

THE PERFECTING TRAINING FOR THE SHEPHERDS

General Subject: THE CHURCH LIFE IN THE VITAL GROUPS

Message One

THE VITAL GROUPS AND CHURCH LIFE

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:41, 46~47; Hab. 3:2; Heb.10:24~25; Matt. 7:14; Gal. 5:22~23; 2 Pet. 1:6.

I. The vital groups should constitute eighty percent of the church life. In the beginning of the church age, immediately after the three thousand were saved on the day of Pentecost, they began to meet from house to house; that is, they began to have vital group meetings. — Acts 2:41, 46-47:

- A. We need a drastic change in our concept. In forming the vital groups, the first thing that we need is to be vital.
- B. Being a vital person, an overcomer, a praying person having the real burden for prayer, to rescue the church from its degradation.
- C. In the New Testament the overcomers are likened to Zion. In Revelation 14:1 the 144,000 overcomers are not just in Jerusalem; they are on the peak of Zion. The overcomers, the vital groups, are today's Zion. My burden today is to help you reach the peak of the vital groups, that is, the overcomers' Zion — Gen.22:2; 2 Chron. 3:1; Rev14:1:
 1. Today in the church age, the God-men who were perfected and matured are Zion, the overcomers, the vital groups within the churches.
 2. But in the new heaven and new earth, there will be no more Zion, only Jerusalem, because all the unqualified saints will have been qualified to be Zion. In other words, the entire New Jerusalem will become Zion — Rev. 21:2, 16, 22.
 3. By that time all the God-redeemed people will be transformed. Thus, God's redeemed people have become absolutely the very God in life, in nature, and in appearance, but not in His Godhead.
- D. If we live such a life, surely we will go out to contact people for the preaching of the gospel. A vital group is a group of this kind of people — Phil.1:19~21a, 3:10.
- E. If we practice what we have heard, spontaneously a model will be built up. This model will be the greatest revival in the history of the church. I believe that this revival will bring the Lord back — Hab. 3:2.

II. The application of the god-ordained way by a revived life — Hab. 3:2; Matt. 28:19; 1Thes. 2:7; Heb. 10:24~25; 1Cor. 14:31:

- A. In order to be prevailing in the gospel, we must be people who live a revived life, an overcoming life.
- B. As regenerated persons, we need to be filled with the Spirit inwardly and outwardly. Then when we go to visit people, we go with Christ as the Spirit — John 15:16.
- C. Being revived by the Lord every morning will become living and even victorious — 2 Cor. 4:16.
- D. The success of the home meetings depends upon who we are — 1 Thes. 2:7.
- E. It is a matter of changing our life. We must be persons who are really living in our spirit, walking in Christ, and living Him — Rom. 8:4; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21.

III. The more we are constricted, the more we are regulated. The more we are regulated, the more we are healthy — Matt. 7:14; John 15:2; Phil. 3:16; Gal. 5:22~23; 2Pet. 1:6:

- A. The more we are constricted, the more we are regulated. The more we are regulated, the more we are healthy. Then we are ready to bear fruit. Fruit comes out of our health.
- B. We Christians should also be growing vitally. To be vital means to be healthy.

- C. We should pray, “Lord, give me one fruit per year, remaining fruit, healthy fruit, fruit that is healthy just as I am.”
- D. We should have a Proper Schedule, with Everything Regulated—Eph. 5:16.
- E. All of us, whether young or old, must all make a schedule, according to our environment, family, jobs, and other factors in our lives.
- F. We should never feel that this is difficult. As long as we follow the timetable and carry it out step by step, we can be absolutely sure that this is to walk in peace—1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim.2:5; Titus 1:8.

IV. Especially today, seeing the development of this new way, it is truly a broad highway and a rising sun, with a boundless prospect. I really feel that this dream is still being fulfilled—Prov. 4:18:

- A. The past forty years that we have gone through proves that the dream has been fulfilled, and now we are still on this broad highway.
- B. At this point in time we particularly need young people to rise up and serve the Lord full-time.
- C. If we can spend several years to labor and save several thousand souls through door-knocking, and if they multiply continually, each bringing in new ones and establishing home meetings, and each maturing in life and learning the truth, how worthwhile it will be! This is the new way. This is the broad highway, the rising sun, and the boundless future.

