



# The Vital Groups

*PARTICIPATE, EXERCISE, PRACTICE*

## **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 simplicity of heart, Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

## **Ephesians 4:16**

Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.



## **Church Outing**

Oklahoma City, October 11-12, 2019



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### **The Vital Groups**

#### **Friday Evening**

- 6:00 Dinner in the Meeting Hall (simultaneous meal for children in the Fellowship Hall)
- 6:45 Singing/Prayer/Pray-Reading
- 7:00 **Message 1** (60 mins)
- 8:00 **Group reading and fellowship #1** – Allow everyone an opportunity to pray, read, and fellowship. It may be best to do this one by one in a circle. (30 mins)
- 8:30 Overflow all together from message and group reading (30 mins)
- 9:00 Dismiss/pick up children

#### **Saturday Morning**

- 9:00 Singing/Prayer/Pray-reading
- 9:15 **Message 2** (60 mins)
- 10:15 **Group reading and fellowship #2** – Allow everyone an opportunity to pray, read, and fellowship. It may be best to do this one by one in a circle. (30 mins)
- 10:45 Break
- 11:00 **Message 3** (60 mins)
- 12:00 Overflow (15 mins)
- 12:15 Lunch



## FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING THE VITAL GROUPS

- I. The God-ordained way is intrinsically a way of LIFE and can be carried out only by life.
- II. A vital group is a BLENDED GROUP, not a collection or a meeting of individual saints.
- III. A vital group that is up to the biblical standard HAS three characteristics—it has a purpose, a nature, and a condition.
- IV. Because a vital group has these three characteristics, it IS vital—living and active.
- V. Because of what a vital group has and is, it DOES four things—it begets, nourishes, perfects, and builds.
- VI. The ACTUALITY, PRATICALITY, AND REALITY of the building up of the Body of Christ is for the producing of the overcomers, the perfected God-men, today's Zion, and can be realized in the vital groups.



## FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING THE VITAL GROUPS

(Message 1 – Friday evening)

### I. The God-ordained way is intrinsically a way of LIFE and can be carried out only by life.

#### A. Daily

**Leviticus 6:12** - And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it must not go out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it and shall burn the fat of the peace offerings on it.

**Exodus 16:21** - And they gathered it morning by morning, each one according to his eating; and when the sun became hot, it melted.

**Psalms 88:9** - My eye wastes away at the affliction; I have called out to You, O Jehovah, every day; I have spread out my hands to You.

**Acts 17:11** - Now these people were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.

**Luke 9:23** - And He said to *them* all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

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

#### B. Small

**Zechariah 4:10** - For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; they are the eyes of Jehovah running to and fro on the whole earth.

##### **Exodus 16:14-15a**

**14** And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

**15** And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, "It is manna:" ...

**Revelation 19:8** - And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

##### **John 1:29, 32**

**29** The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

**32** And John testified, saying, I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He abode upon Him.

**Matthew 15:27** - And she said, Yes, Lord, for even the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

##### **Exodus 23:29-30**

**29** I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the animals of the field multiply against you.

**30** Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have become fruitful and inherit the land.

#### C. Slow

##### **Mark 4:26-28**

**26** And He said, So is the kingdom of God: as if a man cast seed on the earth,

**27** And sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and lengthens – how, he does not know.

**28** The earth bears fruit by itself: first a blade, then an ear, then full grain in the ear.

### **Galatians 6:8-9**

**8** For he who sows unto his own flesh will reap corruption of the flesh, but he who sows unto the Spirit will of the Spirit reap eternal life.

**9** And let us not lose heart in doing what is good, for in the proper season we will reap if we do not faint.

## **D. Hidden and Personal**

### **Luke 5:15-16**

**15** But the word concerning Him spread abroad all the more, and great crowds came together to hear *Him* and to be healed from their infirmities.

**16** But He Himself *often* withdrew in the wilderness and prayed.

### **Mark 1:34-36**

**34** And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and He cast out many demons and did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

**35** And rising very early in the morning, *while it was still* night, He went out and went away to a deserted place, and there He prayed.

**36** And Simon and those with him hunted for Him,

### **Matthew 14:19, 21, 23**

**19** And after commanding the crowds to recline on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave *them* to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds.

**21** And those who ate were about five thousand men, apart from women and children.

**23** And after He sent the crowds away, He went up to the mountain privately to pray. And when night fell, He was there alone.

**Matthew 6:6** - But you, when you pray, enter into your private room, and shut your door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

**Song of Songs 1:6b** - ...They made me keeper of the vineyards, But my own vineyard I have not kept.

**Colossians 2:7** - Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

**2 Kings 19:30** - And the remnant of those who have escaped of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

## **E. Mysterious**

**Colossians 1:27** - To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,

## **F. Corporate**

**2 Timothy 2:22** - But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

**Song of Songs 1:4a** - Draw me; we will run after you ...

### **Psalms 92:13-14**

**13** Planted in the house of Jehovah, They will flourish in the courts of our God.



14 They will still bring forth fruit in old age; They will be full of sap and green;

**Hebrews 10:25** - 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.

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor;

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls and does not have another to lift him up!

11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm. But how can one be warm alone?

