

**Week 7:  
The Body of Christ and the Meeting Life**

**Weekly Reading Materials**

(All reading materials are available at: <http://www.ministrybooks.org/alphabetical.cfm>)

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## Week 7 Day 1

- Rom. 12:5        So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.
- Matt. 16:18      And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

### The Church Being the Body of Christ, Composed of Many Members

Reading: *The New Testament Recovery Version*, Rom. 12:5, note 2

5<sup>2</sup> The purpose of God's salvation is to have Christ reproduced in millions of saints that they may become the members of His Body, not separate and complete individual units but parts of a living, functioning, coordinated, corporate whole. Although these parts have different functions, they are not detached from one another. Rather, they are "individually members one of another." Each member is organically joined to all the others, and each needs the function of all the others. All the members must be coordinated together to practice the Body life that is revealed in this chapter.

### The Church Being an Assembly Called Out by God

Reading: *The Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures*, ch. 5, sec. 1, par. 2;

#### **THE EKKLESIA**

The church is firstly an ekklesia. This Greek word denotes a called-out congregation. In ancient times when the city called its citizens together for a gathering, that congregation was an ekklesia. The New Testament, beginning with the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16, uses this word to denote the church (v. 18). The church is a congregation called out by God unto Himself. The Brethren prefer to use the word assembly. I believe this is a better word to use, because the word church in English has been very much spoiled.

*The Economy of God and the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, ch. 5, sec. 2, par. 3

The church is mentioned for the first time in the whole Bible in Matthew 16. Although there are several types in the Old Testament typifying the church, the word "church" is not found in the Old Testament. Therefore, in the Old Testament the church is a mystery hidden in God. None of the ones such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, or Isaiah knew about this. The Old Testament saints did not know why they were fearing and

worshipping God and why God was caring for them; they only knew that the Messiah, the Christ, would come. They earnestly expected Him to come to establish the kingdom of the heavens on earth. They did not know that God wanted to obtain a church as the Body of Christ. In the New Testament, John the Baptist appeared, calling people to repent and to believe in the gospel. The Lord Jesus continued what John had preached, and as a result, Peter, James, John, and many others received it. Of these, the Lord appointed twelve as apostles and sent them out to preach the gospel, but none of them knew that all this was for the church. I believe by the time they came to Matthew 16, the disciples had been following the Lord for about two to three years. At that time the Lord brought them out of Jerusalem and the land of Judea, away from the holy city, the holy temple, the sacrifice, the incense, and the places full of religious atmosphere, to the region of Caesarea Philippi in the north, at the foot of a mountain by the border of the land of Judea. There the Lord asked them, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). This time he did not say foolish things; his sky was clear, without clouds. He received the revelation and saw that according to His ministry, the Lord Jesus is God’s Anointed for the fulfillment of God’s purpose, and that according to His person, He is the Son of God, the embodiment of God. Here Peter uttered some stunning words. Immediately the Lord told him that this was not revealed to him by man but by God the Father. Furthermore, the Lord said, “On this rock I will build My church” (v. 18). In this word the Lord showed Peter that it is not enough just to know Him as the Christ; Peter must also know that upon Him He will build the church. Christ is only the Head; He needs a Body, which is the church, to be His match. The Head and the Body cannot be divided; Christ and the church is a great mystery (Eph. 5:32). Not only must we know Christ; we must know the church as well.

**It Is Not Enough Just to Know Christ; We Must Also Know the Church  
Ibid.**

## Week 7 Day 2

Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.  
Gal. 1:2 And all the brothers who are with me, to the churches of Galatia:

Needing to Have the Body-Consciousness

Reading: *The Mystery of Christ*, ch. 3, sec. 2, par. 7

### **THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE BODY**

In the church life, we should learn to have the consciousness of the Body. When we are at odds with the brothers and sisters, it means that we are surely at odds with God. Some Christians are like butterflies; they act independently. Others are like bees; they live and move together. The butterfly flies from flower to flower, going its own sweet way; but the bee works for the hive. The butterfly lives and works individually, but the bee has a body-consciousness. We should all be like bees, having the consciousness of the Body so that we can live together with other members in the Body of Christ. Wherever there is Body-revelation, there is Body-consciousness, and wherever there is Body-consciousness, individual thought and action are automatically ruled out. Seeing Christ results in deliverance from sin; seeing the Body results in deliverance from individualism. Seeing the Body and deliverance from individualism are not two things but one. As soon as we see the Body, our life and work as individuals cease. It is not a matter of changing our attitude or conduct; revelation does the work. We cannot enter the realm of the Body by anything other than seeing. A real inward seeing settles the whole problem.

