

Taking the Lead in the Local Churches

(Fellowship from Minoru Chen on January 17, 2021)

Prayer

Lord, we pray for all Your local churches. We just pray for all the ivory palaces. Lord, we pray for Your testimony on the earth, that all these local assemblies would be genuine, golden, shining lampstands. We pray for the strengthening of the churches, not just a kind of maintenance but a strengthening. We pray for a real building up in all the local testimonies, Lord, all over this country. We especially pray for those in the lead, those who are bearing responsibility. We especially seek special mercy from You, special grace from You, that we would do our job in the way of honoring God and pleasing man, for this is such a key matter. We would like to admit and confess our shortage in this very matter of taking the lead amongst Your flock. Lord, we just look to You for mercy and grace to really train us and perfect us. Put within us Your heart that we may know how to shepherd Your flock according to God. Lord, we just pray for this. We pray for the ten GTCA churches. We pray for all the brothers on this call. Lord, whether we are elders or not, we are bearing responsibility, serving Your house, shepherding Your people. Lord, give us a kind of seriousness, a heart to learn to really be proper shepherds. Train us to be those who lead not by lording over the flock, but by becoming living examples. Lord, we would all be the lead sheep that the flock would know how to follow the footsteps. Lord, be with us again this afternoon. Give us the word for this present hour. We are not here for some short-term campaign. We are here for Your long-term move in this country. Lord, may Your testimony prevail. May all the local churches be strong and healthy. Lord, shame the enemy. Bless our time today. Amen.

The Need for Training and Perfecting

We are continuing today in our fellowship with this group of almost 70 brothers. I know my speaking has been long, sometimes strong, and maybe even a bit overbearing at times. But I do remember a certain word in the Bible. Paul said in Hebrews 13:22, “Now I beseech you, brothers, bear with the word of this exhortation...” The footnote says that the word *bear* is to endure and receive; to bear with the word of the apostle is also needed in the church life. I am borrowing this verse to ask you all to endure this word and receive this word. Sometimes the word of admonition is not to please us or make us feel good. This word of exhortation comes, and it is to be endured and also to be received. Surely today, I do have a word of exhortation for us.

Let me just back up a little bit before I start. It was our plan that this fellowship on Lord’s Days with the smaller number or core group of brothers in the different churches will go through this month of January. That was always my plan, with a view that starting in February, we would begin a kind of training for the saints in the churches in these ten cities. Ultimately, perfecting all the saints, not just us brothers, to do the work of the ministry would be crucial. We are still in a lot of detailed fellowship and we do not have a definite schedule or plan yet to share with you at this point, but it is forthcoming. I hope you would pray for that and pray for us as we consider this matter.

I do have the faith to use Brother Lee’s two simple words: “training works”. Training just works. A person who is trained, in contrast to a person who has not been trained, is like day and night. The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. That is why Paul’s strong words were always to perfect. He spoke that very much to the saints and to the brothers at the end of 2 Corinthians: “this also we pray for, your perfecting” in 13:9b, and “be perfected” in 13:11a. Within just one part of a chapter, he spoke a lot concerning perfecting, which is a form of training, educating, equipping, even with the meaning of mending something that is short, something that is broken, like a net that needs to be mended. Brothers, I think we would all admit that there are a lot

of things in our being that need mending, that is broken, that is just not doing its job. If the saints would really be trained in certain things or along a certain line, they will then know what to do, how to carry on, how to serve. I hope you would all pray about this. This kind of training is something that we have not done in the GTCA work.

In the '60s and '70s in Los Angeles, I had the blessing and the privilege to be there in that early church life under Brother Lee's leadership. In those days, he traveled a lot. Almost half the year was devoted to traveling to churches that were open for conferences. But he would always spend his springtime in town to build up the model, which he did most successfully. If you remember, I talked about a model church in Los Angeles. That model was shown in the form of a revival at that time in the late '60s and the early '70s. In the spring, he would cancel all the prayer meetings of the church – not that I am advocating this, I am just testifying to you. For three nights every week, over two and a half months, we would meet. There were three meetings a week of training. He would have different lines: Tuesday was a line, Wednesday was a line, and Friday was a line. I was just a college sophomore or junior at USC. That was when I received my first dose of serious perfecting, directly from Brother Lee, to the point that today I would reflect and go back to many things that I picked up in those times. All these by the way are in book form today, or in the Collected Works of Witness Lee. Let me give you an example.