And while a man may prevail against the one, the two will withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

12 And while a man may prevail against the one, the two will withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

**II. A vital group is a BLENDED GROUP, not a collection or a meeting of individual saints.**

1 Cor. 12:24 – But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,

**A. The meaning of blended**

The word blended also means “adjusted,” “harmonized,” “tempered,” and “mingled.”...In order to be harmonized, blended, adjusted, mingled, and tempered in the Body life, we have to go through the cross and be by the Spirit, dispensing Christ to others for the sake of the Body of Christ.

*(The Divine and Mystical Realm, Chapter 6, Section 5)*

**B. The type of the meal offering**

**1 Cor. 5:6-7a**

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened...

**Lev. 2:1, 11, 13**

1 And when anyone presents an offering of a meal offering to Jehovah, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it.

11 No meal offering that you present to Jehovah shall be made with leaven, for you shall not burn any leaven or any honey as an offering by fire to Jehovah.

13 And every offering of your meal offering you shall season with salt, and you shall not omit the salt of the covenant of your God from your meal offering; with all your offerings you shall present salt.

In the vital groups we need to be blended by much and thorough prayer, as fine flour of the wheat, with all the members of our group, with the Spirit as the oil, through the death of Christ as the salt, and in the resurrection of Christ as the frankincense, into a dough for the Lord (1 Cor. 5:6-7a; Lev. 2:1-13).

*(Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Chapter 10, Section 2)*

**C. The cross dealing with individualism for the blending**

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

**1. Killing our preference and taste**

**Phil. 2:2a** – Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

**1 Cor. 12:25** – That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.

**2. Dealing with arguments over small matters that damage the oneness**

In serving the Lord, we will encounter severe tests, particularly in regard to small things; Satan always hides himself in small matters in order to tempt us. Many times it is because of small things that the brothers are not in one accord....We should use all our strength and even be willing to be martyred in order to guard the matters of the Lord's person and the basic truths related to Him. Besides this, we are all brothers and sisters, and there is nothing worth arguing about in regard to our service.

*(The Ground of the Church and the Service of the Body, Chapter 6, Section 2)*

**3. Dealing with offenses**

**1 Cor. 6:17** – Already then it is altogether a defeat to you that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

**D. The application of the cross by receiving the word as the Spirit**

**Eph. 6:17-18**

**17** And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,

**18** By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit

**1. Killing our offended emotion directly and killing the evil power in the air indirectly**

This is something I have learned through many years of experience. I am not a "marble" person who cannot be offended. I have often been offended by others in the church life or in my family life. How have I been able to get through all the offenses? I get through by receiving the word as the Spirit. The word I receive as the Spirit then becomes the sword to slay the enemy. Apparently, the sword of the Spirit kills my emotion; actually, it kills the evil spirit in the air who takes advantage of my emotion. Whereas my emotion is killed directly, the evil spirit is killed indirectly. In this way I have been able to get through the offenses.

*(Teachers' Training, Chapter 2, Section 3)*

**2. A spiritual antibiotic killing the germs within us**

We may compare this kind of killing to the effect of an antibiotic on the germs that cause illness in our body. In order for our body to be saved, the germs need to be killed by an antibiotic. The word that we receive in a living way as the Spirit is a spiritual antibiotic that kills the "germs" within us. When the germs are killed, the evil forces in the air have no way to take advantage of us. Then we can live a healthy Body life, a healthy church life.

*(Teachers' Training, Chapter 2, Section 4)*

### 3. Preserving us in the church life

This is the way I have been preserved in the church life and in my ministry for so many years. Apart from the killing of the word as the Spirit, my ministry would have been terminated. Once again I would emphasize that we need to receive the word of God in a living way so that in our experience the Spirit becomes the killing sword. When the word becomes the Spirit, the Spirit becomes the sword—the sword of the Spirit that kills the germs in us and the evil spirits in the air. In this way the Body, the church life, and our ministry are saved. This will enable our ministry to have a long life.

*(Teachers' Training, Chapter 2, Section 4)*

## E. The practicality of blending

### 1. Stopping to fellowship

Fellowship tempers us, fellowship adjusts us, fellowship harmonizes us, and fellowship mingles us.... Blending means that we should always stop to fellowship with others.

*(The Divine and Mystical Realm, Chapter 6, Section 5)*

**Phil. 3:3** – For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh,

**Rom. 12:3** – For I say, through the grace given to me, to every one who is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to be sober-minded, as God has apportioned to each a measure of faith.

**Phil. 2:3** – Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves;

**Philemon 14** – But without your mind I did not want to do anything, that your goodness would not be as of necessity, but voluntary.

### 2. Not doing things for our interest or according to our taste but for the church

**1 John 1:3** – That which we have seen and heard we report also to you that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

**Footnote 3** – ...Fellowship here indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining with others for a certain common purpose. Hence, to have fellowship with the apostles, to be in the fellowship of the apostles, and to have fellowship with the Triune God in the apostles' fellowship is to put aside our private interests and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God's purpose...



## FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING THE VITAL GROUPS

(Message 2 – Saturday morning, first session)

### III. A vital group that is up to the biblical standard HAS three characteristics—it has a purpose, a nature, and a condition.

