

THE PERFECTING TRAINING ON ORGANIC SHEPHERDING

Feb. 4th 2007

Message Four

Redeeming the Time to Learn the Truth

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 4:6-7; Matt. 24:45; 1 Pet. 2:2-5; Eph. 5:16, 18-19; Col. 3:16; Joel 2:25

- I. In order to be a good minister of Christ and give food to the household at the proper time, we need to be nourished with the words of the good teaching—1 Tim. 4:6; Matt. 24:45:**
 - A. Being nourished is a matter of life; it differs from being merely taught.
 - B. A minister of Christ is one who serves people with Christ.
 - C. The words of the good teaching are the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ to nourish, edify, and strengthen His believers.
 - D. In order to be nourished with the words of the good teaching, we need to exercise ourselves unto godliness—1 Tim. 4:7.

- II. Through feeding on Christ by taking in the guileless word of God, we are being constituted into a priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God—1 Pet. 2:2-5; Exo. 29:31-34:**
 - A. The guileless milk is conveyed in the word of God to nourish our inner man through the understanding of our rational mind and is assimilated by our mental faculties—1 Pet. 2:2, note 3.
 - B. Unto salvation in 1 Peter 2:2 refers directly to being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices—2:2, note 5.
 - C. The sanctifying of the priests included both the clothing of the priests with the priestly garments outwardly (Exo. 29:5, 9) and the feeding of the priests with the offerings inwardly (vv. 32-33). To be sanctified to be God's priests, we need to be clothed with Christ outwardly and nourished with Christ inwardly—cf. Luke 15:22-23.

- III. By redeeming the time and being filled in spirit and in the word, we can teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—Eph. 5:16, 18-19; Col. 3:16:**
 - A. "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil"—Eph. 5:16:
 1. The evil days are "man's days" (1 Cor. 4:3, note 2) which is in contrast to the day of Jehovah (Joel 1:15; 2 Pet. 3:10).
 2. We need to redeem what is lost in "man's days" and hasten the coming of "the day of Jehovah," that is, "the day of the Lord"—Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Zeph. 1:8-9.
 3. "And I will restore to you the years / That the swarming locust has eaten, / The licking locust and the consuming locust and the cutting locust, / My great army / That I sent among you"—Joel 2:25.
 - B. The way to redeem the time is by being filled in spirit and in the word.

- IV. Setting up a proper schedule of one's daily life.**
 - A. Having a budget in time, energy, and finances.
 - B. We should set aside some time for the Lord every week and every day.

- V. The personal aspect of entering into the proper education in the truth:**
 - A. Building up a habit of spending time in the Word.
 1. Spend at least thirty minutes in the Word every day.
 2. Pray-read the verses and study the footnotes and the accompanying life-study messages.
 - B. The need of a solid foundation in the Lord's Word.
 - C. Growing gradually by life and by the truth:
 1. While the issue of nourishment is forever, the nourishment itself only remains temporarily.
 2. Once the truth has been constituted into someone, it will remain forever.
 - D. Laboring to get into the ministry.

- VI. The meeting aspect of entering into the proper education of the truth:**

- A. Our meetings must be living, nourishing, and educating:
 - 1. Our church meetings should be full of the Spirit, full of life, full of prayer, full of a refreshing atmosphere.
 - 2. We must carry out the saints' education according to the basic truths.
- B. We must endeavor to make all the church meetings educational centers.
- C. Giving the saints the proper education in the full knowledge of the truth.
- D. The leading ones, the co-workers and the ones who take care of the meetings need to be prepared for the meetings.

VII. Entering into the riches of the New Testament ministry:

- A. The Recovery Version of the Holy Bible.
- B. The Life-study of the Old Testaments and New Testaments.
- C. *The Holy Word For Morning Revival*.
- D. The messages from the seven annual conferences and trainings.
- G. The materials for new believers.
- F. Direct Mailing Service (DMS).

