

**Renewal, Revival and Restoration
Talks with Responsible Brothers
October 25, 2020**

Prayer

Lord, we turn our hearts to You. Oh, Lord Jesus! Lord Jesus, thank You we can turn again. Wash us from the day. Thank You for today. We come forward to the Tree of Life. We come forward to You, to gain You and be gained by You, to enter more into Your purpose among the churches. Thank You for our spirit.

Oh, Lord Jesus! Lord Jesus, bless our fellowship today. We just open to Your fresh speaking and moving among us. We pray for these 10 GTCA cities. We pray for a new beginning for the churches. Oh, that the churches would be vital, that the churches would be living, Lord, that the churches would match You in Your expression. Supply us all for this great labor, Lord. Supply us all for this great labor, Lord, in the United States. Oh Lord, supply us that we can just follow You, follow You in Your economy, in Your plan for these GTCA cities.

Lord, we pray for our time this afternoon. Oh Lord, we ask for Your covering blood over all the brothers. We take You as our Shield of Faith, as our Breastplate of Righteousness. Lord, we are still aware we are in the warfare. Lord, as we are here, seeking Your growth and Your increase all across this country of America, we pray again for these 10 cities, these 10 churches. Lord, we pray for both a revival and a renewal. Lord, we look to You as the reality of resurrection. Lord, You are the life-giving Spirit. You are the resurrected Christ. Lord, we pray You will bring forth a third day to all the churches, to all the saints. We

do pray for a new revival. Lord, we pray for a spiritual revitalization. We just pray for this, Lord. You must do this, Lord. Grant us the fellowship we need today, according to You, Lord, according to Your guidance. Amen, Lord. Do this, Lord. Do this for Your name's sake.

Bring us into full normality, even an intensified living, Lord. Bring the sevenfold intensified Spirit to overcome the degradation of this age. Amen, Lord. We pray for a revival and a restoration. Lord, bring us into a new season, where we would be fruitful, living, active, and vital. We give You the fellowship this afternoon. Lead us and guide us.

Our prayer is that You would lead us and guide us. Thank You for these times of fellowship. We are just fully under Your mercy. It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs. We are just here opening to Your speaking Spirit. Speak to us in a fresh way. Cause us these days to go on to higher ground. Save us from all our oldness. Save us from all our old practices. We do pray for a revival these days. Lord, come in and operate. Operate among the churches.

Operate in us, in all the churches. Bring in the third day, the revival, the revitalization, not only in these 10 cities but in Your recovery. Bring in the final revival. Do this for Your imminent second coming. Bring in the revival for Your second coming. Bring us to a level corresponding to Your second coming, Lord. Oh, a revival to meet You, Lord. Oh, a revival that would have You coming right out of us, Lord.

Introductory Word

Well, brothers, this is our third time to have this kind of fellowship, and I continue to have the feeling or to be burdened to not yet get into those 36 lessons on the Proper Church Life. That is not to say that they are not important at all. On the contrary, they are critical. And I have the concern within me that not all of us brothers are adequately grounded in a lot of those things. We may be in the church life. We love the church. We serve the church. But that does not mean that we are so clear, that we have a proper or even a comprehensive view

concerning what really are the basic and necessary factors for the building up of a local church.

Let me suggest this here in the beginning. Although we are not going through these lessons right now, I hope that you will find a way, maybe church by church, three or four or a half a dozen brothers each church, whatever the case may be, to get into these lessons yourselves. Now, we have had two meetings like this already. This is the third one. Perhaps you can at least preview the first six lessons. The first one is on vital living. The second is on truth equipping. The third one, I believe, is on gospel preaching. If you would at least start with the first three, that's module one. Altogether there are twelve modules with three lessons per module. Just read through them. You have an outline and you also have some ministry excerpts to help. How you do it, I leave it up to you, brothers, but at least familiarize yourselves with that material. Maybe start this week with module one on vital living. Next week on truth equipping. Then the next week on gospel preaching, and so on.

Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery

Today, I would like to continue my fellowship on what is the present, primary, or greatest need in the church life in America. Last time, I referenced a book of messages given by Brother Witness Lee back in 1985. That book is on the four major pillars in the Lord's recovery: truth, life, the church, and the gospel. There is no doubt about this. This is universal.

1. Truth-Based

It is very clear that our church life must be based on truth. We need to practice the church life on the base of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15 says, "...the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth." The truth, that is, the Word of God, the divine revelation, is our sole base. We are all here practicing the church life according to the truth. The Word of God remains our unique and highest authority, by which we judge everything. Is it in the Word? Is it part of the divine

revelation? The Lord's recovery is entirely based on this truth, and so it should be the case with our church life. Needless to say; in a proper church life we have to help the saints to know the truth. Thank the Lord that, today, we have not only the Bible – we have this wonderful Recovery Version – and also an abundance of ministry put out by the Living Stream Ministry. We have all the fellowship and messages given by Brother Watchman Nee and Brother Witness Lee, who stood on the shoulders of all the past greatest Christian teachers and who brought all those truths together in an all-inclusive, balanced and consummate way. So today, locality by locality, we do not go by any creeds. We don't go by any kind of traditional teaching to practice our church life. We base our practice on the truth, the Word of God. And today we are blessed to have this Word being interpreted for us.