#### A. Moving from a hall centered church life to a home centered church life and becoming vital groups

1. The hall—focusing on good meetings
2. The homes—focusing on people
3. The vital groups—focusing on blending

#### B. The three main characteristics of the vital groups

1. Purpose—for the increase, the perfecting, and the building up of the church

##### **Acts 2:46-47**

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

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

##### **Ephesians 4:12**

For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

2. Nature—spiritual

#### a. To be spiritual means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, within and without

##### **Acts 13:52**

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit

##### **Acts 4:31b**

...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

#### b. In Acts the disciples experienced the outpoured Spirit again and again

##### **Acts 2:1, 4**

**1** And as the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, they were all together in the same place...

**4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, even as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth.

##### **Acts 9:17**

And Ananias went away and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, he said, Saul, brother, the Lord has sent me – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road on which you were coming – so that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit

##### **Acts 10:44**

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those hearing the word.

**3. Condition—love (loving one another in oneness and with one accord)**

I have had the opportunity to serve in many different countries and churches, and it has been my experience and observation that the churches can take two different ways to gain the increase. One way is to get everyone excited to preach the gospel and to do a work of effort to gain the increase. However, in the end this way does not produce much increase.

The other way to gain the increase is the way of love. When there is the element of love between all the saints, this love overflows to the unbelievers, and when this happens, there is the increase. It is not our working that brings in people. Doing a great work may be effective to a certain degree, but the greatest work, the work that produces the most increase, is the work that is out of love.

Love is the way of the vital groups, which Brother Lee showed to us and into which we must enter. The very element and expression of the vital groups should be love. In the vital groups we should love the members, and when the Lord brings us in contact with a new one, we should love him into the church. The vital groups are absolutely of the Lord, and this way of living in the vital groups and carrying out the vital groups will produce great results. However, for there to be the increase, one element must be present—love. If in a vital group love prevails and love is the center of everything, there will be the increase. If we love one another and all the new ones, if we pray for the new ones and for one another, and if we have fellowship, the Lord will bless us with the increase. Moreover, if all the vital groups gain the increase, the church will gradually grow. The way to gain the increase is not by our endeavoring or working but by love. Love produces the greatest result.—B.P.

*(The Ministry Magazine, vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 170-171)*

**John 13:34-35**

**34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

**35** By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

**John 15:17**

These things I command you that you may love one another.

**17<sup>1</sup>** This is to love one another in the Lord’s life, the divine life, in the Lord’s love, and in His commission of fruit-bearing. Life is the source, love is the condition, and fruit-bearing is the goal. If we all live by the Lord’s life as the source, in the Lord’s love as the condition, and for fruit-bearing as the goal, we surely will love one another. Having different sources of life, different conditions, or different goals will separate us and prevent us from loving one another.

*(Holy Bible Recovery Version, John 15:17 footnote 17<sup>1</sup>)*

**IV. Because a vital group has these three characteristics, it IS vital—living and active.**

Recently, I felt burdened to use the term *vital groups*. My understanding in using the word *vital* is that a vital group is living and full of activities. You may be a living person, but if you do not know how to take any action, you are not vital....To be vital is to be living and very active, full of activities. The vital groups are groups that are living and full of activities.

If the saints who have the burden to be in the vital groups do not move, do not act, in any kind of meeting, the church is finished.

*(Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Chapter 24, Section 1)*

## **A. Living**

### **1. Individual – thorough fellowship, confession, consecration, prayer, and filling with the Spirit**

One day in August 1931 the Lord spoke within me. He asked me, “What are you doing here? Are you living or dead? What kind of Christian are you?” This was a real crisis for me. The very next day I went up to a little mountain close to my home to pray. I went there early in the morning and knelt down and cried out to the Lord, saying, “Lord, be merciful to me! There must be something wrong with me. Week after week I attend Christian meetings, study the Word, and pray, but I am still so dead and weak, and for many years I have not brought one soul to You.” When I cried out in this way, the Holy Spirit flooded through me like a mighty tide. I realized that I was sinful, dirty, and rebellious. I cannot describe how I felt at that time. I simply prostrated myself on the ground and told the Lord, “Lord, I am sinful. I am the most sinful person in the whole world.” As I confessed to the Lord in this way, tears came down my face. Later, as I was on my way down the mountain, I was filled with happiness, joy, peace, and a heavenly feeling. At that time I did not know where I was. I could not tell if I was in the heavens or on the earth. From that day on, for more than seven months I rose up early every morning and went up to that mountain. Day by day I went up to the mountain to pray to the Lord in a living way.

*(Contacting the Lord, Being Filled in Spirit, and Having Proper Christian Meetings for the Accomplishment of God's Eternal Purpose, Chapter 3, Section 2)*

### **2. Two or more – fellowship, prayer, and care**

We will not be vital if we do not pass through the stages of fellowship, the confession of our sins, reconsecration, a prayer life, and the filling of the Spirit. Also, we need to have a thorough and intimate fellowship with one another. We may come together as groups and yet not have this kind of fellowship. Instead, we are all very reserved. We open up ourselves to a certain extent and no more. We like to cover and hide many things concerning our situation. As a result, there is no thorough fellowship. When there is no thorough fellowship, there is no thorough blending. Then we cannot see the proper mutual intercession, the proper mutual care, and the proper mutual shepherding. This shows that we are not that vital.