The Body of Christ in Practicality Appeared as Many Local Churches

Ibid., ch. 10, sec. 2, par. 1

### **THE LOCAL CHURCH BEING THE MANIFESTATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST ON EARTH**

When Paul wrote to a group of believers in Corinth, he said, "Now you are the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27). The Body of Christ is not only universal; it is also local. Every local church is the manifestation of the Body of Christ in that locality. All of the riches of Christ are vested in the local church. The authority of the Head is vested in the local expression of the Body. Apostles and elders in the local church are representative members of the Body, but they are not the Body. The entire company of believers in a locality, not just a section of the believers, constitutes the church in that locality. The church

is not one member; it represents the whole Body in a locality. Hence, when we touch the local church, we touch the Body. Participating in the fellowship of the local church is participating in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is not something abstract or unfathomable; the Body of Christ is manifested in the local churches. Anyone who wants to live in the Body in a practical way has to be in the local churches. He should fellowship with the local saints, be edified in the local church, and be built up together in mutuality.

Taking the Principle of One Church in One Locality

Reading: *Lessons for New Believers*, ch. 14, sec. 1, par. 9-10

### **Taking the Principle of One Church in One Locality**

On the one hand, the expression of the church takes the jurisdiction of a community as the boundary, and on the other hand, it takes the principle of one church in one locality. There can be only one expression of the church in a local jurisdiction; there definitely cannot be two or more. There can be only one church in one locality. This means that there can be only one church in one locality. In a small locality there can be only one church; likewise, in a large locality there can be only one church. Although Jerusalem was a city with a large population, there could be only one church in Jerusalem, not two or more. Although the cities in Asia were small and the population was sparse, there was only one church in a locality, and two localities were not combined to form one church. In the Bible there was the church in Jerusalem and the church in Antioch, not the churches in Jerusalem or the churches in Antioch (in Acts 8:1 and 13:1, *church* is singular in Greek). Hence, the Bible clearly shows that there should be one church in one locality.

However, since a region or a province can include many jurisdictions, the Bible does speak of *churches* in a region or province. For example, Acts 15:41 refers to the churches in Syria and Cilicia; Galatians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 16:1 speak of the churches of the province of Galatia; 1 Corinthians 16:19 speaks of the churches of the province of Asia; and 2 Corinthians 8:1 speaks of the churches of the province of Macedonia. All these places were either a region or a province, including many community jurisdictions; therefore, there was more than one church in these regions and provinces. This shows that the expression of the church is local and is according to the principle of one church in one locality.

Needing to Discern the Body and Stay in the Body

Reading: *Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, msg. 58, sec. 1, last par.

Since I left mainland China in 1949, about three hundred eighty churches have been raised up on five continents through this ministry. All this has been accomplished without mission boards, fund raising, or people trained in seminaries. On the contrary, it is our reflection of Christ's heavenly ministry for the carrying out of God's administration. What the Lord has done since 1949 is a strong evidence that what God needs on earth today is the practical expression of the mystical Body of Christ. For example, because the Body is universal, there is now a church in Pretoria, South Africa, although we never sent anyone to that locality for the church life. This causes me to have high expectations for the future. The future of the Lord's recovery is glorious. I surely believe that whatever the Lord has spoken in the New Testament will be fulfilled. There is no doubt that the Lord is working to recover, to gain, His mystical Body. We need to discern His Body and remain in the Body so that we may enjoy the Spirit for God's administration.