2. Life-Grounded

The second thing is life. Our church life is life-grounded. It is entirely grounded on life. This is the house of God, the church of the living God. The living God. It's all about life. We are not here just building up a denomination, building up an organization. Everything that we do – the way we live, the way we relate to one another, the way we worship God, the way we carry out the Christian work – is grounded on life, the divine life. So, we pay much attention to the life of the saints, and how they participate in the things of this divine life, the fellowship of life, am I right? The tree of life, the water of life, the breath of life – everything in the Lord's recovery – are grounded on this life, this resurrection life. This should be very clear to us. So, all the time, we're here to help the saints to know this life, to experience this life, to grow in this life, and eventually, even to operate or function by life. And this is our testimony in the recovery.

3. Church-Conscious

Number three, we are clearly here not to be part of Christianity. In a broader sense, you may say we are, but no, we are not. We are here to build up the church of the Lord, the church of God, the church typified in the Old Testament and unveiled to us in the New Testament

by the apostles. That church is God's purpose. That church is God's work. That church is Christ's Body. That church is Christ's wife. That church is the house of God. That church is God's temple. And that church is God's kingdom, etc., etc. So absolutely, in our practice of the church, we are church-conscious. We may do a work for the Lord, but even that should not occupy the first place. Everything should be for the church. Everything should be for the building of the church. The greatest prophecy is Matthew 16: "I will build my church." And I will put a parenthesis here – not only church-conscious, but Body-conscious. The burden that we have received from this ministry is that eventually, this church is the organic Body of Christ. There is only one Body, the mystical Body of Christ in this universe, and every local church is part of that one Body. So, as we practice the church, when we say church-conscious, we are not just referring to a single local church. Practically, we must build up the local churches. We operate as one city, one church. But in actuality, what we are seeking is that we would arrive at the reality of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is simply an aggregate of all the local churches in space and in time. So, we must be conscious of that in the practicing of the church life.

4. Gospel-Commissioned

Lastly, the gospel. We are a gospel-commissioned church life. Again, we are truth-based, life-grounded, church-conscious, and gospel-commissioned. Gospel-commissioned – that is, the gospel remains the great commission of the resurrected Christ, to whom is given all authority in heaven and earth, who commissioned His disciples, His church, His believers to propagate that gospel to disciple the nations and to teach them with the Lord's teaching, the apostles' teaching. So, the gospel is our commission.

These four things will not change, no matter what. And those are the basis for us to build up the local church to practice the church life.

The God-Ordained Way of Practicing the Church Life vs. the Way of the Nations

Now, having said that, last week, I began to say something more on the operational side, the operative side, the functional side, or the practical side of building up a proper church life, a proper local church. I mentioned this with a view to how Christianity – I'm talking about the Protestant Christianity – generally practices the church and even with a view to our experiences in the Lord's recovery. I remember Brother Watchman Nee would quote this phrase from the Old Testament, when Jehovah warned Israel not to go the way of idolatry, the way of apostasy. The Lord would charge them not go or take or follow the way of the nations. Do you remember that? The way of the nations means the nations are taking the way of idolatry. Do not take the way of the nations. Watchman Nee would use that phrase “the way of the nations” and apply it to the Lord's recovery, that we must be careful lest we follow, lest we fall into, the way of the nations. In this case, the nations mean the nations of Christianity, the denominations. The Lord's recovery is not just a recovery of truth, of life, of the church, even of the gospel. The Lord's recovery, over all these years, has endeavored to practice the church life, the Body life, not according to tradition, not according to two thousand years of Christian tradition and human organization, not according to natural concepts and philosophies, and not doing things according to oftentimes a secular way. These things are why there is a degradation of the church.

So, even in our practice, our working out of the church life, we need to be recovered. Recovered. Recovered to the Scripture-revealed way, or we can use this word that Brother Lee used: the God-ordained way. When we talk about a way, it infers practice. You need a way to do things, to carry out certain things. The church, by nature and in essence, is spiritual. It is Christly. It is heavenly. It is resurrectionly. That is true, in essence and nature. But the church today is still an entity that exists on the earth, among men in society, and the church is composed of us, flesh and blood. We are not spirits. We are not angels. We are human beings. Although we are saved and we've been regenerated, today we are still here on the earth and we're here

practicing a church life with a lot of practical needs.

