them.

In the past I wanted some co-workers to go to the West and serve in countries such as Canada, the United States, and Brazil. However, when I once recommended a co-worker to some local brothers in the West, they were concerned about his temperament. A person with a temperament problem has difficulties in accommodating others. For this reason, the co-workers must visit other places. The more places they visit, the broader their experience and knowledge will be. The brothers who have gone overseas may not be skilled and experienced, but they have a broader view of things because they have been living abroad, they know the situation of the churches in China, and they have contact with many Westerners. Many problems in the work are due to the inability of the co-workers to adapt to their environment. Without the ability to adapt to our environment, we cannot be useful.

The usefulness of a co-worker will be very limited unless his concept is changed, no matter whether he is abroad or in his own country. Some want others to revere them, but they do not revere others. This indicates that they are not accommodating in their service; instead, they want to be the master. If they cannot be the master, they are not willing to serve. We have always had this problem, even when we were in mainland China. If not for this problem, the work would have spread to many places.

PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE ELDERS

There are different kinds of elders. The first kind of elder is elders in position only; they are limited by both their time and the extent of their burden. This kind of elder wishes others would take care of things so that he would only need to sign his name. He is not concerned about how the work should proceed. Some co-workers prefer this kind of elder because the co-workers may do whatever they wish in that locality, and the co-workers are not bothered by anyone. The second kind of elders is those who are neither able nor willing to do things, but such elders often keep a tight hold on things in their hands. In this situation human temperament prevents the things in the church from being accomplished readily.

The third kind of elders is the elders who are capable and willing to do things; they give their energy, their time, and their all to the Lord. However, such elders also keep everything in their hands. They direct the saints and never delegate responsibilities to the saints. In other words, such elders know how to do things, but they do not know how to perfect and oversee the saints. In

his book concerning church administration and church affairs, as well as in his training on the elders' administration of the church, Brother Nee repeatedly said that elders are overseers and should not direct the saints to do things. The affairs of the church should be entrusted to the saints, and the elders should oversee, instruct, enlighten, and lead the saints (cf. *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 46-49). Even though Brother Nee wrote these words, we are still short of this. For example, when co-workers go out to serve, in some places they cannot do much, because the elders have a tight hold on everything. This latter situation causes everyone to learn lessons.

By the Lord's mercy, the co-workers in Taiwan have learned some lessons. They are unwilling to stir up trouble, and they are reserved and unwilling to voice their opinions when the elders are restrictive. The elders and co-workers seem to get along peacefully, but they lack the ability to coordinate together. Hence, the co-workers and the elders must have a clear understanding of their roles. If I were a co-worker serving in a locality, I would not care to be the "master of a domain" or to achieve something. I would only care to be accommodating, like glue that can be applied to any surface, like air that fills every space, or like water that seeps into every crack. I would not care for anything else. The co-workers must learn to this extent, and they must change to this extent. Moreover, the elders in every locality must oversee. We know that there are many affairs in a church, such as hospitality, ushering, cleaning, decorating, giving tithes, visiting, shepherding, teaching, and so forth. The elders should make a list of the services. The elders can also fellowship with the saints, train them, and hand the services over to them. The elders need only to oversee and teach. Then the entire church will be different.

THREE NECESSARY ITEMS

Perfecting the Saints to Establish the Services

The first thing a co-worker must observe in a locality is whether the elders function as elders and the deacons function as deacons. If the elders and deacons are proper in their function, the co-worker only needs to support the elders. If there is not a proper functioning among the elders and deacons, a co-worker should find ways to help establish the services of the church. Establishing the services does not mean that a co-worker needs to do everything himself. Rather, he should consider the things that need to be done, consider the saints who can carry out the services, and encourage the

delegation of these services to the saints. He should think of ways for the saints to serve and should train them. In whatever he does, he should never replace the saints. The services should be entirely in the hands of the saints. He should also teach the saints how to lead others into the work. Such a work cannot be accomplished in one day. It may take a month for an area of service to be established and then another month for another area to be established.

We have seen people build houses. However, have you ever seen a mason, as he is building a house, build himself into a pillar and become a pillar in the house? If this happened, that pillar could never move, because if it moved, the entire building would collapse. No engineer or mason would do this. This is an extreme example; however, this is the situation among the co-workers. Some co-workers in the local church serve to the extent that they cannot leave that church; they cannot be moved. As a result of their lack of service, the brothers in one locality do not even know to purchase train tickets for visitors. This is a simple example, but it reveals the shortage in our coordination.