*(Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Chapter 24, Section 1)*

#### **a. A nest to which the Lord can add**

##### **Acts 2:46-47**

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

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

**b. Branches loving one another to express the divine life in fruit bearing**

**John 15:12, 16-17**

**12** This is My commandment, that you love one another even as I have loved you.

**16** You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

**17** These things I command you that you may love one another.

**c. The spiritual nature and the loving condition of the vital groups**

**d. LIFE – watchful and ready; for life we need oil**

**Matt. 24:42-44**

**42** Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord comes.

**43** But know this, that if the householder had known in which watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.

**44** For this reason you also be ready, because at an hour when you do not expect it, the Son of Man is coming.

**Matt. 25:4** – But the prudent took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

**e. The opposite of Sardis**

**Rev. 3:1**

And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

**B. Active – prayer, fellowship, and coordination**

**1. Work being carried out as the spontaneous overflow of life**

**2. The purpose of the vital groups**

**3. FUNCTION – faithful (toward the Lord) and prudent (toward the believers); for service, work, we need the talent, the spiritual gift**

**Matt. 24:45**

Who then is the faithful and prudent slave, whom the master has set over his household to give them food at the proper time?

**Matt. 25:15**

To one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability. And he went abroad.

**4. The opposite of Laodicea**

**Rev. 3:15**

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.







## FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING THE VITAL GROUPS

(Message 3 – Saturday morning, second session)

### V. Because of what a vital group has and is, it DOES four things—it begets, nourishes, perfects, and builds.

#### A. Begetting

1. Speaking to people about the Lord is the spontaneous desire of the divine life within every believer.
2. Going out on the gospel with others gives us boldness.
3. Having been in the fellowship with the brothers and sisters even for a short time, you already have enough content and utterance to speak something.
4. There is power of the gospel in your speaking the Lord as a young person. It almost doesn't matter what you say, or even if you are not a polished speaker. The young, tender branches on a plant are the ones that bear the fruit.

#### B. Follow-up

1. The definition
  - a. Follow-up is the parental care given to new or young believers in order to bring them to spiritual growth and fruitfulness—1 Thess. 2:7, 11a
  - b. Follow-up is intensely detailed and personal, and it takes a great deal of effort.
  - c. Follow-up is, indeed, a life imparted into another; it is imparting your life into somebody else—1 Thess. 2:8a; John 10:11
2. The basis of follow-up
  - a. Having a heart of love to care for people—1 Thess. 2:8b; 3:12
  - b. Our care for others should be initiated from our love for Christ—John 21:15
  - c. Having an intimate concern for others—2 Cor. 8:16
3. The practice of follow-up
  - a. Personal contact (regular face-to-face and/or messaging)—Rom. 1:11; 3 John 13-14a
  - b. Prayer (personal and with companions)—Rom. 1:9; Col. 1:3
  - c. Fellowship (with the Lord and with companions)—Prov. 27:23
  - d. Minister the riches of Christ according to the need and the new one's capacity—Eph. 4:29; 1 Cor. 3:2a
  - e. Being available to the new believers according to their convenience—Acts 20:31
  - f. Remaining fruit requiring us to “remain” in three directions and requiring them to be brought into the same three directions—Exo. 21:5; Matt. 1:5, footnote 1
4. The price tag of follow-up
  - a. Your time—Mark 3:14; Rev. 12:11
  - b. Your self—John 10:11; 2 Cor. 12:15a
  - c. Your convenience—Acts 20:31

5. The results of follow-up
  - a. We grow in life—Prov. 11:25
  - b. We are saved from a host of things—1 Tim. 2:15a
  - c. A joyful life—John 15:11; 1 Thess. 2:20
  - d. Fruit that remains and multiplies—John 15:16; 2 Tim. 2:2
  - e. Boasting before our Lord at His coming—1 Thess. 2:19

**C. Recognizing the seasons and prioritizing our labor**

1. Sow, grow, reap

*The Kingdom of the Heavens Being like a Mustard Seed*

*The Word of God Being Sown in the World*

The Lord Jesus said, "The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed." The mustard seed is His word, just as the seed in the previous section is His word. It is something that comes absolutely from God. The life of this seed and everything about this seed are of God. Concerning the seed verse 31 says, "Which a man took and sowed in his field." The preceding verses indicate that the field is the world. They also show us that the man is the Lord Himself. This means that the Lord sows the word of God into the world.

*(Messages for Building Up New Believers, Vol. 3, Chapter 11, Section 12)*

2. Prioritizing our labor by identifying the signs of a seeker who potentially would meet with the local church
  - a. Why do we need to prioritize?
    - i. Not all ground is the same—Matt. 13:3-5, 7-8
    - ii. Our time and capacity are limited
  - b. What are some signs of a seeker?
    - i. Hunger for the Word—Psalm 119:140; 1 Pet. 2:2
    - ii. Attracted to Christ, versus other things
    - iii. Positive response to the interpreted Word, versus being full
    - iv. Positive response to the meetings, versus talking about their meeting
    - v. Two-way fellowship
    - vi. Willing to pay a price
    - vii. Having more eyes and being open to more eyes. This will save us from being emotionally invested without proper discernment—Phil. 1:9
    - viii. Following the anointing—1 John 2:27m