How do we do this? In these last one hundred years of history, actually, even in the Lord's recovery in general, in these last five or six hundred years since Martin Luther, accompanying the recovery of truth, life, the church, and the gospel, there is a parallel recovery of the way to meet and the way to serve. It is by this way that we build up the church or the churches, and eventually, even to build up the Body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul talked about the gifts. The Corinthians were a bit confused by the gifts. They sought gifts in a selfish way and in an unclear and confused way. So, Paul was there to adjust them. Paul spoke much concerning the Body and the church. And he would interchangeably refer to the church and the Body, both in a local way and also in a universal way. It's both.

Brothers, today, in this fellowship, I would like to draw your attention to the practical church life. The Body of Christ finds His practical expression in local churches. You know, in local church after local church, in different localities, we are a miniature Body of Christ, expressing Christ Himself, to be the testimony of Jesus. But for that church life, we need to practice and carry it out in a very practical way.

Aspects of the Practical Church Life that We Need to Build Up

1. Being People-Centered vs. Meeting-Centered

I mentioned a few things last time. Number one, the church should be people-centered and not meeting-centered. You may say, but Brother Lee paid so much attention to meetings. In fact, he wrote a book called *How to Meet*. Even the God-ordained way is about meetings: small group meetings, home meetings, prayer meetings, gospel meetings. Absolutely. We, the churches, the assembly, the *ekklesia*, are those who meet, those who are called out of everything to meet together, to assemble together, to be the church of God in a city. So, yes, we absolutely meet. We are a meeting people. Even in this lockdown time, we still have to meet by Zoom or other platforms. That is true.

But what we have found over many years is while the saints are used to meeting, faithful to meet together week after week, year after year, meeting a lot, it seems that we do not have as much consciousness or burden concerning people. People. We are more for a good meeting than for taking care of people. This is something that has happened among us. We maintain the meetings. We go to the meetings. But in many instances, there is no increase, no growth in number. The saints are not cared for, as they should be. There is not too much care for the dormant or backslidden or the peripheral ones, to shepherd them or to restore them. The gospel is not going out so much, because it's about saving souls, about regenerating persons. So while we are keeping our meetings alive – you know, that's how we keep the church life alive – we do not have that kind of concern, burden, sense, or, I would even say, compassion for people. Because of that, we need some adjustment.

We still meet, of course, continuing steadfastly. The first church met, even day by day. Yes, we meet, and the meetings are important. You will find that, in these lessons, there are several lessons on meetings. We cover the Lord's table, which technically is not a meeting, but a banquet, a meal, a supper. We cover prayer meetings, gospel meetings, group meetings in those 36 lessons. So no, we are not giving up the meetings. But here I am making a point, brothers. We need a strong adjustment from now on in the church life, and that is to be people-centered. People-centered.

You know, when Brother Lee was in Taiwan back in the '80s, studying the God-ordained way, he was even trying to adjust the meeting schedule – listen – so that the saints could be freed up to go and visit people. Do you know why nowadays we practice having the Lord's table and prophesying on the Lord's Day morning? It was not like that for years and years in the recovery. For the longest time, we had meetings on Lord's Day morning, and we broke bread in the evening. I remember when I was in junior high in Hong Kong and I followed my grandmother to their district prayer meeting. I was just a little kid, you

know, on a chair. And I got used to meeting. My point is the Lord's table always took place in the evening. It's called a supper, and based on some of Brother Lee's ministry in Taiwan in the '50s, he studied this and he said that the time of the Lord's table should be in the evening. That is why we practiced it so. Then, in the 1980s, he changed. He said, We'll move the table to the morning, so that the saints can use the rest of this holy day, the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, to go and take care of people, to preach the gospel, to visit the saints, to nourish the new ones, and to recover the dormant ones. My goodness, that's why we're meeting in the morning like this today, not so that we have more time for ourselves on Sunday or Lord's Day. Not at all. Unfortunately, we moved our meetings to the morning, and now the saints have more time for themselves for the rest of the Lord's Day.

Brothers, it is with this that I say that we need to be people-centered. I hope all of us would have a renewed mind in this matter. While we take care of the meetings, it's people first.

You have to read the book called *The Vital Groups* by Brother Lee, where Brother Lee talked about how, when the Savior came to this earth, whatever He did and everywhere He went was people-centered. He met with the disciples, of course He did. But everywhere He went, He was centered on people: the sick, the lame, the blind, the dead, the hemorrhaging, the weak. It was all about people. He was bringing God to men. He was dispensing Himself to people. He was people-centered. People-centered.