## Week 7 Day 3

1 Cor. 12:20 But now the members are many, but the body one.  
Rom. 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

Needing to Live in the Body of Christ to Receive All the Supply of the Body  
Reading: *The Mystery of Christ*, ch. 4, sec. 1, par. 1, 3

### **THE NEED FOR THE SUPPLY OF THE BODY**

Every Christian should know that he is only a member. If he does not have the other members, he will not survive. In the Body all the members must be joined together before they can become the Body. All the members in the Body are related to one another, and they cannot be separated from one another. Between the members there must be a mutual supply and a mutual relatedness. Only then can the members survive. If a Christian lives an independent life, sooner or later he will weaken and dry up. If I am an ear, I cannot see and neither should I expect to see by myself. The whole body is dependent upon the eyes for sight, and no amount of prayer will give sight to the other members. If I am an ear, what should I do if I want to see something? I should go to the eyes—a brother or sister who sees—and ask for help. In order to go on with the Lord, we must recognize His supply for us in the Body and avail ourselves of it. The whole Body is built up through the interdependence among the members.

Romans 12:3 says, "Not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think." We should not think too highly of ourselves, and we should not think that others are inferior. We should not despise and reject other members of the Body. Peter thought that the other members would fall and fail but that he would not. But when the test came, he failed just the same as everyone else. Those who think highly of themselves and despise other members will end up in trouble sooner or later. In the Body of Christ everyone is a member and nothing more than a member. Hence, no member can live without the other members, much less despise them.

Meeting Is God's Ordination for the Believers

Reading: *Life Lessons*, vol. 2, lesson 14, sec. 1, par. 1-2

### **MEETINGS**

(1)

Since the church is the assembly called out by God from the world, it should meet continually. Meetings enable God's called out congregation to be supplied, established, and perfected, that the goal of God's calling this assembly may be accomplished.

## **I. GOD'S ORDINATION FOR THE BELIEVERS**

1) "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25).

Here the assembling of ourselves together refers to our Christian meetings. God has ordained the way in which every living thing in the universe should exist. God's ordination is the very law by which a particular species lives. If the living thing obeys that law, it will survive and be blessed. God is the same toward us who have believed in Christ. God's ordination for us, which becomes our law of existence and blessing, is the meetings. As water is to the fish, and air to the birds, so are the meetings to the Christians. As the fish must live in the water and the birds must exist in the air, so the Christians must maintain their spiritual existence and living by the meetings.

Meeting Is a Requirement of the Spiritual Life

Ibid., par. 3

## **II. A REQUIREMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

1) "...sheep...be one flock" (John 10:16).

Every kind of life has its own characteristic, and usually, many characteristics. The spiritual life we believers have received, being the life of God in us, also possesses many characteristics. For example, the hatred for sin and the separation from sin are characteristics of this life. The desire to draw near to God and the willingness to serve Him are also its characteristics. One of the many characteristics of our spiritual life is to flock together, to meet together. John 10:3 and 16 show us that since we are saved, we are the Lord's sheep. The characteristic of the sheep's life is to flock together and to dislike isolation from the other sheep. Hence, the Bible says that we are not only the Lord's sheep, but even more, His flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). In order to be a sheep which shares in the blessing of the flock, we must meet together with the flock. The characteristic of the spiritual "sheep life" within us requires this of us.

Meetings Should Enliven People and Revive Their Spirit

Reading: *Words of Training for the New Way*, vol. 2, ch. 20, sec. 3, par. 2-3 14

## **BACK TO THE WAY OF MEETING**

## **REVEALED IN THE BIBLE**

Brothers and sisters, please remember that the way of meeting as revealed in the Bible is one that enlivens people. It revives man's spirit and develops the organic function in man. It develops from within man the initial gift received from God. This initial gift is the divine life of God, which is capable of growing within us in the same way that the life within a baby will grow. When this life grows, the functions of life are developed from within the baby gradually, causing the baby to see, to hear, to speak, to work with his hands, and to walk with his feet. However, the system of meeting in today's Christianity does not develop the spiritual function of life within us, the regenerated ones. On the contrary, it restricts, limits, and suppresses our spiritual functions, with the result that they are reduced or annulled.