Excerpts from the ministry:

The Vital Groups Should Constitute Eighty Percent of the Church Life

The vital groups should constitute eighty percent of the church life. In the beginning of the church age, immediately after the three thousand were saved on the day of Pentecost, they began to meet from house to house (Acts 2:41, 46-47); that is, they began to have vital group meetings. They did not have the name "vital groups," but they had the reality. As they were meeting in that way, day by day the Lord added many people to them. On another day five thousand men were saved (4:4), and at another time multitudes of disciples were added to them (5:14). All these were not only added, but they were also contained, supported, and kept as remaining fruit. This could take place only because of the practice of the vital groups. Their primary way of meeting was not in a congregational style with one man speaking. Their main way of meeting was to have vital groups in every home. They could have vital groups because each one of them was vital. It is not a matter of merely forming a group and calling it a vital group. We do not need merely the name "vital group"; we need the reality of being vital. (*1993 Blending Conference Messages Concerning the Lord's Recovery and Our Present Need*, msg. 7)

Being A Vital Person, An Overcomer, A Praying Person Having the Real Burden for Prayer, To Rescue the Church from Its Degradation

We need to remember that our groups must be vital groups. The Bible talks about vital people. What is an overcomer? An overcomer is a vital person. Then what is it to be vital so that we can be overcomers? A vital person, an overcomer, is a praying person. You must have the real burden for the real prayer. Recently, I told some co-workers that their prayer did not come out of any burden. If we come together just to shout a few sentences, is this a burden of prayer? This is formality. It is a formal performance. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Ch. 23)

Jerusalem is built on the top of a mountain. Although Jerusalem is good, it is not the peak. In Jerusalem there is a peak, that is, Mount Zion, on which the temple was built. About one thousand years before the building of the temple, God asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, which is another name for Mount Zion (Gen. 22:2; 2 Chron. 3:1). The good situation in the recovery today is just like Jerusalem. However, there is no Zion. In the New Testament the overcomers are likened to Zion. In Revelation 14:1 the 144,000 overcomers are not just in Jerusalem; they are on the peak of Zion. The overcomers, the vital groups, are today's Zion. My burden today is to help you reach the peak of the vital groups, that is, the overcomers Zion. Although

we may have a good church life, among us there is almost no realization, no practicality, no actuality, and no reality of the Body life. This is the need in the recovery today. (Practical Points Concerning Blending, Ch. 2)

Today in the church age, the God-men who were perfected and matured are Zion, the overcomers, the vital groups within the churches. But in the new heaven and new earth, there will be no more Zion, only Jerusalem, because all the unqualified saints will have been qualified to be Zion. In other words, the entire New Jerusalem will become Zion. What is Zion? Zion is the very spot where God is, that is, the Holy of Holies. In Revelation 21 there is a sign signifying that the New Jerusalem will be the Holy of Holies. Its dimensions are the dimensions of a cube, twelve thousand stadia long, twelve thousand stadia wide, and twelve thousand stadia high (v. 16). That is the Holy of Holies, because the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament in both the tabernacle and the temple was a cube, equal in length, breadth, and height (Exo. 26:2-8; 1 Kings 6:20).

By that time all the God-redeemed people will be transformed, not only to be the same as God in life and nature, but also to be the same in God's appearance. Revelation 4 tells us that God looks like jasper (v. 3). Then Revelation 21 says that the entire New Jerusalem has the appearance of jasper (v. 11). Thus, God's redeemed people have become absolutely the very God in life, in nature, and in appearance, but not in His Godhead. (*Practical Points Concerning Blending*, Ch. 5)

It Is A Matter Of Changing Our Life. We Must Be Persons Who Are Really Living In Our Spirit, Walking In Christ, and Living Him

This shows that practicing the church life is not simply a matter of changing or way. It is a matter of changing our life. We must be persons who are really living in our spirit, walking in Christ, and living Him. Some may feel that this is too demanding, but the things of life are demanding. God can do so much for us, but He cannot eat, drink, or breathe for us. We have to exercise to eat, drink, and breathe. We must help the saints realize that they need to exercise to be brought into the enjoyment of the Lord. They have to contact Him. (*The Eldership and the God-ordained Way*, pp. 30-34)

The Model of Corporate God-Man Living Is the Greatest Revival in the History of the Church

If we live such a life, surely we will go out to contact people for the preaching of the gospel. A vital group is a group of this kind of people. The vital groups should not be practiced as a formality; they should be groups of people who live such a life. Our living the life of a God-man will save people, edify others, and build up the local churches even to the building up of the Body of Christ.

If we practice what we have heard, spontaneously a model will be built up. This model will be the greatest revival in the history of the church. I believe that this revival will bring the Lord back.