I believe, brothers, if all the churches, the saints, the leading brothers, the responsible ones, would have a turn and be people-centered, I think our church life will have a revolution. I absolutely believe that we will gain the increase as a result. We will restore brothers and sisters as a result. We will have many saints loving the church as a result. Brother Lee told the elders that they should go through the name list of their church, the phone list. And visit the saints one by

one. Elders, do that. You do not need to take a long, long time, just 15 minutes. Nowadays, you cannot go to people's houses. You can do it by Zoom. You care for them. You contact them. Brother Lee was big on this matter of contacting people. One of the things he always said, brothers, was that before and after the meetings, leading brothers should show up early and leave late. Of course, today, the leading brothers meet before meetings to pray and prepare. Brother Lee said that you need to go early to meet people, to meet the brothers and sisters, to greet them, to see how they're doing. And then you stay back afterwards, you don't leave, you stay back to contact the saints, to contact the brothers and sisters. Oh, this will warm up the church. This will cause the saints to love the elders and love the church because they care.

Many churches today, sorry to say, are cold. I am not saying they are lukewarm towards the Lord. I am saying they are cold towards men. When you come to that church life, everything is good but it's not attractive. It's not drawing. It's not people-centered. It's not about people. It's about something, maintaining something, maintaining our meetings. I'd rather that our meetings would not be so great, but the people are cared for. I would rather see that than just meet and meet, have good meetings, and people are not cared for. No one cares for them. Do you know that many saints who come to the meetings leave alone? No one talks to them. If we brothers don't take the lead to set up that kind of example, how would that habit, that culture, be prevalent in our church life? We can warm our church up quickly by being people-centered. I just have too much to say because Brother Lee had too much to say about this. He said to set aside time during the week, you elders, and go visit the saints, go take care of the saints. You know, we just sit there, and the saints come with problems to us and we just go fight fires. No, we are not here for fighting fires. We are here attending to God's flock. We are here as shepherds to care for their souls, to care for their needs, to be with them. We are here to preach the gospel, to care for the dying, the lost.

Brothers, we really need a revival on our burden for people. Trust me, brothers, if we are like this, our church will be good, will be normal, will grow. And the saints would be delighted and happy. And they will do things – they will care for others. Oh, Lord Jesus. You know, in Thessalonians, Paul said, “You are my hope. You are my crown. You are my boast. You are my joy. You are my glory.” I tell you, to Paul, it was not about doing things right. To Paul, it was all about people. Go and find someone to care for, brothers. You know, we are still in the midst of migration. It will be another year before the dust settles. But don't wait. Now is the time. Of course, with this, we need the love of God. We need the compassion of God. We need the kindness of the Lord to fill us. We need a heart expanded and enlarged. We need to be lovers of men. Read that chapter on A Lover of Men in the book *The Normal Christian Worker* and see what Brother Nee had to say.

2. Home-Based vs. Hall-Based

Now the second thing I mentioned last time, brothers, was that the church should be home-based and not hall-based. I am not against meeting halls. I built quite a few and I designed a lot. I advised the brothers here and there over many decades because I'm an architect. So, I'm for it. Here in Irvine, we built our hall in 1981 and, since I've been here in the last 20 some years, we have renovated that hall several times to make it nice, to make it attractive, to make it match the community. I paid a lot of attention to this, down to choosing the color, choosing the bricks, I was there with the brothers. We need meeting halls, brothers. But, my brothers, according to the God-ordained way, the proper church life should be home-based. Of course, Brother Lee spent too much time talking about the church life being from house to house. He spoke too much about that, how the early church was entirely home-based. Most of the churches did not have halls to meet in. They met in some public arena, like when the church in Jerusalem gathered, they gathered by the temple, the public square. Otherwise, they were house to house in the day by day church life. In Acts chapter 5, day by day, house to house, they ceased not to preach Jesus Christ as the gospel.

I mention this home-based church life in two ways. Number one, Brother Lee said that 80% of our church life should be in the homes, 20% in the meeting hall. Today, many of us have meeting halls and some of them are not cheap. You know, from an efficiency standpoint, I tell you, it is not a good investment. How many hours do we really spend in the hall? A few hours a week. And we have to pay millions for it and maintain it. From a business angle, I would say that is not a very efficient use of our finances. But we need the meeting halls. We do need to meet and have a place to call our own. But 80% of our meeting life, brothers, should be in the homes. It is easier for the saints to come together in a home. The home is warm. The home is normal. The home is less institutional. The home is not so cold. And the home is flexible. The home, we always say, is the home and the hearth, the fireplace. That's the warm place. It's a place of conversation. It's a place to socialize. It's a normal kind of place to get together. So the church life should be mainly in the homes, whether it is the groups coming together, whether it is the brothers having fellowship together, whether it is couples having fellowship together, whether it is taking care of our children in the neighborhood, whether it is entertaining our young people and shepherding them, whether it is shepherding the college-age. Brothers, the home-based church life! I don't need to say much because there's a ton of literature on this subject.