Some local churches always have co-workers. When one co-worker leaves, another comes, but no elders are produced. If the Lord removed the co-workers, those churches would collapse. In a certain district there has been a co-worker serving the young people. The day he leaves, the young people's work will collapse. In this kind of so-called service, the co-workers have built themselves as material into the building. When they leave, the building will collapse. This is a fundamental problem among us.

A co-worker serving in a local church must learn to let the local saints take care of the church affairs. When some saints are not able to stand, he may help them by "cutting" a bit or "sawing off" a bit. Thus, the saints will be strengthened to support the structure. This kind of work is solid. With such a solid and strong structure, the pillars will be able to stand, even when the co-worker leaves to do other work. It is wrong for a co-worker to be completely occupied and tied down to a place. A co-worker must be free to go wherever there is a need. He should not give the saints the feeling that he is upholding the church in a locality, as if he were a big pillar. The saints must be the pillars in a locality, and a co-worker should go there only to support the saints on a temporary basis. When the co-worker is free to travel, he can direct his time and energy to other matters related to the work.

Presently, however, the co-workers often replace the elders and the deacons. This is not right. No matter what the circumstance is, the elders in a locality must accomplish some things, and they should delegate things to the deacons. For example, in every district there are saints serving in the business office. The elders can delegate many things to these saints and release the deacons to do other things. The deacons can distribute gospel tracts. They may contact one person in the morning and another person in the afternoon. If two people are saved in one day, there will be fourteen new ones gained in a week. The elders can arrange for two saints to cover the business office. These two saints can shepherd each other by reading the Bible or praying together. Then, depending on their capacity, more things can be delegated to them. Regrettably, the saints are not brought into function. The co-workers who want to accomplish something should first establish this matter. If there is a shortage of elders, the co-workers can train and perfect more elders. If there is a shortage of deacons, the co-workers can train some saints to be deacons. The key is to let the saints function. The elders should not be idle. They should teach the saints. This is the way that we should serve the church.

Leading the Saints to Grow in Life

However, the most basic work of the elders is to impart life to the saints; in order to do this the elders need to be desperate to have life themselves. Although some saints love the Lord, they have little growth in life and limited experience and knowledge of Christ. The elders should be desperate to impart the life supply to them. If most of the saints in a locality are progressing, the elder should not give ordinary messages or do an ordinary work. He should do his best to supply the saints with what they need at that point. No one can do this for him. For example, a mathematics teacher must think of ways to teach his students multiplication and division. Then the students will advance to a higher level. Once the students learn multiplication and division, the teacher must teach them something new. If the teacher has nothing left to teach the students, he must quickly learn something new. If he is unable to learn, he should ask someone to come and assist him. The elders should lead all the saints to grow in life. If the elders endeavor in this matter, the church will advance. Since we are short in our own growth in life, it is very difficult for us to lead the church to grow in life. This is the second item of our work.

Supplying the Word

The third item is that the co-workers must be desperate to have the supply of the word. A local church always needs the word; doctrines are useless. There must be the supply of the living word. A local church should have two messages every week to meet two kinds of need. One message should be simple, and the other should be deeper. This will require the co-workers to labor. In the past, one brother would give a message, another brother would call the hymns, and still another brother would pray, and then the meeting would be dismissed. This kind of meeting is not proper. The meetings should enliven the saints and cause them to release their spirit. However, if in every meeting the saints only release their spirit and there is no living word and no substantive supply in the word, the saints will not receive a solid supply from the meetings. In a good meeting at least half an hour to forty minutes must be used for supplying the word. Therefore, the co-workers should have a supply of the word to impart into the saints. This will cause the saints to grow in life.

Some co-workers said that they do not have the gift of speaking. It is not fitting for them to say this; it is also not fitting for someone to say that he does not have the gift of eating. Only the dead do not have the gift of eating. We can all speak, just as we can all eat. Some may say that they do not have the gift of cooking. This is also not right. In the New Testament Paul says, "Having gifts...according to the grace given to us" (Rom. 12:6). Whether we cook well or not, we all can cook. It all depends on whether we are desperate and whether we do something with our heart and our strength. We are too kind to ourselves, and we have not been strict with ourselves. If, as a co-worker, I do not have a supply of the word, I should be diligent and desperate to produce a living word. If I cannot do it myself, there are other full-timers serving with me. I can ask them to endeavor with me. We must endeavor so that we always have a living word, a living supply, for the saints.

There are three crucial points that we should focus on. First, the business affairs of a local church must be delegated to the saints. Second, we must be desperate for the saints to grow in life. Third, we must endeavor to have the supply of the word. Nothing is impossible to accomplish to those who are determined. As long as we are determined, we will accomplish something. The Lord will give us grace.