On one Tuesday night in one spring, he spent the time to cover the prayer meetings of the church. I remember his speaking until today, for example, how he went through the whole matter of the watchmen on the wall according to Isaiah. He would go through the entire book of Acts just on the matter of prayer, to show us that Acts is actually a book of prayer, which is very much needed for the propagation of the resurrected and ascended Christ for the increase and spread. Easily I can recall these for you. The saints that were trained eventually migrated out from Los Angeles to cities all over the country. That migration, at least the first round or two, was enormously successful because these were trained people. You can migrate with a good

heart, but if you are not trained, you may not be useful and in fact, you may become problematic. Brothers, I just want to say this word to all of us that we need training, and the saints need training. The more they are trained, the more they will know how to live and to serve.

Taking the Lead

Today, I would like to take some time to talk to you about taking the lead or being a leading one. Notice that I did not use the word *elder*. I just used the scriptural word of *taking the lead*. Even though some of us are not elders and some of us will never be elders, still this matter of taking the lead is important. The local church is as good as its leadership. The local church is as strong as its leadership. The local church is as living and as rich as its leadership. The leadership decides what the church looks like. Even the condition of the church reflects the condition of its leadership. If the leaders are old and cold, the church will be old and cold. This is a principle. Whoever is bearing responsibility and taking the lead is critical in the advance of that church and the building up of that local church.

Romans 12:8

I will read some verses, brothers, and then I will share something with you. I will start with chapter 12 of Romans, a chapter on the Body life and the functioning of the members in service with their gifts of grace. In verse 8, it says, "Or he who exhorts, in that exhortation; he who gives, in simplicity; he who leads, in diligence..." *Leads* is a particular way of describing certain members. *He who leads* means the leading brothers or the leading ones in the church. The requirement here is one word: *diligence*. Please keep this in mind: "he who leads, in diligence."

1 Thessalonians 5:12

I will read another verse, and that would be in 1 Thessalonians, where this word about leading ones is spoken of. I would refer you to chapter 5, verse 12: "Furthermore we ask you, brothers, to acknowledge those who labor among you and take the lead among you in the Lord and

admonish you.” The word *elder* in this case is again not mentioned. It says those who “take the lead”, but along with that, as if they are the same people, “those who labor among you”. This verse is characterizing a leading person or brother to be a laboring person. It is the same concept as *in diligence* in Romans 12:8. “Those who labor among you and take the lead among you in the Lord and admonish you.” Keep this word *admonish* in mind.

1 Timothy 5:17

Now we come to another verse in 1 Timothy 5:17. Here Paul used the word *elders*, proving that elders, specifically and technically speaking, are those who take the lead. Again, today, I want to avoid using the term *elders*. I want to focus on this term *taking the lead*. “Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching (v. 17).” Brothers, here we again have the word *labor*. A very consistent descriptor of the character of a leading one is one who labors, and here, more specifically, labors “in the word and teaching”. The earlier word *admonition* includes *word and teaching*. In the footnote, Brother Lee made a distinction of these: *word* refers to something more general, a general speaking of doctrines; *teaching* refers to more specific instruction of particular spiritual items. Regardless, those who take the lead are those who should be laboring, and in fact, this labor eventually deserves the honor of the saints. That is what it is saying here.

Hebrews 13:7

Now we come to the last verses, which are all in Hebrews chapter 13. The first verse is verse 7: “Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God...” Do you see the consistency of the thought here? Who are the ones leading you? They are those who spoke to you the word of God. “And considering the issue of their manner of life” (v. 7b). The saints were exhorted to remember the leading ones and consider or think about the issue of their manner of life, which means the living, the example, of these leading ones. Not

only consider, but “imitate their faith” (v. 7c) in the Lord.

This is what the writer charged the believers to do: not just to honor the leading ones, but to consider the issue of their manner of life, their conduct, and imitate their faith. They were told to copy, to take as an example, as a pattern, the living of a leading one and the faith of a leading one. To me, brothers, this is a very serious, an exceedingly serious, matter. You do not just take this lightly. If you really touch the spirit of this charge, you will say, “Lord, I am not qualified. Who am I?” You will check your living. You will check your faith. And you will find that it is short, as far as the saints imitating them. Brothers, this is a very sobering word.