Another thing about the home is that it is very mutual, you know, the roundtable church life, I call it. In this kind of environment, the shy are more likely to open, the timid are more ready to engage in this kind of back and forth with one another. So, we need to base our church life in the homes during the week. In Taipei – a big church, Taipei today has about 10,000 saints – they have 50, 60, or 70 halls. But even so, their number is too big to meet and they don't have that many meeting halls. So, most of the districts, each composed of 20 to 30 people, meet in homes in those high-rises in Taipei. Brothers, this is the home-based church life.

Another thing about the home church life is that it is a daily affair. You live there. And when we offer our home for the church to meet in, our home is sanctified, our families are sanctified. I can testify to this. I think many of us can. When we hide out in our own place and no saints come, nobody knows what you're doing and you can do all kinds of things and you can live a two-faced church life, so to speak. But when you open the home, you have to clean your house, you have to ready your house, you have to have a place that is befitting for the Lord's testimony and the church. There are a lot of good points about meeting in the homes. The house of Aquila and Prisca. Am I right? The house of Philemon. On and on and on in the New Testament.

Another aspect of the home is very important as well. Today, what would you say is the building unit of the church, of the local church? I would like to say that it is not the individual member. The building block of the church is the family. Now there are single saints, and they are not married yet. That is another matter. I'm saying that the nuclear family, so called in the world, is the building unit. Brothers, you have household salvation. All throughout the Bible, Old and New Testament, the household is the unit: the house of Chloe, the house of Philemon, many households. Brothers, today, there is a vehement attack, assault, to destroy the nuclear family. Look at the rate of divorces. Look at the number of dysfunctional families in the world, in society. The goal of this attack is to kill and break up that God-ordained unit in human society. It is the unit of multiplication, of propagation. The family is to have kids, to have children. The country of the USA would not be strong if the families are not strong. No nation can actually be. It is God-ordained. So, brothers, what is my point? Today, to build up a strong and healthy local church, we must pay attention to the family life of the saints, the home life of the saints, the marriages, the families, the parents, the children. As a common matter, we need to pay attention to that. Sorry we have situations where saints come to the meetings and act like they're very good, very normal, but actually, things are falling apart at home, on the home front, with the children, marriage, and so on and so forth.

Brothers – home-based church life. By being home-based, automatically it means a daily church life, doesn't it? It's not weekly – see you next Sunday. No. It is daily because it's in our home. Inviting the saints, having dinners, and, oh my goodness, so much traffic, so much fellowship, the gospel is preached, saints are shepherded, all in this wonderful environment of the homes. And we need to help the saints to build that up.

3. Companions, the Twos and Threes

Today I would like to say something more. Last time, I think I also used this word *companion*. I did not use the word *group*. I know Brother Lee promoted the “small group” a lot, you know, group meetings and small groups. But I hesitate to use this because a group can become static. A group can become too big. A group has to be managed, so to speak. Companions are a lot more flexible. When Brother Lee talked about the vital group companions, he said to start with one, and you find another one, then you find another one. You are a small unit. That unit is what I call *twos and threes*.

The twos and threes are a biblical number. I have a full outline and material on that subject. Sometimes I would like to speak about this to the saints. Twos and threes are companions in the church in a proper way. For what? I mentioned last time, Matthew 18. Three things: number one, for prayer; number two, for fellowship, mutual fellowship, supply, support; number three, for shepherding people and for the outreach of the gospel to gain fruit, to bear fruit. Of course, in the end, each one of us has to bear these burdens. But there's something there in Matthew 18, the chapter where Christ on earth mentioned the local church for the first time. He mentioned the universal church in Matthew 16: “I will build my church.” Two chapters later, He mentioned the local church: If this person would not listen, tell it to the church. That is the local church in Matthew 18. And in that chapter on the local church, three times He talked about twos and threes. That's where the companionship comes from.

Remember these three things: number one, to gather together to pray; number two, to gather together to fellowship; and number three, to gather together to take care of people, both in the way of the gospel and in the way of shepherding the Lord's sheep, His saints, to recover the dormant. I use these three S's for the three kinds of people we take care of: number one, sinners; number two, seekers; and number three, the saints, including the dormant saints. How many people brothers need care? The Lord is so burdened for us to cherish people with Christ's humanity. Oh, my goodness, brothers. So, companions is another aspect of the church life that we need to build up.