If we are determined, we will find a way to go on. A co-worker serving in a locality should carefully observe the situation in the church and pray. He may observe that the saints love the Lord, attend the meetings regularly, and tithe,

but they do not have a good foundation in life. He should find a way to give them a foundation in life. Perhaps he realizes that the saints do not adequately know the meaning of regeneration. They have been regenerated, but they do not have sufficient knowledge concerning regeneration and do not know the experience of regeneration. Some co-workers may tell the saints to read books such as *The Knowledge of Life*, *The Experience of Life*, *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, and *Lessons for New Believers*. This approach can be likened to buying groceries and then putting them on the table for people to eat. The groceries still need to be processed. The co-workers cannot expect the saints to receive the supply simply by reading spiritual books. In order to fellowship from Lesson 8 in *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, they must first digest the lesson and then present it to the saints. Even if the co-workers are not eloquent, their words will touch the saints. If a co-worker cannot digest a lesson by himself, he should ask a few of his companions for help. Then the saints will receive the help and be supplied.

Managing a family depends more on diligence than on competence. The Chinese are smart and capable, but they like to take shortcuts. A Chinese person may take an hour to finish a job, but a Japanese person will take three hours. From this we can see the diligence of the Japanese. Herein lies the success of the Japanese industries; no one can compete with them in this aspect. The Americans seek efficiency, the Chinese search for shortcuts, and the Japanese strive for perfection. The disposition of the Chinese people has not been rooted out of the saints. As soon as we speak of ministering the word, the co-workers think of doing a quick job or depending on others. As a result, the work does not have much effect, nothing substantial is built up, there is not much growth in life, and there is very little supply of the word. Such work is like that of a pastor maintaining a congregation, and it is not of much use.

DOING A BUILDING WORK RATHER THAN MAINTAINING

The co-workers must have a turn. Every co-worker is like a beam and a pillar in a house. They are beams and pillars supporting the house. The entire house should not be supported by the co-workers. Rather, when a co-worker leaves a locality, there should be saints who have been raised up to replace him. However, even among the co-workers who have been serving for twenty

years, it is difficult to find a locality where the service has been built up for the saints to carry out their function.

There is a group in the Philippines with a large membership. The founder of this group does not believe that the Lord Jesus is God. Nevertheless, because he thinks that the Lord Jesus was a man with excellent character and conduct, the members of this group are diligent in regard to maintaining good conduct. For example, the members in this group are excommunicated if they are loose in their marriage. Their meetings are proper, and their meeting place is respectable. I visited one of their chapels in Manila, and there were many people. The ushers are specially trained. One time at least four of their members, one a lawyer and another a medical doctor, came to debate with me concerning God. From our conversation I observed their character and their strictness. We may not match even ten percent of their standard. They have many members, yet every one of them is well behaved. Although we do not care for all their outward regulations, we can learn from their diligence. The lack among our co-workers is a lack in the word. If they were willing to spend time, make an effort, and diligently endeavor before the Lord, they would have a living word.

These are the three crucial points that we should focus on. First, the building up of the church services; second, the growth in life of the saints; and third, the supply of the word. The church services are maintained in an ordinary way. The number of serving ones in a locality does not increase. Furthermore, the condition of the saints in the divine life remains the same year after year. Hence, the co-workers are only maintaining the status quo at best. It is no wonder that the saints have not grown in life and that the churches have not advanced.

PROBLEMS IN THE WORK AND HOW TO CORRECT THEM

Learning to Hand Things Over

In the past when the co-workers went to various localities, they usually replaced the elders. The co-workers must not serve in this way anymore; rather, they should bring the elders along in the work. We must find out our weaknesses and our problems. Formerly, both the co-workers and the elders kept the services in their hands and were unwilling to hand them over to the

saints. This must change. When we begin the work, we should lay a foundation of letting the saints function. As the saints learn to function, we should be less involved. Everything should be placed in their hands. Thus, the church affairs become the service of the saints. This is a great principle.

Furthermore, when we hand things over to the saints, we should watch from a distance. Our watching is not with a hope that the things would return to us, and we do not focus on mistakes that the saints might make. When we hand a certain matter over to a brother, we should watch him as if we were sitting next to him and teaching him to drive a car. We should not only explain things to him but also instruct him on how to do them. If he does not do a good job, we should encourage him so that he does not lose heart. If he loses heart, we should not lose heart. We should encourage him until he is strengthened. This has not been our practice in the past. Instead, it seems as if we have not put our whole heart into expanding the work. The more we were involved in various aspects of the service, the fewer the saints who served. In the end, there was only a small number of experienced “old timers,” and the other saints were idle. This has been a great problem in our work. Therefore, the co-workers and elders must learn to hand things over to the saints and also to watch and teach the saints as they serve until the saints are fully able to function.