Excerpts from the Ministry:

BE NOURISHED WITH THE GOOD TEACHING

According to verse 6, we should also be nourished with the good teaching which we have closely followed. The words of the good teaching are the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ to nourish, edify, and strengthen His believers. Actually, the words of the faith and the words of the good teaching refer to the same thing. If we would teach others, we ourselves must first follow these words closely. Following them closely and being nourished with them, we shall then be able to feed others. For example, if a mother does not know how to nourish herself properly, she will not know how to feed healthy food to her children. Through her own experience of being nourished, she will know what food is best for her children. This illustrates the fact that as good ministers of Christ, we must first be nourished ourselves with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which we have closely followed, and then we shall be able to nourish others. (*Life-Study of 1 Timothy*, p. 73)

LONGING FOR THE GUILLESS MILK OF THE WORD

Verse 2 says, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word, that by it you may grow unto salvation." Born through regeneration (1:3, 23), the believers become babes who can grow in life unto further salvation, and that for God's building, by being nourished with the spiritual milk.

"Guileless" in verse 2 does not mean unadulterated, in contrast to less pure teachings; instead, it is guileless in contrast to the guile in verse 1. Guileless milk is milk without false purpose, without any other goal but to nourish the soul.

The Greek word rendered "of the word" is *logikos*. This word, in Romans 12:1 translated reasonable, is derived from the noun *logos*—the word; hence, of the word; having the sense of pertaining to the mind (in contrast to the body), to the rational faculties; hence, rational, logical, reasonable. The milk of the word is not milk for the body, but is milk for the soul, the inner being. It is conveyed in the word of God to nourish our inner man through the understanding of our rational mind, and it is assimilated by our mental faculties.

As far as grammar is concerned, verse 1 is a modifier of the subject of verse 2. As we have pointed out, "guileless" in verse 2 is in contrast to "guile" in verse 1. The Recovery Version may be unique in using "guileless milk" in the translation of verse 2. Other versions have "pure milk" or "sincere milk." It may be that Peter intended guileless to include the meaning of pure and sincere. However, the purpose of Peter's writing here is to show a contrast between guilelessness and the guile that proceeds out of malice. (*Life-Study of 1 Peter*, pp. 125-126)

SETTING UP A PROPER SCHEDULE OF ONE'S DAILY LIFE

We need to find a way to bring all the saints in the Lord's recovery into a proper education of the truth concerning God's New Testament economy. We need to consider this matter in two aspects—the personal aspect and the meeting aspect. We must have a personal way laid as a foundation for us to stand on and then go on to take care of the meeting way. (*Elder's Training, Book 3*, p. 106.)

You need to set up a proper schedule for your life. Formerly, you were not living to the Lord, and your way of living was like that of those in the world. But now you are living to the Lord; you should set up a new pattern of life. Speaking first of the small things of life, most people like to sleep a little late in the morning. This is especially true with the young people. But now, you have to get up at six-thirty in the morning. The first thing after getting up is to call "O Lord Jesus" and to pray. Speaking next of the more important things of life, most people want to seek after an academic degree and to be famous and glamorous in the world. Now that we love the Lord and live for Him, our way of living is changed. In everything we should still fulfill our duties properly. We study properly and work properly, without any special coveting. In an ordinary way, we should love the Lord and live for Him. Formerly, our life was a struggle and a striving for success in the world. Now we live a simple life of loving the Lord, living for Him, raising a family, educating our children, and daily testifying and bringing people to Him. Even when we venture into business, we do so with a restraint. We only labor in a measured way. We would not be greedy, nor would we be lazy. Neither would we waste time. In this way, we will truly be a person that loves the Lord and lives for Him. Otherwise, even though you may have a strong desire, your outward way of living will eat you up totally and bind you. For this reason, our way of living has to be one that matches our desire to love Him, live for Him, and serve Him. (*Messages Given to the Working Saints*, pp. 85-86)