The way to meet as revealed in the Bible establishes and builds up the function of life in us, and it stirs up all the gifts of the divine life that the saints received from God; the result will be that they are nourished and supplied. By this the saints grow, and the growth of the saints is the building up of the church. However, I have seen some brothers and sisters among us who come to every meeting, who participate in all the services, who are very faithful in listening to messages, and who love the Lord; yet, we do not see much growth in life in them. The reason is that there is not much supply and nourishment in the meetings, and also there is the lack of the release and exercise of life. For this reason, in the meetings under the old system, it is difficult to see any growth in life, and there is very little building.

## Week 7 Day 4

Acts 20:7 And on the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread, Paul conversed with them since he was to go forth on the next day; and he extended his message until midnight.

Psa. 118:24 This is the day that Jehovah has made; Let us exult and rejoice in it.

### Corporate Grace Is Found in the Meetings

Reading: *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 1, ch. 12, par. 1-3

#### **I. CORPORATE GRACE BEING FOUND IN THE MEETING**

God's Word says, "Not abandoning our own assembling together" (Heb. 10:25). Why should we not abandon the assembling together? Because God dispenses His grace to us through the assembling together. God's grace to man can be divided into two categories—personal and corporate. God gives us not only personal grace but also corporate grace. This corporate grace can be found only in the assembling together or the meetings.

We have already spoken of the subject of prayer. One can learn to pray by himself at home; there is no doubt that God listens to such prayers. God listens to individual prayers. However, there is another kind of prayer. In order for this other kind of prayer to be answered, it must be prayed in the meetings, in the principle of two or three asking together in the Lord's name. If a person tries to do this alone, he will not get any answer. Many great matters must be prayed over in the meetings before God will answer. They must be brought to the prayer meeting before we see them come to pass. God's corporate grace comes to man only through the meetings. You may think that it is sufficient for a man to pray alone and that he can seek God's mercy by himself. But the experience of many people tells us that individual prayers alone will not work. It seems that unless two or three people pray, or all the brothers and sisters come together to pray, God will not answer. Therefore, we have two kinds of answers to prayers: One is answer to individual prayers, and the other is answer to assembly prayers. If we do not meet with others, some prayers will not be answered.

We have also spoken of reading the Bible. Of course, God will give us individual grace when we read the Bible. However, some portions of the Word cannot be opened up by one person alone. God gives light when we meet, when we assemble ourselves together. In such a meeting, some brothers may be led to open up a particular portion of the Word. There may not be any speaking concerning that particular portion of the Word, yet the

fact that everyone is assembled together gives God the opportunity to shed His light. Many brothers and sisters can testify that they understand more of God's Word in the meeting than when they study it individually. Many times in the meeting, God opens up one portion of the Word through another portion of the Word. As one person speaks on one passage, light shines on another passage. In this way more light is unveiled, and we receive grace in a corporate way.

### Separating the Lord's Day

Reading: *Basic Lessons on Service*, ch. 2, sec. 3, par. 2

#### **A. The Lord's Table Meeting**

##### *1. On the First Day of the Week (the Lord's Day)*

Acts 2 tells us that the early believers had the Lord's table, the breaking of bread, every day in their homes (vv. 42, 46). Later in Acts 20:6b-7a, we can see that the saints had a habit of having the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. Verse 6b says that the apostle Paul and his co-workers stayed in Troas for seven days. Then the next verse says that on the first day of the week they had the Lord's table. This strongly indicates that by that time the Lord's table was conducted mainly on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, the day of resurrection.

We Should Consider This Day as a Day of the Lord and for the Lord

*Ibid.*, par. 3, 5

We need to say a little word here about the difference between the Lord's Day and Sunday. Sunday is a heathen, idolatrous term adopted by Catholicism and maintained by our tradition. Actually, it is idolatrous to say a day belongs to the sun. The Bible refers to this day as the first day of the week. Revelation 1:10 calls this day "the Lord's Day." We must respect the first day of the week as a memorial of the Lord's resurrection. We should consider this day as a day of the Lord and for the Lord.