**VI. The ACTUALITY, PRATICALITY, AND REALITY of the building up of the Body of Christ is for the producing of the overcomers, the perfected God-men, today's Zion, and can be realized in the vital groups.**

You must realize that there is a great lack, a shortage, that is, the reality of the Body of Christ. It is for this reason that there is a need for the blending....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, Chapter 2, Sections 2-3)*

**A. We need a vision of the ultimate work of God's recovery, the recovery of the Body testimony**

We believe that God is recovering the most difficult thing today. What worries us the most today is the fulfillment of Ephesians 4. It seems as though we do not have to worry about the fulfillment of John 3:16. We are not afraid that it will not be fulfilled, and we are not worried. Suppose someone says that he has believed and asks what he should do if he still has not received eternal life. He has believed, yet he has not seen any result. What should he do? We are not worried about this. I have read the New Testament more than two hundred times. I am not worried about any other passage. I have even read Revelation a few hundred times. I am not worried about that book either. However, I am worried about Ephesians 4. I am concerned about how this passage of the Scriptures will be fulfilled....Yet, brothers and sisters, we believe that there will be a day when God's recovery will reach the fulfillment of Ephesians 4. God is doing a recovery work everywhere. The ultimate work among all these works may very well be the recovery of the Body testimony.

*(Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 3) Vol. 57: The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, Chapter 22, Section 1)*

**Eph. 4:12, 16**

**12** For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ,

**16** Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

1. The life we received is a Body life
2. All the one-talented members brought into function (Matt. 25:18)
3. The whole church rising up and coordinating to preach the gospel
4. The whole church involved in the care of the new believers
5. The church building itself up, or perfecting itself, in love
6. Made practical in the vital groups

**B. We need to be Body conscious**

**1 Cor. 12:12, 14-27**

**12** For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ.

**14** For the body is not one member but many.

**15** If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

**16** And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not that because of this it is not of the body.

**17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were the hearing, where would the smelling be?

**18** But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, even as He willed.

**19** And if all were one member, where would the body be?

**20** But now the members are many, but the body one.

**21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

**22** But much rather the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

**23** And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness,

**24** But our comely members have no need. But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked,

**25** That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another.

**26** And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with it.

**27** Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

1. Being delivered from the self and not being individualistic
2. Needing to see one's own limitations and pursuing submission
3. Being brought into a fellowship and a coordination with one another
4. Receiving the riches and the protection from the members

**C. Consecrating ourselves for God's ultimate recovery**

For the building up of the vital groups, we need to make, with much and thorough prayer, a corporate Nazarite's consecration for the Lord (Num. 6:1-4). We need to do this until we are blended, until we become dough. All the members of a group should come together to consecrate themselves as one entity, as a group of Nazarites, to give the Lord a corporate consecration. We need to let the Lord gain our whole group as one entity for the carrying out of His New Testament economy. Our corporate consecration should not be to fulfill any kind of formal duty but to serve the Lord according to the organic leading of the Spirit.

*(Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Chapter 10, Section 4)*

## READING IN GROUPS #1 (Friday Evening)

### CHAPTER ONE

#### THE WAY TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSE

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; John 1:4; 6:35, 57; 4:14, 24; 6:63

#### GOD'S PURPOSE

God's economy and God's building both depend on the tree of life....

#### EATING OF THE TREE OF LIFE

In Genesis 1 there is the purpose, the intention, of God, but there is not the way to fulfill God's purpose, the way to attain God's intention. The way is not in Genesis 1 but in Genesis 2, and what is the way? The way is the tree of life (v. 9)....The way to fulfill God's purpose is seen in the tree of life. Even the matter of authority to represent God depends on the tree of life. If you do not have the tree of life, God within you as your life, how can you exercise His authority? For these two aspects of God's purpose, God's expression and God's representation, we need God to be life to us. We need God to live within us that we may be His very expression and His very representation....

After God created man, He did not say, "Adam, you have to realize you are a little creature, and I am your great Creator. I am always on the throne, and you always have to prostrate yourself to worship Me." There is not such a record in Genesis....Genesis tells us that after God created man, He put man in front of the tree of life....This tree of life is God in Christ as the Spirit to be life to us. It is the Triune God, the Father in the Son, and the Son as the Spirit. Before we received the Lord, we may not have thought anything about God. But when we got saved or revived, we might have immediately made up our mind to serve the Lord, to do our best to do good deeds to please Him, and to "go to church" to worship Him. These thoughts, which are according to our natural concept, are wrong. God's intention is not that we serve Him, do good to please Him, or that we worship Him in a religious, ritualistic way. But God's intention is that we eat Him. We have to eat Him. The first picture of God's dealing with man is not a picture of doing but a picture of eating....

We have to believe in the Lord Jesus because we need Him as our life (3:16, 36). To believe in Him is to receive Him into us as life (1:12-13). He is not only our objective Savior but also our subjective life. We need such a life. After receiving Him, the problem with us is not related to work, to service, or to worship, but to eating. How do you eat, what do you eat, and how much do you eat? Immediately after the creation of man, God put man in front of the tree of life that man may take the tree of life as his food. This simply means that God presented Himself to man as life in the form of food. God had no intention to ask man to do things for Him. God's intention is that man would simply take God Himself as his food, that man would feed on God.