4. Prayer-Dependent

Now, I would like to add two points in light of our present need. Number one, to build up a church that is prayer-dependent. Let me quote Brother Lee again. Many times, he said, "I can never forget the church in Los Angeles." What made the church so special is that he had not seen another church that prayed so much. This was in the '60s. He said, "I've never seen one church, even in China, that prayed so much." It is that prayer that built up that model church in Los Angeles. It is that prayer that laid the tracks for the Lord to spread throughout the USA back in the early '70s. There was an explosion, a revival, in LA brought about by prayer. Do you know what my first meeting was in the church in LA? It was a prayer meeting on a Tuesday night. That was my first meeting ever. I still cannot forget the scene that night. You know, in LA, 75 to 80% of the saints that came on Lord's Day attended the prayer meetings regularly. It was unbelievable. I have not seen anything like that again. Prayer was just our life. Prayer was just our living. Prayer was so strong and prevailing that the saints were filled in the spirit. And the fire of the gospel, the power of the Spirit, was with us all the time. That's why there was this spiritual explosion.

Now brothers, you know, this is the 180th or 190th day of our prayer during this pandemic. The burden is to build up the prayer life of the

saints and the prayer ministry of the church. Recently in the ITERO we covered the church as the house of prayer, praying the prayer of this age. Brothers, those cannot be just words and talk and messages. Build up your local church to be a house of prayer. Let me tell you, all kinds of things will happen. Revival will happen. The Lord will move. The Lord will do many things. So, we all need to build up the church to be a praying church, an intercessory church. And this church will be strong in the spirit because it prays much and often.

I am laboring now with one locality here in Southern California. I had a meeting with them last night and this morning: last night with the core brothers and this morning with the whole church. I talked to them both times about the need of a revival, genuine revival. How do we have a revival? There is no other way but to contact resurrection Himself and that is Christ. And the best way to contact Him is to pray, to contact the Lord all the time. That prayer will bring about confession and repentance and dealings. All of these will prepare us to receive the Spirit. And the Spirit is really the only factor of our renewal and revival.

Brothers – build up a church of prayer, a prayer-driven church, a prayer-dependent church. Start with the leading ones. And then help the saints to pray with partners and companions. When the prayer is strong, the spirit is strong and burning. And the church life will be full of air, *pneuma*, and full of fire, full of fuel.

5. Increase-Oriented, Fruit-Oriented

The last thing brothers is that the church must be increase-oriented, fruit-oriented. Right now, the main need of the Lord's recovery in the USA is increase and growth, is fruit. Remaining fruit is multiplication for the growth of the True Vine. It is more sheep to fill the desolate cities. This is the need and I'm not saying this from me. I am absolutely quoting Brother Lee in his last years. In his last years, he said that the greatest need today – and I would say particularly in America – is to gain the increase.

The church should be gospel-oriented. The church should be people-centered. This is to gain the increase in all the churches. It is absolutely wrong brothers, for a church not to grow, but after years or decades, to still remain the same. In fact, not only not growing, but dwindling in number, diminishing in its number. I have seen that repeatedly – no growth. The saints there were getting older, no new blood. Brothers, that is wrong. I'm not here for mushroom increase. I'm not here to do gimmicks to gain increase. That's not what I'm saying. But I am saying that the present need in the churches in the USA is to gain the increase. If you're a church of 30, you should have a goal that this church should be 60, and eventually, this church would be 120, really, as a normal course of things. If you're a church of 20, you should look to the Lord that this church would be 40, and then 60, and then 80, as a normal course of things. Some states still don't have that many saints. Some states still don't have that many churches. There's something terribly wrong. It need not be like this. We can change this kind of situation, but it depends on us.

Brothers, I have more to say about other things. I hope that you will take this to heart, even this very practical fellowship. This migration, this GTCA, is affording all of us in these 10 places an opportunity, a window of opportunity, to revive and renew our church life to go on in this new way to meet the Lord's need.

Responses and Questions from the Brothers

Brother Minoru, I have a question for you. Maybe this accumulating burden that you've been sharing from week to week will continue for the next several weeks. I'm wondering if there could be some fellowship, maybe one Lord's Day morning – most of us in the 10 cities are in the same time zone – instead of a prophesying time, maybe there could be a time where you could share your burden like you did to the other place to all the 10 churches. Then it won't be just us, but they can hear it from you as well.

I would love to. This morning, as I said, I met with one locality and I

mostly spoke to them about Habakkuk and also Hosea, applying it very much to the church today. Actually, I would say that it's really a word for all the churches. If the brothers in these 10 churches have a burden along this line to make some arrangement, as you suggested or some other way, I'll be more than open to do that.

I'd like to encourage you, brothers, that this is possible. What I'm talking about is not unreachable on the moon, even though our experiences have not necessarily been like that. Brothers, this is 2020 – God is moving, the Spirit is working, Christ is leading! We should have faith in the Lord that He is turning a new page and it's time for us, the churches, the recovery in this country, to enter into a new season: a season of refreshing, a season of growth and multiplication, a season of strength to be prevailing in all of the Lord's recovery. This should be a season of increase in the recovery of saints, of the building up of strong local churches, small and big, all across this land, so that the Lord's recovery would be prevailing once again as it was in the first 10 or 15 years.