In ancient times, the saints eventually had the Lord's table on the Lord's Day, the first day of every week. This is also proved by 1 Corinthians 16:2. In this verse the apostle Paul told the saints that on the first day of each week, they should offer something of their material possessions to the Lord. This proves that on the first day of each week, the early saints met together. Today the best day for the Christians to meet together is the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. We must make this clear to the saints.

“This Is the Day that Jehovah Has Made; Let Us Exult and Rejoice in It”

Reading: *Crucial truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 5, ch. 50, sec. 9, par. 4

## **How the Believers Should Act with Respect to the Lord's Day**

**1. "This is the day that Jehovah has made; / Let us exult and rejoice in it" (Psa. 118:24).**

Psalm 118:22 says, "The stone which the builders rejected / Has become the head of the corner." In Acts 4:10-11 Peter said that this verse refers to the Lord's resurrection. Therefore, "the day that Jehovah has made" must be the day of the Lord's resurrection. The day of the Lord's resurrection was not an accident but was made by Jehovah. In the Old Testament types and prophecies God told us about this day (Lev. 23:10-11; Hosea 6:2). Before the Lord died, He also spoke clearly about this day (John 2:19; Matt. 16:21). Thus, God specially ordained this day, and it is a day with special significance. On this day we should exult and rejoice in it because the Lord resurrected on this day. He began the new creation on this day, and He made us the new creation on this day. Therefore, this day is a day when we should exult and rejoice in order to testify of the Lord's resurrection. We should not be quiet and sad with no resemblance to a person in the resurrected new creation.

## Week 7 Day 5

Acts 2:46-47     And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and 4simplicity of heart,  
47     Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

Mutuality Being the Characteristic of the Body

Reading: *The Mystery of Christ*, ch. 5, sec. 2, par. 3

### **THE MINISTRY OF THE BODY**

The fellowship in the Body involves not only receiving help from other members but also giving help to other members. The functioning of the Body is mutual. Mutuality is the characteristic of the Body. Even when there is ministry from the pulpit, the ministry should never be one-sided. The pulpit needs the help of the congregation just as the congregation needs the help of the pulpit. Merely being a listener or an onlooker is contrary to the life of the Body. Every Christian should have a part in the meeting and render supply to other members. This kind of supply is the ministry of the members and the function of the members. It is also the fellowship of life. No member should cut himself off from this fellowship. If you stop this fellowship, life will stop flowing, and you will become a burden to the Body. If a person thinks that he does not need to say anything, and that he will be approved of and not cause any trouble as long as he simply, quietly, and politely receives from others, he does not know what the Body of Christ is. Every member has to render supply to the Body and fellowship and function in the Body. This is a law of the Body. In the physical body no member can cease functioning without there being a loss to the whole body. This is also true in the Body of Christ.

The Different Kinds of Meetings in the Church Life

The Lord's Table Meeting

Reading: *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 3, ch. 30, sec. 2, par. 1;

### **The Table Meeting**

1. "We gathered together to break bread"; "Come together...to eat the Lord's supper" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20).

The first meeting for those who have received the Lord's redemption is the table meeting. Whereas other meetings emphasize our receiving, only the table meeting emphasizes the Lord's receiving. In this meeting we break bread, which is to eat the Lord's supper. Breaking bread and eating the Lord's supper speak of two aspects of one matter. Breaking bread emphasizes the fellowship that we have with all the saints through the Lord's bread and cup. Eating the Lord's supper emphasizes our remembrance of the Lord through eating His bread and drinking of His cup.

*Life Lessons*, vol. 2, lesson 16, sec. 1, par. 2; lesson 17, sec. 1, par. 3

### **I. REMEMBERING THE LORD— WITH THE LORD AS THE CENTER**

1)“And having taken a loaf...He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you; do this unto the remembrance of Me. And similarly the cup after they had dined” (Luke 22:19-20).