In conclusion, I would encourage you to try faithfully to practice living a God-man's life by contacting Him through calling on His name, pray-reading His living word, praying unceasingly, not quenching the Spirit, and not despising prophesying. May the Lord bless us with Himself as the life-giving Spirit that we may touch Him in the mingled spirit by these life practices. (*Living a Life According to the High Peak of God's Revelation*, Ch. 5)

The More We Are Constricted, the More We Are Regulated, the More We Are Regulated, the More We Are Healthy

We may wonder why we cannot see much bearing of fruit among us. The fruit of life does not come by means of a miracle. We need to see that the more we are constricted, the more we are regulated. The more we are regulated, the more we are healthy. Then we are ready to bear fruit. Fruit comes out of our health. A sick tree cannot bear fruit. Living things which are sick cannot produce. God's ordination is for living things such as the trees to grow vitally. We Christians should also be growing vitally. To be vital means to be healthy. We need to be healthy and normal. We should not expect to get many persons saved. We should always be prepared to bear one remaining fruit a year. We should pray, "Lord, give me one fruit per year, remaining fruit, healthy fruit, fruit that is healthy just as I am." (*The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups*, pp. 166-167)

We Should Have a Proper Schedule, with Everything Regulated

The Bible reveals that a proper Christian should love the Lord, take Him as the center, and give Him the preeminence, offering Him the first place. Such a person should have a proper condition in his daily life. His schedule should have a proper time to rise and go to bed. He should do everything in a regulated way. We must be such people, living a normal life; everything we do should be through consideration, prayer, and advance calculation, whether it is going to bed, rising in the morning, eating our meals, or taking care of our business. If, according to our situation, it is right for us to rise at 6:30 in the morning, we should practice this daily. The first thing we should do after waking up is to draw near to the Lord. Before getting out of bed, we should call on the Lord, being careful not to disturb others. Following this, we should read a short portion of the Lord's Word. We should read at least two verses from the Bible, pray-reading the verses, reading by praying. Then while we are preparing for the day, we should muse over these verses. This is the proper condition of those who love the Lord as normal Christians. (*Three Crucial Matters for the Increase and Building of the Church—Begetting, Nourishing, and Teaching*, Ch. 14, pp. 215-216 in Chinese.)

**All of Us, Whether Young or Old, Must Make a Schedule
According to Our Environment, Family, and the Situation in Our Jobs,
and Various Kinds of Other Factors**

The church is taking the new way, but this does not mean that it neglects the spiritual care of the brothers and sisters. We must rise up in the morning to contact the Lord through His Word. Our Bible is an opened Bible. If we pray-read it and study it diligently, we will be edified in life. May we all receive the Lord's grace to practice this? In addition, all of us, whether young or old, must all make a schedule, according to our environment, family, jobs, and other factors in our lives. The schedule should include when to go to bed and when wake up. This will give us a regulated living. If a lover of the Lord is not regulated in his daily living, he will surely fail. We should exercise self-control and be restricted in all things. It is not appropriate to conduct ourselves according to impulse. We must rise up in the morning at regular time to enjoy the Lord and go to bed at regular time. Then we can rise up early the next day. (*Three Crucial Matters for the Increase and Building of the Church—Begetting, Nourishing, and Teaching*, Ch. 16, p. 232 in Chinese.)

**We Should Never Feel That This Is Difficult.
As Long As We Follow the Timetable and Carry It Out Step by Step,
We Can Be Absolutely Sure That This is to Walk in Peace**

From today onward, we should endeavor to learn the truths, and we should exercise to have a timetable. We should never feel that this is difficult. As long as we follow the timetable and carry it out step by step, we can be absolutely sure that this is to walk in peace. He who persists will finally prevail. If we practice these things in our daily living, over a long period of time we will see the effect of the Lord's doing. (*Three Crucial Matters for the Increase and Building of the Church – Begetting, Nourishing, and Teaching*, Ch. 14, p. 208 in Chinese.)

The Broad Highway of the Lord's Recovery

It has been over forty years since I first had the dream in 1943. After I had fully recovered from tuberculosis in 1946, the brothers in Shanghai and Nanking asked me to go there, so I went. That brought in a great revival. Then the political situation in mainland China became desperate, so Brother Nee and all the co-workers decided to send me overseas. I came to Taiwan and saw the Lord's blessing the whole time. Later, when I went to Southeast Asia, I again saw the Lord's blessing. Even after I went to the United States, the Lord's blessing was also evidently present. This is today's situation. I can say that every day I am walking on the broad highway, step by step. Especially today, seeing the development of this new way, it is truly a broad highway and a rising sun, with a boundless prospect. I really feel that this dream is still being fulfilled.

I genuinely believe that the dream I had was a real vision. The past forty years that we have gone through proves that the dream has been fulfilled, and now we are still on this broad highway. At this point in time we particularly need young people to rise up and serve the Lord full-time. There is nothing more glorious than serving full-time. Consider this: The gaining of a million dollars cannot compare to the gaining of one soul. If we can spend several years to labor and save several thousand souls through door-knocking, and if they multiply continually, each bringing in new ones and establishing home meetings, and each maturing in life and

learning the truth, how worthwhile it will be! This is the new way. This is the broad highway, the rising sun, and the boundless future. (*A Blessed Human Life*, Ch.6)