Working with the Element of Life

Some co-workers seem very capable in the work, but their service is superficial; it is a work without the element of life. We do not care for this kind of work. Our work can be compared to tending an orchard. In order for the fruit trees to grow and bear fruit, some branches must be pruned or trimmed. But this is not the primary need. The primary need is to fertilize and water the orchard and to get rid of bugs. These are done with the expectation that the fruit trees will grow and bear fruit. Hence, there is growth, and there is also fruit-bearing.

Some co-workers can do a work that looks good, but their work is void of the divine life. Our work must have the element of life. Our meetings may seem “disorderly,” but there must be the element of life. We do not want to do a work that is without life. We want to do a work that has life, grows, and bears fruit. Only this kind of work will grow. Attractive messages are not useful without the element of life. We do not care for attractive messages. We

care only that our messages have the effect of life and penetrate into the inner being of the saints. Growth in life does not depend on attractive messages. Growth in life depends on whether life is imparted into the saints and grows in them. If a co-worker gives messages full of the divine life, this life will continue to operate in the saints even after he leaves. Life takes care of its own growth.

We must change our concept and not repeat our mistakes so that our work can advance. If we do not deal with this problem, our work will not advance. If we pay attention to the fellowship in this message, we will be living. These points are basic. If the co-workers take heed to these points, the work will be effective.

In many localities the co-workers are replacing the elders and the deacons in their service. In other localities many things are blocked, and nothing is accomplished because the elders control the saints. Such situations should not exist among us. In our coordination we must stop directing the saints. Whenever there is something that needs to be done, we should hand the responsibility over to the saints and let them take care of it. We should not rely on directing the saints. For example, not many saints may volunteer to serve for a conference. The saints serve only when they are directed to serve. If no arrangements were made for them to serve, they would not serve. The co-workers are responsible to turn this situation. They should delegate all the services to the saints for their regular function.

The saints have the heart to set aside time for the meetings, and their tithing is substantial. However, the saints have not been perfected in the service. The saints who meet regularly do not exercise their function, we do not help them grow in life, and we do not supply them with the word. In the meetings the saints are only maintained. This is better than not having meetings. However, it is not adequate to only maintain the saints; we need to give them food. Every week we should give the saints a supply in the word. Sometimes the word should be simple, and sometimes it should be deep. Whether the message is simple or deep, we should always give a word that causes the saints to be enlivened, fed, and satisfied.

Recently, the elders in a locality asked for a method to meet the need of supplying the saints with life. I do not have any methods to give you. You should find a way. Find the reasons that the saints do not come to the

meetings. This will be a great help to the church. Then address the problems so that the saints can meet. When the elders come together, they should not discuss matters but should spend time praying and seeking the reasons that hinder the saints from coming to the meetings and that hinder our bearing fruit. We do not bear fruit because we are idle, slothful, and not diligent. Hence, we must make a major turn. We should study this situation thoroughly.

Being Renewed and Not Holding On to Old Ways

We must spend time before the Lord in order to be renewed and not hold on to our old ways. From 1967 to 1970 we did not make much progress. The churches have been here for more than twenty years, and some elders and responsible ones are getting older. Therefore, we truly need a change. The elders and responsible ones can continue to function behind the scene by praying, interceding, and caring for the saints and by supplying life. They should also allow younger saints to handle the business affairs of the church. We need a new way of doing things because the Lord is new every day.

Everyone must rise up in the Lord to perfect the younger saints. It will be a shame if we cannot change the system and pass the baton. It is a shame to control things, and it is also a shame not to perfect the saints. The brothers must be encouraged to advance. It is not sufficient for the elders and co-workers to ask the saints to pray, pray-read, and release the spirit in the meetings. The root, the cause, of our sickness is still present, and it must be removed. Otherwise, even pray-reading will become a method among us.

Unless the co-workers, elders, and responsible ones have a fundamental change in life, any method will merely be superficial. The co-workers and elders lack vitality, and they barely manage to meet the need. This is still worthy of praise because the meetings are being maintained. However, we need to be living and energized. We must strive and struggle to be flexible and living. This can be likened to a boxer who must be regulated in his practice but who also must be flexible and active in competition. We need to be regulated while we are being trained, but we should be living and not rigid in our practical application. Whether or not a person has been trained makes a difference. A person who is trained is able to apply his training.