The bread breaking meeting is not for anything other than remembering the Lord with the remembrance of the Lord as its center for the Lord's enjoyment. Everything in this meeting, whether hymn singing, prayer, Bible reading, or words of inspiration, should take the Lord as the center, speaking either concerning His person and work, His love and virtues, His living or suffering on the earth, or His honor or glory in heaven, that others may consider or realize these things in order to remember the Lord Himself. In such a meeting, we should think of the Lord in our hearts and behold the Lord in our spirit that we would be inspired concerning the Lord. Then we will express our inspiration through songs, prayers, reading of the Bible, or words, that the feeling of the entire meeting would be directed to the Lord and that all would remember the Lord.

In the bread breaking meeting, we are eating the one bread, which signifies the body of Christ, and drinking the one cup, which signifies the blood of Christ. Our eating and partaking of one bread and our drinking and sharing in one cup imply mutual fellowship. We have this fellowship because of the Lord's body and the Lord's blood. Hence, such fellowship becomes the fellowship of the blood of Christ and the fellowship of the body of Christ. In this way, when we eat and drink together, sharing in the Lord's bread and the Lord's cup, we “partake of the table of the Lord” (1 Cor. 10:21). At this table, we share in the Lord's body and the Lord's blood with all the saints and have fellowship one with another. The blood of Christ, which we enjoy together, removes all the barriers between the saints. The bread, which we share and which symbolizes the individual body of Christ, comes into us to

make us one bread, signifying the one corporate Body of Christ. In the aspect of eating the Lord's supper, the bread refers to the Lord's individual body, which He gave for us on the cross, while in the aspect of attending the Lord's table, the bread points to the Lord's corporate Body, which He constituted with all the regenerated saints through His resurrection from the dead. The former is physical and was put to death and given for us; the latter is mystical and is constituted with all the saints in the Lord's resurrection. Therefore, each time that we break the bread, on the one hand we remember the Lord and enjoy Him by receiving the body which He gave for us on the cross; on the other hand, we enjoy the mystical Body which He produced through His resurrection from the dead, fellowshiping with all the saints in this mystical Body and testifying the oneness of this mystical Body. There is not only a relationship between us and the Lord, but a relationship between us and all the saints.

### Prophecy Meeting

Reading: Ibid., lesson 15, sec. 1, par. 6;

### **C. Meeting for the Exercise of Spiritual Gifts and for Mutual Building Up**

1) "Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (1 Cor. 14:26).

The meeting mentioned here is for the exercise of spiritual gifts and for mutual building up. In this kind of meeting, there is not a special person doing a specific thing, but everyone is exercising the spiritual gifts; one has a psalm, one has a teaching, one has a revelation, one does this, and another does that. Each one may participate with the goal of building up and edifying others.

*The Practice of Prophecy*, ch. 1, sec. 2, par. 4; sec. 3, par. 1

### **PROPHECYING IN THE WAY OF FIRST CORINTHIANS 14 BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE CHURCH MEETINGS AND BEING FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH**

Prophecying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 is carried out in the church meetings (vv. 23-24). Verse 23 says, "If therefore the whole church comes together in one place..." This refers to a church meeting, not a home meeting or a small group meeting. Moreover, the prophecying in the way of 1 Corinthians 14 is for the building up of the church (vv. 4-5). According to

our experience and observation, the best way to build the church is to prophesy, that is, to speak for Christ and to speak forth Christ, ministering and dispensing Christ into people. For one man to speak while all the others listen is a form of prophesying, but it is carried out in a wrong way. The proper prophesying should be carried out by each attendant in the church meetings.

## **HAVING THE CAPACITY, THE OBLIGATION, AND THE EARNEST DESIRE TO PROPHECY**

### **All Believers Having the Capacity to Prophecy**

First Corinthians 14:31 says, “You can all prophesy one by one.” This verse is one of the clearest verses in the entire Bible. It says that all the believers have the capacity to prophesy. Capacity denotes an ability by birth. Dogs do not have the capacity to speak human language; they have the capacity only to bark. Human beings, however, have the capacity to speak. We, as members of the Body of Christ, all can prophesy one by one. Romans 12:6-8 mentions seven gifts, including prophecy, and says that these gifts differ according to the grace given to each member. These verses, however, refer to the exercise of the gifts outside the meetings. In the Body of Christ we have different gifts and functions outside the meetings. The gifts in Romans 12 are not the gifts exercised in the meetings. In the meetings all the members can prophesy (1 Cor. 14:24, 31).