Hebrews 13:17

The next verse that I would read is verse 17. “Obey” – again, the word of exhortation to the saints, the believers – “the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls.” In other words, these are overseers, they take oversight, they watch over the flock, the believers, and specifically watch over their souls, their being – “as those who will render an account.” This matches the word in 1 Peter 5 that if an elder would shepherd the flock, not with greediness, not seeking gain, not by being compelled, but willingly, they will one day receive a crown. There is the thought of a reward associated with a proper shepherd because one day these ones will render an account, at the judgment seat of Christ, to the Lord, to the Chief Shepherd, on how they watched over every sheep in the flock, in their local church. “That they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you.” This is a word to the saints.

A Word of Love

Brothers, I want to charge us all to go back to the book *A Word of Love*, given by Brother Lee in the summer of 1996, roughly a year before he passed away. In that fellowship he gave us the most solemn admonition and charge. He talked very much about shepherding. This is a book to the elders and co-workers. He said that among us we have lost the spirit of shepherding. A spirit of legality had replaced it and

had come in its place. In the last two chapters, he wrote a classic outline concerning how we follow others. If you read it, you will see in particular how you follow certain co-workers to whom you are attracted. Eventually, he formatted that outline into a scroll that holds that whole outline, and he charged us to put it in front of us and read it once a day for 30 days.

I want to take Brother Lee's charge and charge you brothers to do the same thing. Just take the outline and read it once a day for the next 30 days. Do not read it quickly or lightly. Read it carefully. You may want to break it down: today you read Roman numeral one, tomorrow you read a and b, maybe each day take one line and repeat it after you are done for another 15 days. Brothers, take your time to study how to properly follow a co-worker. I am a co-worker, but when I read this, I said, "Lord, I'm not a co-worker. I'm not a co-worker, according to that standard." Brothers, please take this very seriously.

Responsibility to Shepherd

We are here burdened, brothers, to build up local churches, to build up model local churches, proper local churches. We want to break the kind of history among us of churches that are not strong or proper. I would like to see all the churches in this country strong, healthy, proper, and prevailing. To realize that, much of the burden lies on the shoulders of the leading brothers, of the leading ones. You cannot change that principle regarding the leading brothers, elders or not. Do not get hung up on the rank or the position. Brothers, I am talking about a proper leadership in the local church. How should they be, just according to these verses?

Watching Over the Souls of the Saints

The first thing I would like to say is that the job or the responsibility of a leading one is to shepherd. This word *shepherd* is not used in any of the verses we read today. But the words *watch over your souls* are used in Hebrews. I want all of us brothers to have this first realization that we are here to watch over the saints' souls. The first thing is not to tell the saints what to do. That will come, but the first thing is to

oversee, like a shepherd, watching over each soul.

I find it interesting that the word here is *souls*. This is because the human being is mainly comprised of his soul, and the soul is the main part of the heart. It is the soul plus the conscience that make up the human heart. This part is the psychological part of the human being according to God's creation: the mind, the emotion, and the will, and all those faculties combined. Brothers, we are here to watch over the being of the saints, or, may I say, the well-being of the saints. The whole point is that we want the saints' souls to be well. I am not saying we should be psychiatrists, psychologists, or therapists. These people are professionals. There are certain cases that even Christians need that kind of help. I am saying that, generally in the church, a leading one is given the responsibility to be a shepherd to watch over the souls of the sheep.

When you consider this phrase *watching over*, you will remember Paul's word to the elders in Acts chapter 20. He charged them to shepherd the flock of God. It is the same charge here in Hebrews 13:17 to shepherd the flock of God. In Acts 20 he talked about how he was with them in Ephesus for three years, going from house to house with tears, not withholding God's counsel (v.31). You will find in that chapter that Paul was using himself as a pattern to charge these elders what they should do. He even said that they had to watch out for the wolves on the negative side (v.29), as there would be wolves, the heretics, coming among the flock to lure them away.