THE PERSONAL ASPECT OF ENTERING INTO THE PROPER EDUCATION IN THE TRUTH

Building up a Habit of Spending Time in the Word

We should help the saints to build up a practice or a habit that every day they would spend at least thirty minutes in the Word. This can be done by taking ten minutes in the morning, ten minutes in the evening, and another ten minutes before going to bed. We all need to build up such a practice to spend at least thirty minutes a day to get into Lord's Word. The best way is to charge the saints to study a book of the New Testament according to their choice. They should get into this book continually and every day. Some saints may decide to study the book of Romans or the book of Hebrews. They should study every day either three times of ten minutes each or one time of thirty minutes. We should charge them to pray-read two or three verses of this book every day. Then they have to study the accompanying message, we have messages on all the verses. The saints do not need to pray-read the life study Messages, but they have to pray-read the biblical verses. In order to get the help to enter into the truth conveyed in these few verses. They also need the help of the notes and the Life-study Messages to enter into the truth. The saints need to take this way every day to get into the truth. After one year of studying the Bible in this way, there will be a solid change in the saints' home life, private life, and church life. A few verses seems very slow but we must realize that breathing is a slow thing. We only breathe a little at a time, but this continual practice accumulates and keeps us living. We may think this is too slow, but even if it took us ten years to finish the entire New Testament that would be wonderful. To pick up the truth contained in half of the New Testament after five years will be marvelous. We do not encourage the saints to be greedy and attempt to finish one book in one day. Then "their stomach will burst." We should not encourage them in this way. Rather, we should slow them down. It is not a matter of quantity but a matter of endurance. You must endure this kind of Bible study. I think we need to remind them week after week, and sometimes the elders need to give the saints some direction, some encouragement, and some incentive. (*Elder's Training, Book 3*, pp 108-109)

The Need of a Solid Foundation in the Word

I have the assurance to say that whoever has read through five hundred Life-study Messages properly has been an excellent believer. You elders who are shepherding the local churches know the real situation of most of the saints. If a saint in your locality is not that “proper” and he would begin from tomorrow morning to read the Life-study Messages until he reaches five-hundred, he will become another person. Medicine, nourishment, and all kinds of vitamins are included in these messages. This is why I said earlier that I had some realization that some of the saints who contacted me had not read many of the Life-study. I realized that they had not taken the “medicine and nourishment.” In their talk there were symptoms and signs of sickness. For example, a doctor may prescribe certain drugs for his patient. When the patient comes back to him after two months, the doctor can tell whether or not the patient took the drugs. The patient’s breathing, color, and entire being tells the doctor that the patient did not take the prescription. If you would begin to study the Life-studies every day starting tomorrow morning, you will become a different person even after fifty days. (p. 106)

Growing Gradually by Life and by the Truth

While the issue of nourishment is forever, the nourishment itself only remains temporarily. Once the truth has been constituted into someone, however, it will remain there forever and its remaining is its supply. Our need for the long run is this kind of education with the truth, which is really something solid, living, and existing. We need this. Do not expect to have an overnight success which is like a factory making artificial flowers. Overnight you can produce many flowers, but in a genuine nursery or garden it takes time to grow flowers. Do not pick up a thought that we could do a quick work. You may have the thought that within two years a great number of people will be added to the church. Most of these people, however, may be empty. This is mushrooming. We must take care of the church in a way of growing gradually by life and by truth. (pp. 120-121)

THE MEETING ASPECT OF ENTERING INTO THE PROPER EDUCATION OF THE TRUTH

We must find out the best way to carry out the New Testament ministry. In principle, I feel that we, the leaders, must get into the ministry and we must find a way to bring our congregation into it...We must keep our meetings so living and so full of nourishment. But still, we must carry out the saints’ education in the basic truths. Then all the saints who have been meeting in the Lord’s recovery with us for many years will get the adequate, solid, and basic education of the New Testament economy...Our meeting should be carried out in a living way such that all the saints might be nourished on the one hand and educated on the other hand. (pp. 98-99)

I am not fellowshipping in a legal way, but in principle I beg the elders to reconsider the way to carry out the meetings. We must have a very available way to carry out God’s purpose. We cannot go the religious way. Even today our way of meeting is still very much governed and influenced by the religious way. We come together to pray, read some verses of the Bible, give some messages, and the people who have been sitting in our meetings for years eventually only get some kind of inspiration. This is better than nothing, but for the long run the Lord could not carry out His purpose in this way.

I feel that we must endeavor to make all the church meetings educational centers to build the saints up with the proper knowledge. Our meetings should not merely be a restaurant to feed the children or a hospital to heal people. If the parents of a child would not care for the education of their children until they become ten years old, their children would grow up to be persons who are not very useful to society. Proper parents must take care of bringing their children up through elementary, junior high, high school, and college. In like manner, we must educate our spiritual children. We should not only help them grow in life, but also help them to be educated and built up in the proper knowledge of the truth. To carry out this educational work we must come to the Life-study Messages with the Recovery Version and the notes. If all the saints could go through the entire New Testament and the Life-studies with the Recovery Version and the notes in five years I would worship the Lord, This would be wonderful. (pp 144-145.)