*The Practice of Prophesying*, ch. 1, sec. 2, par. 4; sec. 3, par. 1

## Week 7 Day 6

Verses: Acts 12:5; Heb. 10:24

Acts 12:5 So then Peter was kept in the prison; but prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him.

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works,

### Prayer Meeting

Reading: *Life Lessons*, vol. 2, ch. 15, sec. 1, par. 2, 5;

#### B. Prayer Meeting

1)“If two of you agree on earth concerning anything, whatever they may ask, it shall come to them from My Father who is in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together...” (Matt. 18:19-20).

Here the Lord is speaking concerning the prayer of a meeting. This kind of prayer is more powerful than the prayer of an individual, being able to bind on earth what has been bound in heaven, and to loose on earth what has been loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18).

2)“These all were persevering with one accord in prayer, together with the women...” (Acts 1:14).

Here again, the prayer of a meeting is mentioned. It was this prayer that brought in the blessing of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

3)“And when they heard this, they lifted up their voice with one accord to God and said...And as they were beseeching, the place in which they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:24-31).

It says here that in those days when the disciples were under persecution, they met together to pray with one accord. That kind of prayer caused them to be filled outwardly with the Holy Spirit and to speak the word of God with boldness.

4)“Prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him” (Acts 12:5); “where [the house of Mary] a considerable number were assembled together praying” (12:12).

On the day when Peter was imprisoned, the church prayed fervently for him, and a considerable number were assembled together in a sister’s house, praying for him specifically. That prayer caused God to perform a great miracle, delivering Peter out of prison.

*Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 1, ch. 13, sec. 4, par. 2, 4; sec. 5, par. 1-2

### **A. Praying in One Accord**

The basic requirement for brothers and sisters to pray together is to be in one accord. In Matthew 18 the Lord tells us to be in harmony, that is, in one accord. The prayer in Acts 1 was also a prayer in one accord. Hence, the first condition for carrying out a prayer meeting is to have the one accord. No one should come to the prayer meeting with a different mind. If we want to have a prayer meeting, we must ask in one accord.

### **B. Being Specific**

How can our prayers be in harmony? Perhaps the biggest problem in our prayer meeting is that we bring up too many subjects. Once there are too many subjects in the prayer meeting, it is impossible to have harmony. Some prayer meetings have so many subjects that the meetings are an all-inclusive bazaar. We cannot find such a meeting in the Bible. What we see in the Bible is men praying for specific matters. When Peter was imprisoned, the church prayed for him fervently (Acts 12:5). They did not pray for many things but for one specific thing. When the subject is specific, it is easy to pray in harmony.

### **C. Being Genuine**

Another basic requirement is to be genuine in our prayer. I am afraid that many words in the prayer meeting are spoken in vain. Many people pay attention to the nicety of the words and care little whether or not God listens to them. It seems to be of little consequence to them that God does not listen to their prayers. Such prayers in the prayer meeting are often artificial and vain.

Genuine prayer is the result of a desire that comes from the heart. It is something that flows out from our inner being. Genuine prayer is not made up of flippant and nice words. Only genuine words that flow out from the deepest part of the heart can be considered as genuine prayer. The goal of our prayer should be an answer from God rather than pleasing the brothers and sisters.