#### CHANGING OUR CONCEPT FROM DOING TO EATING

...God's first intention is not to have man toiling but to have man feasting and feeding on Him, to have man enjoying God Himself. John 4:24 tells us that we must worship God, but we must ask what the word *worship* means. According to the full context of John 4, the Lord's meaning is that to drink of Him as the living water in verse 14 is to worship Him in verse 24. When you drink of Him as the living water, that means that you worship Him. The more you drink of Him, the more you will be filled with Him, and the more He will be worshipped by you. The best way to worship the Lord is to drink of Him, to feed on Him, to enjoy Him, to take Him in....

You have to see the vision. Once the Lord enlightens you, you will say, "Lord, I want nothing to do with doing, so I will not ask You to help me do anything. But help me to feed on You, to eat You." I have been learning this lesson for more than fifty years. At times I drifted back. Whenever I began to ask the Lord to help me, I immediately had to stop myself and have a turn to tell the Lord, "O Lord, I open myself to You. You are my enjoyment."...

## HOW TO ENJOY CHRIST

We also have to learn how to enjoy Him. He is life, food, water, and air to us, but how can we enjoy Him? If we are going to enjoy the Lord, we have to open ourselves, not superficially but in a deep way. We should not only open our mind, or even our heart, but we also have to open our spirit. You may say that you are so open to the Lord. But how open are you, and how deeply do you open to the Lord? A brother may seem to be open to everybody, but he may only be open superficially. He is not open deeply. Many times when we come to the Lord, we just open our mind but not our whole heart. Sometimes we may open our heart, but some deep part within us may still be closed. We have to open ourselves from the depths of our being. If we would learn to enjoy the Lord, we have to learn this one lesson—how to open ourselves. We have to open ourselves by opening our mind, our heart, and eventually by opening our spirit. We have to open the depths of our entire being to the Lord.

I once thought that to drink of the Lord meant that the Lord was outside of me. But later on from experience and from the reading of the Word, especially John 4, I found that to drink of the Lord is not in this way. Since the time we received the Lord, the Lord as the very fountain of living water is within us. Do not consider that the fountain is in the heavens or that it is something outside of you. You have to realize that the Lord as the living water is within you as the living fountain in the deepest part of your being. He is in your spirit. John 4:14 says, “The water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life.” In this verse we should underline the words *in him*. This fountain is “in him,” in us. In what part of us? John 4:24 says, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit.” If you read the whole context of John 4, you will realize that this living water, the fountain within us, is in our spirit. If you are going to drink of the Lord, do not think that the Lord as someone outside of you will come into you. The Lord is within you already in your spirit. Now you have to learn to open yourself. Open your mind, your heart, and your spirit to the Lord. Then the fountain will spring up. When this fountain wells up and springs up, it will water you, and you will drink of Him.

This fountain is not something from outside but something from within the depths of your being, your spirit. You have this living fountain within you, but this living fountain may be shut up, concealed, confined, and closed deep within you. There is no need for Him to come in, but there is a need for you to open yourself that He may spring up. When He springs up within you, you will be watered.... Today the tree of life is not outside of us but within us. We have such a living supply within us, so now we have to learn how to open ourselves to the Lord as our living, inward life supply.

We should pray, “Lord, help me to open myself to You.” To open yourself is not so easy. If you try to do this, you will find out where you are. You may only open to a certain degree. You may not open deeply. You have to learn the lesson to try to open yourself. For a person to be saved by the Lord in a strong way depends upon how much he repents. This means it depends upon how deeply this person opens himself to the Lord. We may have been saved for many years, and we may have learned many lessons with the Lord, but even today we still need to learn one lesson—to open ourselves from the depths of our being. If you will go to the Lord and pray, “Lord, help me to open myself to You,” then you will see that the living water will spring up within you and flow out. This flow of the living water brings you the supply of life....

We must learn to come to the Lord in a new way. We must learn how to contact the Lord by opening ourselves from within. You have to say, “Lord, help me to open my mind, to open my heart, and even to open my spirit, to open my entire being, the depths of my being, to You. Lord, reveal Your riches to me and impart Yourself into me that I may enjoy You.” If you will open yourself to the Lord in such a way, you will see how real, available, and precious the Lord is. You will sense His presence within, and you will be filled with Him. He is not only the life to you, but He is also the food (the bread of life), the drink (the water of life), and the air (the breath of life) to you. All these things are related to the Lord as the tree of life. You have to learn how to take Him in, how to enjoy Him, how to feed on Him, how to drink of Him, and even how to breathe Him in. There is only one way for you to do this—learn to open yourself.

Open yourself to the Lord and learn to stay with Him for some time. During this time, forget about your needs, your business, your family, your home affairs, your work, and everything else. Just open



yourself to the Lord and enjoy Him for a length of time. Feed on Him, drink of Him, and breathe Him in. Regardless of how busy we are, we have to spend three times a day to sit down to eat something. The most healthy practice is to pay full attention to what you are eating and not to anything else. If you try to take care of other things while you are eating, your enjoyment of the food will be limited, and you may not digest it so well. Sometimes I do not like to receive phone calls while I am eating. Likewise, while I am praying and having a time with the Lord, I do not like to receive phone calls. We all need to set apart a time, free from all outside disturbances, in which we open our entire being to the Lord just to enjoy Him....