THE LORD'S BLESSING

Genesis 2:5 shows God's need to send the rain and man's need to work the ground. This means that we need to labor and toil in order to coordinate with God in the work. If we are willing to coordinate with God, the East—from Japan to Hong Kong and the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand—will be open to us. The Lord has opened this door for us, and we should match Him with our cooperation.

The Lord has indeed blessed this way. He bestows His blessing on us. We are not worthy, but the Lord is still doing His work. It is obvious that the Lord is blessing what we do. When we work with the young people and children, He blesses the work. Although we are still not mature in life, the Lord has blessed us and caused us to be different from Christianity in our function and our work. This is altogether the Lord's blessing.

Furthermore, the church in Taipei has had substantial offerings. This is also the Lord's blessing. This proves that the Lord is blessing His way. The Lord has also opened doors for us. All we need is to cooperate with Him. We must go against the Chinese disposition, character, and temperament. We must not excuse ourselves and say that we were born this way. Since we love the Lord and are willing to serve Him full time, we must have a heart for the work and not turn to the world. Since we have given ourselves, we must be desperate to find a way to improve. Some brothers are complaining that I make changes every day. However, I have not made enough changes. I hope that the brothers will not dispute or insist on keeping the old way. Everyone must pursue the Lord. If we can move forward and change our way, we will have a wonderful situation. The Lord will bless this way. He will also bless our fellowship.

THE CO-WORKERS GOING OVERSEAS TO HAVE A BROADER VIEW AND BRING IN NEW FELLOWSHIP

According to our present situation, twelve brothers will go overseas for at least two to three months every year. Some of them may go for half a year. When these co-workers return, they will be assigned to lead the saints in a larger locality. The co-workers will go abroad in order to learn how to work.

While they are abroad, their ability to supply the word will increase, and the propagation of the work will also increase. If all the co-workers could serve in this way, Southeast Asia would be enlivened and blended together. Taiwan would become a center of the work. This is the situation that we are anticipating. However, it must not happen through human organization.

We hope that more young saints can be gradually added to the work. Both full-time brothers and sisters are needed. We lack co-workers who are between the ages of twenty-five and forty. I hope that some in this age group can be brought in to serve in coordination with the rest of the co-workers so that the younger ones can be raised up. This path that we are taking is not too difficult. We look to the Lord for His leading in this matter.

The co-workers who go abroad must go with a burden. I hope that all the saints would receive the burden to pray for this matter. Whenever there is an opportunity, the co-workers should go abroad to serve for a period of time and then return. The serving ones should also visit different places such as Japan and the United States. This would be a great help to them. A few serving ones can go abroad and visit some places. They should endeavor to help the place that they visit and to bring back something new, thus having a kind of fellowship. This kind of fellowship needs to increase, but this does not mean that we should have a move with a large group of saints traveling. At the same time, the overseas saints can also visit Taiwan. In short, there should be much fellowship among the saints from all over the world, either by their coming here or our going to visit them. If we practice this, our view will be broadened, and the work will become one. May we all receive the burden to pray for this so that we have a broadened view and do the same one work.

CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE WORK IN TAIWAN

There are five major cities along the west coast of Taiwan, along the railroad. These cities are Kaohsiung, Tainan, Taichung, Taipei, and Keelung. We can add Hsing-chu, Chia-yi, and Chung-hua to have eight major cities. We need to strengthen our labor in these eight cities and make them the base of our work. These cities should be the focus of our work. We should also work with the students. The students' work is more important than the work on the strategic cities. The blessing is with the students; hence, we must give our all to this work. Our work must focus on the main cities and on the students. The

co-workers need to make this shift and work with the students, that is, spend more time with the students. At the same time, the co-workers must not hold on to the church affairs. The church affairs must be handed over to the elders and the saints. The co-workers must concentrate on the growth in life and the supply of the word. The rest of their time should be spent on the schools.

We must pay attention to the growth in life and the supply in the word. When we find out that there are saints meeting in a school, we should focus our labor on them. This especially applies to the local churches in large cities. We must strengthen the work in the schools. There should also be a desperateness in the work of shepherding and visitation. The students should be involved in the work; they must not depend on others to do the work for them. There is much work to be done.

We visited a few churches that were established by migration and saw that the Lord has blessed many aspects of the church life. Hence, the co-workers must go out. When they go out, they will become living. The church they visit will become living, and the co-workers will also become living. Furthermore, they will bring back something living to their locality. This also applies to those who stay in Taiwan. The co-workers must focus on having a living word. They do not have to serve in one designated area. It may be effective for them to serve in different areas. When a person serves in one area, it is easy to become regulated and mechanical. We must do a work that is living and energizing.