Lead Sheep

Brother, my overarching burden is that our attitude, our heart, and our feeling, towards the saints must be one of a shepherd, versus one of ruling, lording, or controlling the believers, which is very easy to lapse into. Yes, we are taking the lead. We have to lead the saints. But how do we lead? Brother Lee said that instead of almost thinking that we are the shepherd, we should consider ourselves as just the lead sheep. The sheep, the whole flock, just follow the first sheep, the one who is taking the lead.

Brothers, we are also sheep ourselves needing the Chief Shepherd's oversight. We ourselves need to be under His shepherding. Our souls have to be cared for by Him, which He does as the Heavenly Shepherd. Then we need to shepherd the saints and lead the saints according to God. This means we shepherd according to God's being, according to God's heart, according to God's feeling, and according to the Lord's inward parts. Now, this is something that cannot be taught. It is something that we need to acquire in the Lord's presence over a long period of time. Brother Lee said that we should never treat the saints as our property, as if they belong to us. None of the saints belong to any of the elders or leading brothers. They all belong to the Lord. What are we doing? We are just given some temporary stewardship or assignment to oversee the Lord's sheep, His property, on His behalf.

Recently, because of some situation in the USA, this matter was brought to my personal reflection before the Lord. Brothers, you may have a naughty saint in your church, but be careful how you deal with him or her, and what you say to him or her. Yes, we need to know, understand, and read the situation in order for us to care. But brothers, I am here talking about the kind of spirit we have, the kind of heart we have, the kind of attitude we have. That is why I say that we need to read the book *A Word of Love*.

Having a Shepherding Heart and Spirit

Brothers, briefly speaking in a genuine kind of way and not in a natural way, we need more love in the church. We need more concern in the church. We need more patience in the church. We need more forgiveness in the church. We need more hope in the church. Just think about yourself. If the Lord is not that way in shepherding us, where would you be today? Where would I be today? Of course, we do not play politics. We do not try to please man. We are not trying to buy the saints' hearts – that is ugly and terrible. But brothers, we can imbue our church with a certain kind of heart and spirit by the way we treat the saints, by the way we are with them. We can very easily become highly critical, judgmental, or disparaging of the saints, and we may be right. But something is lost in the process, and that is a

shepherd's heart, a shepherding spirit. Some brothers are too legal. To be legal with oneself is one thing, but to become legal with others is another matter. I am not advocating for us to become sloppy and careless. No, I am saying that legality does not work so well in shepherding the saints.

There is a lot to learn, brothers, in shepherding others. I am not claiming that I have learned it all. I am learning and all the time finding a great shortage. Sometimes you just want to forget about a saint. You feel you are wasting your time because this person will never change. Brothers, their souls. There are many little-souled ones in the church. There are many weak-souled ones. This is just the way it is since God made some that way. The ability to bear, to suffer long, and to endure is a trying thing for leading brothers. But brothers, this is a test. Look, sometimes we may even be this way with our own spouse. We may become short-tempered. It is safe, my dear brothers, to always err on the kinder side than on the other side, the strict side.

I have a lot to say on this topic. You know, I am just like you and have a GTCA church that I am deep into with the brothers. I am planning together with them and am very thankful for being with them. We spent hours and hours together on Zoom. This is an older locality and one of the things they are burdened for is the atmosphere in the church. They are concerned that their atmosphere is just cold, unwelcoming, and even judgmental, not warm and drawing. I asked all the brothers to be honest and open since we are not playing a game here. We want to really touch what is needed in that church. This emerged to be one of the main points. I took it very seriously. We are not done yet. We are taking two weeks now to do our planning with prayer. I am going to tell the brothers, "Brothers, if the church is going to be hot, warm, welcoming, and non-judgmental, the place where we'll have to start is with us, with you. That's where it will start. Don't go and tell the saints to be warm, to be loving. Don't. We may say something at the right time, but that's not how it works. If you and I, all of us brothers, are really like that, really with the inward parts of Christ, you will see something happen. You will see something

change.”