How does this look with COVID, not being able to meet in person? How can this be carried out during this Zoom kind of church life that we are living in today?

Well, brother, you know, these are the circumstances we are in. Number one, Brother Nee said and Brother Lee also said, oftentimes in church history, we are not in easy, smooth-sailing times. Often it is in times of opposition and persecution that the church grows. Think about the Roman Empire. It was during that time when the saints were underground, meeting in the catacombs. But that did not stop the gospel. It could not stop the Spirit. Eventually, the faith was spread and the Word of God prevailed. This happened again in China. After the Communists took over in 1949 even until recent days, the number of believers in that country exponentially increased under that oppressive regime. I tell you death cannot hold the resurrection life.

Now we're in a pandemic. Sure, we cannot meet together physically, but are in a lockdown. But brothers, this is not the time to call it quits. This is not the time to slow down. This is not the time to tread water. I cannot tell you exactly what to do. But if you have a heart, there is a way. If you pray, the Lord will work. In fact, these times of Zoom, it's a great time to visit the saints by Zoom, to care for them, to shepherd them. It's a great time to preach the gospel by Zoom, by text, by email. Use BFA, Bibles for America – it is full of materials for you to use: videos, blogs, and all kinds of gospel content for you to share the gospel.

Brothers, the problem is not the pandemic. It's not this outward restriction. Brothers, do you know what the problem is? The problem is our lack of vitality. Vitality. That's why we need a revival, a revivification, a rejuvenation of all the saints in the spirit. The church life – yes, it's inconvenient, but we can go on if we brothers are living, active, and vital in that kind of a way. I cannot give you express methods or ways. I think you just need to fellowship and pray. If there's a heart, this can be worked out. And this pandemic will not stay forever, by the way. I just heard that Dr. Fauci said the first vaccine may be ready by December of this year. Now, it will take some time for everyone to get the benefit. But my point is that this pandemic may not be here all the time. Good times, bad times, adverse times, smooth times. Brothers, in the end, it's our vitality that matters.

As a response, brothers, I don't speak for any other localities, but I have the sense that the fact that we need this kind of speaking, this kind of teaching, in itself, makes me feel sort of ashamed in some way. Not to be overly low, but we have no need that anyone should teach us. The anointing should just bring us into this reality as we are filled with the Lord. If this speaking is not our experience, it means we're subnormal, because the Spirit organically brought the saints into this kind of a normal living in Acts. If the Spirit has a free way among us, this should be our normal living. The fact that we're kind of needing to be

perfected and taught to be brought into a normal living, I just feel so short. And I realize that, just as our brother shared, it's not that I just need to try a little harder. The church here, and my companions and I, need to be filled with the Lord to overflowing. Then spontaneously, all these things will just be our living: the gospel, the burden for the saints, the prayers, the intensification. I just feel that the response in me is that we need to pray desperately for the Lord to revive us and pour out His Spirit in our being, in our living, in our households, in our church life. I appreciate that in Elden Hall, there were saints desperately praying, and then boom, there's a normal church life. In Acts, it was the same. They were crying out to the Lord in the midst of an outward situation that was difficult, Pour out Your Spirit, Lord, upon us. Then they were filled. And they began to speak, they went out, and we saw the testimony. Then it was easy to say, Go and declare the words of this life that you're all experiencing. It was organic. We need the teaching and we need the perfecting from the ministry and from the brothers. But I just feel we desperately need the Lord to pour out. Unless the Lord builds, the builders labor in vain. And more importantly, Zechariah says, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says Jehovah." So, I don't know. There's just a desperation in me that the Lord would have a start. I don't know how He starts, if He starts by our just faithfully picking up these things and getting to labor in a small way, or if it starts with just our desperate prayer for the Lord to save us from our state.

I would say we must start with prayer. Because after all, we're not interested in a movement. Am I right? And we're not interested in the Pentecostal miracle-based revival. No, we're talking about a genuine revival of life, and of truth, and even of practice. For that, we need the prayer. You know the prayer in Habakkuk chapter 3, "O Jehovah, revive Your work." What is the work of Jehovah? Israel. What is the Lord's work today? The church, the church life. Revive Your church, revive the church life in the midst of these years. So – we need to pray brothers. The leading brothers need to pray. We ourselves need to pray. We need to have companions to pray. Pray for some time. Pray

desperately. Pray openly for the revival of your church, of all the churches in America.