Learn to open yourself. Then you will enjoy the Lord as the tree of life. With the tree of life is the flow of living water and the fresh air as the breath of life. If you open yourself to the Lord, the Lord will spring up from within you. Then you will be nourished, watered, refreshed, and strengthened from within. You will be right in your person, in your being, in what you are, not just in what you do. May the Lord bring us into His intention, that is, into the enjoyment of Himself as our life and life supply that we may express Him in His image and represent Him with His authority on the earth.

*(The Tree of Life, Chapter 1, Section 1-2)*

## READING IN GROUPS #2 (Saturday Morning)

### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

#### MORE FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING THE LIVING CONTENTS OF THE VITAL GROUPS

We have pointed out that in the group meeting we should have the proper, intimate, and thorough fellowship with one another by exercising our spirit with much and thorough prayer. This is the first section of the vital group meeting, which should occupy about twenty-five minutes. In this section of the meeting, there should be the elements of fellowshiping and interceding, caring, shepherding, and visitation. The second section of the meeting, which should occupy about thirty minutes, is the teaching in mutuality with the mutual asking and answering of questions.

#### HAVING VITAL GROUPS, NOT FORMAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

I have stressed in the past that the group meeting should not be a formal, religious worship service. But after attending some of the group meetings, I have observed that we are still somewhat having a religious meeting, a worship meeting, a kind of service. This is because we are too formal. In the group meetings, we should fellowship freely, sing freely, pray freely, and ask and answer questions freely without formality. When we sing a hymn, we do not necessarily have to sing it in order from the first verse to the last verse. We may begin with the last verse or with any verse according to the leading of the Spirit. We should not sing the hymns in a dead way but in a living, exercised way with the release of our spirit.

We need *vital* groups, not formal, religious, and dead groups. We need to pray, “Lord, make us vital in singing, vital in speaking, and vital in everything.” The Psalms tell us that we need to give a ringing shout and make a joyful noise to the Lord (71:23; 100:1). Our habit of being formal limits us in the meetings of the church. We should be “crazy” in the Spirit, but our craziness should be spontaneous and normal, not a kind of demonstration or performance. In our vital groups we should be living and exercised in our singing and praying.

#### TEACHING ONE ANOTHER IN MUTUALITY THROUGH THE MUTUAL ASKING AND ANSWERING OF QUESTIONS

Through the exercise and release of our spirit, we will spontaneously have some teaching in mutuality. A brother may say, “Brothers and sisters, we recently heard from Psalm 68 about little Benjamin, the princes of Judah, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Do you know what this signifies?” This might become a subject raised up for your fellowship. We can have this kind of fellowship in many ways.

Another person may say, “We were told that we need to be dealt with in our disposition, character, and peculiar traits. What is the difference between these three items?” We have said that we need to deal with these three items, but how many of us know what they are? Our disposition is what we are in our natural being by birth. Our character is formed mostly according to our habit. We may be a slow person in our disposition according to our birth. But our doing things carelessly is not according to our birth but according to our habit by practice to become a part of our character. A person is careless because he has never been disciplined to do things in a careful way. We need a change in our practice for a change in our character. Our peculiar traits are our biased and warped characteristics as the expression of our natural life. To have the mutual fellowship about the significance of dealing with our disposition, character, and peculiar traits can be very profitable.

In the vital group meeting, someone may say that he has a problem in understanding John 7. He may ask why John 7:39 says that “the Spirit was not yet.” Then the other members of the group can answer his question in a mutual way. We need this kind of teaching in mutuality with the mutual asking and answering of questions.

#### CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER SO AS TO INCITE ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

Verses 24 and 25 of Hebrews 10 are the basis for our practice of the group meetings. 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.” These verses first say that we need to consider one another. This implies that we have a genuine care for all the members of our vital group. To care for one another means to consider one another. Today we may not care for others. We do not really care whether or not a certain brother comes to the meeting or whether or not a certain sister is sick. The genuine care for one another needs to be recovered among us.

Proper wives always have their husbands in their consideration. A sister may make sure that her husband has a coat to wear as he is leaving the house. This means that she is considering her husband, caring for her husband. We need to have this kind of practical care for one another. To consider one another in a practical way is to love one another. We say that we love one another, but in what way do we love? We may not care for anyone in a practical way. Love means practical care and consideration. When we consider one another, we incite one another to love and good works. We stir up one another. If someone cares for me, that spontaneously stirs me up, incites me, to love and good works. *To love* here is not an infinitive. *Love* is a noun, just as *good works* is a noun. We incite one another to love and good works by caring for one another, considering one another.

We need the intimate fellowship with one another with the practical care and shepherding. One sister may point out that another sister in the group is absent because she is having some particular trouble. After sharing with the other group members the nature of the problem, the group can pray for her and fellowship about how to give her the practical care and help.