## Group Meeting

Reading: *Practice of the Group Meetings*, ch. 6, sec. 1, par. 1, 3, 5; sec. 2, par. 1-2, 5

### THE PRACTICE AND GOAL OF THE GROUP MEETINGS

#### **Scripture Reading: Heb. 10:24-25**

#### FELLOWSHIP, INTERCESSION, MUTUAL CARE, AND SHEPHERDING IN THE GROUP MEETINGS

According to our experience and learning and based upon the clear revelation in the New Testament, the proper group meetings should consist of two sections. The first section should include fellowship, intercession, mutual care, and shepherding, and the second section should carry out the perfecting of the saints through teaching. In the first section of the group meeting, the attendants should fellowship concerning each person's present spiritual condition and practical environment. This fellowship should not be by only one or two persons. All the attendants should make their situations known to the others in each meeting. If a brother has become spiritually weak and is bothered by something, he should come to the group meeting and open himself to the other brothers and sisters. To open in this way is to be honest and faithful and to confront the enemy's attack. In the group meetings we should fellowship about the things that concern our present situation. If we have no problems or needs of our own but know of the needs of others, we may fellowship something about their up-to-date situation. This may spontaneously burden some of the saints to pray for that situation. After fellowshiping about each other's situations, the attendants in the meeting will spontaneously be stirred up to intercede, to pray, for one another. This prayer will not be formal or like a theatrical performance but will be sincere and practical. After the fellowship and prayer the attendants in the group meeting should extend their loving concern for one another in the exercise of a definite and practical care. After becoming aware of a brother's practical situation, some saints in the meeting may consider whether the brother is in need of financial help or some other practical care. Then, after caring for a brother in this way, some may go to visit him. This is the practice of the practical shepherding.

Based on Hebrews 10:24-25, I believe that in the apostles' time the church practiced the group meetings in this way. These verses say, "Let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works, not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing

near.” In these verses there are three crucial words: *consider*, *incite*, and *exhorting*. Verse 24 charges us to consider one another. The word *consider* is very meaningful. To consider one another implies to remember, to have a sincere, loving concern for one another. It implies that the saints are in our heart. This verse goes on to say that we should incite one another to love and good works. *Good works* here refers to giving something to others freely or doing something freely for others. To give a financial gift or to care for a sick brother is a good work. There is the need for many such good works in the Body. We need to incite one another to love and to this kind of good work. Verse 25 also says that we are to exhort one another. Considering one another, inciting one another, and exhorting one another cannot be accomplished in the big meetings. They can be carried out only in the small group meetings.

### THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS THROUGH TEACHING IN MUTUALITY

The fellowship, intercession, care, and shepherding in the first section of the group meeting are the beginning and the base of the group meetings. Without such a base, we cannot have effective group meetings. However, these items in the first section of the group meeting cannot fulfill the purpose of the group meeting or reach its goal. The purpose and goal of the group meetings is the perfecting of the saints through teaching in mutuality. The way to have the proper teaching in a group meeting is not by waiting for an assigned teacher to speak. Rather, the best way is to teach by asking questions. There are no assigned teachers in the group meetings; all the attendants are teachers. Although the sisters should not teach with authority by defining and deciding the meaning of doctrines concerning divine truth (1 Tim. 2:12), they can still teach in the way of exhortation. A sister can say, “Brothers and sisters, we all need to be sanctified from the world unto God by the holy Word.” Then another sister may ask what sanctification is, and a brother can give a defining word on the meaning of sanctification. He may say, “To be sanctified is to be separated from the world.” Another may say, “Sanctification is to be made holy unto God in our position.” A third one may say, “Sanctification is to be made holy unto God also in our disposition.” A fourth may say, “Formerly, we were mixed with the world, but sanctification separates us from that situation unto God. Then this sanctification continues by separating us from the negative things in our disposition. This is equivalent to transformation.” In this way every attendant in the group meeting can teach, regardless of how little he can do. Each answer to the questions raised in a group meeting becomes part of the teaching in that meeting.

The group meetings are our meetings. Therefore, all the attendants in a group meeting must take care of the meeting. In our natural being and in the traditional practice of Christianity there is not the thought that every member must care for the meetings, but in the new way this thought must be sown into us. We should not go to the meetings without a sense of obligation. If each person does not take care of the meetings, the meetings will be poor. Each person in the meeting must be both a teacher and a learner.