The second thing is, of course, when we are vital to some degree, we're not waiting to be 100% vitalized, to the degree that we are vitalized, we have to be active. An un-revived condition is when a person is dying, has lost consciousness, is not breathing. You go to revive him. He is unable to carry out something or has become inactive. The normal result of a revived person is not only that he's breathing or conscious, but that he can do things. He's active, in an organic way, you know, in a spontaneous way. And our activity is altogether, number one, to serve the Lord, and number two, to care for people. So, yes, they will follow each other. And I would say it is best to not go around and "preach" to the saints. Don't go and "preach" this to them and say, "You be revived." Brothers, if we ourselves are revived, others will see.

I'd like to actually say another word here to the churches, not just to individuals but to churches. I'm deeply impressed – talk about a gospel-oriented church – with Thessalonica, that new church in Thessalonica. Listen to what Paul had to say. You know, Paul spent three weeks there to raise up that church. Listen to what Paul had to say in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8: "So that you became a pattern" – that new little church somewhere in Greece – "to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded out; not only in Macedonia and in Achaia, but in every place" – around the Mediterranean – "your faith toward God has gone out, so that we have no need of saying anything." Talk about a model church – that's Thessalonica. It was probably not a huge church, not a very mature church. But let me tell you, it was a model church, in that the word objectively and the faith subjectively emanated, went out, from this church to affect the region, and so it has become a pattern to so many local churches.

Now, brothers, we are not here to compete. We are not here to be in

rivalry. Please forget all of that. But, brothers, in each of our places, shouldn't this be our responsibility – to build up a church that could be a pattern to others in this sort of way?

I appreciate the fellowship this afternoon. Here we are, to build up our churches, vitalized churches, renewed churches, and even as Brother Minoru said, model churches in these 10 cities. I appreciate the presentation of the blueprint, so to speak, that we ourselves can first live and labor and then, with the brothers leading in the churches, with the same vision, we can live and labor together. And as Brother Minoru shared, we can become patterns to the saints in our localities. I just appreciate that, in addition to the four pillars of the Lord's recovery, Brother Minoru mentioned last week about being people-centered and being house-based, household-based. On top of that, this afternoon, we received three additional items: (1) The twos and threes: living a life of twos and threes, praying together, taking care of each other, fellowshiping with one another, and then caring for people together; (2) The prayer-dependent church: pray much, because the more we pray, the more we will be filled with the Spirit, there will be pneuma, there will be a real vitality; (3) Gospel-oriented, increase-oriented, fruit bearing-oriented church life. Anyhow, I appreciate such a blueprint that we can live and labor ourselves and together with the brothers, so all our churches can be a model church, a revived church. Praise the Lord for the Lord's speaking today.

Thank you, brother, for the speaking. It's sinking in. I feel like the more I hear it, the more I can understand, even the changing of our concept on being people-centered vs. meeting-centered. We've been endeavoring to be outward-facing. We had a gospel meeting on Friday night over Zoom. We did a lot of activities in the Sunday fellowship time today, and it was very positive. But you know, considering your utterance, how much of our time went into the meeting organization and the items, as opposed to how much time went into the people that were there, the follow up, the care, and the prayer. It just goes to show that we've got it upside down. I just appreciate, on the one hand, the

speaking over and over again. And also, I really appreciate being able to get together in the smaller ways to get into the details.

The Chefoo revival in 1942 to 43, during the Japanese war with China, was a very difficult time. But it was at that time that a revival came, and the gospel exploded. Talk about rough times. Now, the thing is this, a revival is needed from time to time among God's people in the Old Testament and the New, even in the Lord's recovery. This is because from time to time we degrade into oldness, deadness, lukewarmness, and barrenness. All these things come in. Therefore, we need a revival from time to time. Brother Lee counted in 1973 that there were four revivals. I certainly think that the LA days should be the fifth one. But back to Chefoo; Brother Lee took Brother Nee's blueprint and went back to his hometown in the north to practice it from 1939 through 1942 when the revival broke out. My point is that it took some time. Brother Lee was just there laboring, praying, building up the church, the infrastructure of the church, the service of the church. At that time, of course, he did not see as much as we see today. He met with the saints and hired a cook. Every night he would invite a different group of saints to eat with him as he cared for them and mingled with them. Eventually, by his care, after a couple of years, the revival broke out as a result. So, brothers, don't be overwhelmed, all right? I said a lot, but it will take some time for us to build this up. The important thing is that we have a goal. We are clear where we are going. We know what the main need is today.

Okay, brothers. Thank the Lord. I just feel like this fellowship we're having on the Lord's Day evenings is really a particular fellowship related to these 10 cities and our going on in the church life. We could spend a lot more time than the hour and a half we've had. But hopefully, brothers, that within each of the localities, you're able to digest some of this fellowship in your gatherings together with the local brothers, just to consider and to pray over these matters and to consider how to apply this. How do we put this into some action? It would be good to labor over some of this fellowship so that we don't

lose it so quickly. Consider it, pray over it, fellowship, and really seek the Lord's leading on how to apply some of these matters in each situation. Praise the Lord!