If a brother has lost his job, we should pray for him. We should also consider his material situation. This is real love. James in his Epistle says, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and lacks daily food, and any one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and filled, yet you do not give them the necessities of the body, what is the profit?” (2:15-16). In his first Epistle, John says, “Whoever has the livelihood of the world and sees that his brother has need and shuts up his affections from him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue but in deed and truthfulness” (3:17-18). If we see brothers who are in need and merely tell them that the Lord will take care of them, that is not love. That is vain talk. We should care for one another, consider one another, in a practical way.

This kind of care stirs up our love and our good works. These good works may refer to small things or big things that are related to God's economy. A saint in your group may not think about God's economy. God's economy seems too abstract and unattainable to him. He thinks that we talk much about God's economy but that this has nothing to do with our present need in our daily life. Through our loving care for this brother, he will be incited to consider God's economy. Without such a loving care and consideration of one another, we may be very indifferent toward the things of God's economy concerning Christ and the church. But once a brother is loved in some practical care, that impresses him and incites him to think about the Christian life and about God's economy. When a brother who is Italian cares for another brother who is Chinese, this is a marvelous testimony. This shows that the different races are swallowed up in the new man and testifies of the practical love among the members of the Body of Christ.

Paul says that we should consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works, not abandoning our own assembling together. Today our vital group meeting is our own assembling together. For the Hebrew believers at Paul's time to abandon their own assembling together would have been to return to the Jewish way of meeting and to abandon their assembling together as Christians. Paul exhorted them not to abandon their own assembling together as Christians. Hebrews 10:25 says that in the group meetings we should exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day drawing near.

The first thing we have to do in the vital group meetings is to have a thorough fellowship together so that we can know the members of our group in an intimate way. The more thorough our fellowship is, the better. Do we know the occupations of the saints in our vital group and where each one works? Do we know the first and last names of every member of our vital group with their proper pronunciation? By considering these questions, we can see that our fellowship has not been thorough. To love one another involves a lot. We need to endeavor to know one another intimately in the Lord. If someone is absent from our vital group meeting, we should immediately ask where he or she is. We say that our group should be blended, but our blending has not been completed, because we do not know each other thoroughly. When

you take action together in serving the Lord, you will see that this is very important. Week after week we have been meeting together, yet we still do not really know one another.

We should know each other's situation and condition in an up-to-date way. Then we will realize there is the need of practical care. If we realize that a sister is sick, we can fellowship about how to render the proper and practical care to her. We can fellowship about who would be burdened to go or about who could and should go. In the larger prayer meetings of the church, we pray in a general way, but the prayer for one another in the groups is specific with a view to the practical care and shepherding. We may pray for a few minutes, and then we can arrange for some person or persons to visit our sister. This is the shepherding. Later, the one who visits should let the group know the situation of this sister. This is what is implied when we say that the group meetings are eighty percent of the church life.

The new ones whom we bring to our group meetings will not merely be taught by us outwardly. They will observe our practice. This is similar to the children in a family learning things by observing the way the family lives and acts. The new ones will follow the pattern that they see and hear in our vital groups. This is why we must learn how to fellowship with one another and how to get ourselves released.

*(Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups, Chapter 17, Section 1)*

(Lord's Day Morning)

**Working Out the Lord's Present Need in His Recovery  
by Knowing Him, Being Grouped, and Reaching the Nations**

**Overview:**

What does the Lord's recovery need today? Please remember that the Lord's recovery needs a large number of people. In order to produce a large number of people, we must bring in young students; hence, the campus work is a must. We have to bring in a large number of college students and then give them training.

(CWWL, 1994-1997, vol. 1, pages 541-542)

In conclusion, I want to stress again that what is needed among us is a practice of visiting people. The full-timers among us should spend ninety percent of their time for visiting, going to see people again and again. We need to visit people regularly according to a schedule. Then the church will be taken care of and we will gain the increase. By visiting we will gain people, by visiting we will keep people, and by visiting we will help them to grow.

(Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (3), page 86)

**I. To know Him**

**Philippians 3:10** – To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

**1 Peter 1:8** – Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing *Him* at present, yet believing, you exult with joy *that is* unspeakable and full of glory,

**A. By Tasting Him**

**1 Peter 2:3** – If you have tasted that the Lord is good.

**Hebrews 6:4-5**

**4** For it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit

**5** And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

**B. By Him becoming Precious to us**

**1 Peter 2:4, 6-7**

**4** Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men but with God chosen and precious,

**6** For it is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a cornerstone, chosen and precious; and he who believes on Him shall by no means be put to shame."

**7** To you therefore who believe is the preciousness; but to the unbelieving, "The stone which the builders rejected, this has become the head of the corner,"

**II. Being Grouped**

**A. In Harmony**

**Matthew 18:19** – Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

**Acts 2:46-47**

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

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

**B. By Loving One Another**

**John 13:34** – A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

**1 Peter 4:8** – Above all, have fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins.

**C. By Forgiving One Another**

**Ephesians 4:32** – And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ also forgave you.

**III. Reaching the Nations**

**A. Contacting them by Entering into their Situation**

**John 4:7** – There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give Me [something] to drink.

**John 5:6** – When Jesus saw this one lying [there] and knew that he had already been a long time [in that condition,] He said to him, Do you want to get well?

**B. Being a Gate for Entrance**

**Rev. 22:14** – Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city

**C. Bringing them into the Real Community in the Homes**

**Acts 2:46a** – And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house...