Sometimes, brothers, even our face, our countenance, says a lot and betrays us. Even I have a problem with that. Oftentimes we may have a stern countenance, an unhappy countenance. The saints become afraid of the leading brothers. Paul charged the saints in the verses that we read to honor and to submit. That is a charge to them. What about the charge to us, dear brothers? Remember the Lord's case in Luke 15. He put the ninety-nine sheep aside and went to look for the one. If I have a hundred sheep and one is gone, I do not care as I still have the ninety-nine. But this shepherd in chapter 15 of Luke realized that one was missing. He must have done his daily counting and found one missing. Statistics are not for statistics. Statistics are for shepherding. When you do not even know who did not show up in the meeting, when you do not even care if someone has not come for two or three weeks, what kind of shepherd is that? You may say, “Well, it is about the same.” Brothers, a shepherd who is really doing his job in overseeing looks for the wandering sheep. He would even leave the ninety-nine and go look for the one that is lost. When he finds him, he will put him on his shoulders. How tender and how loving that is. I do not think those are wasted words. The Lord painted a picture about Himself and that kind of heart that brought the sheep home. Brothers, there is one chapter in the book *Vital Groups* called *Love Prevails*. That is based on 1 Corinthians 13. I never heard Brother Lee speak like that.

Brothers, yes, you need to build up your church, to preach the gospel, to gain increase, to build up the service groups, to build up the meetings, to expand and grow. Yes, this is why we are doing GTCA. But I must tell you, all these in the long-term depend on the condition of the church, the condition of the church life. When we talk about condition, I am not talking about how many meetings you have, I am talking about a certain spirit, a certain heart, a certain atmosphere, that pervades that local church. What is that? I believe that when our church life is filled with the *agapē* love that is constituted into our human love and with the brotherly love, *philia* love, when there is this kind of atmosphere of mutuality, of care, and of intimate concern for

one another's being, especially of the leading ones for the sheep and the flock, that church will be warm. People can smell it, touch it, and feel it. That is how people are drawn. What will draw new ones coming into the church life? The whole society today is anything but love, but this should be our testimony.

Being a Pattern to the Saints

The second thing that I want to mention is the leading ones being a pattern, an example to the saints. In Hebrews 13:7 two things in particular are mentioned. Number one, the issue of their manner of life. There is some outcome, some result, some display or exhibition of the way they live. Number two, their faith: their faith in the Lord, in the word, in God's economy, in this ministry, and in the Lord's recovery. For these two things, brothers, the saints need patterns. They do not need to just be told what to do. They need to see people who are like that.

In Our Manner of Life

Over these years, I have had the grace to encounter brothers who are not that gifted, not great speakers or charismatic. Some are not even elders. But I tell you, they become patterns. We do not lead by our words merely. We lead by our deeds, our living, and our good works. This is how we lead, brothers. Lead by example, as they say. We do not lead by ruling. We lead by being examples to the saints. Dear brothers, we need to pay attention to our manner of life. The first thing with a leading one is not his capacity and ability to carry out certain things. The first thing is the way they live. If we do not live, or at least endeavor to live, a God-man life, if we do not live Christ in our marriage, we have nothing. Without a living, we do not have the base to admonish the saints. We do not even have the position to tell the saints what to do.

Brothers, we need to take care of our living, our personal life, our marriage life, and our family life. In 1 Timothy, one of the important qualifications is that an elder would manage his household well. That is in the Bible. I am not saying that all of us should have perfect kids. I

am saying that we have to do our best to live in a certain way, according to the word, by the Spirit, and by taking the cross. All these things cannot be just terms, books, and theories. All these things have to be the way we live. Although we are short, we endeavor, we practice. If I am a certain way with my wife, I could not stand up in the meeting to exhort the saints. I would be a hypocrite. When I have something wrong with some others and do not deal with it, I have no ground or position to tell people what to do when I am not doing it myself. You may say that this is a high bar and no one can reach it. It is a high bar, but we cannot say that we cannot do it. We need to take grace, brothers, to walk by the Spirit, and to really take the cross.

In Our Faith

I'm particularly burdened for three things: our personal life, our marriage life, and our family life. These three things added together are our manner of life. This includes how we comport ourselves, how we handle ourselves before the saints and with the saints. Sometimes we become very careless and it shows. The other side to being an example is our faith, which comes from the Word. We may not be a great speaker, but that is not the point here. The point here is to have the element of faith within us. The saints can see it and they will imitate that faith. Most of our children's learning is by watching the parents. It's not that they talk, they watch. I have two of my four grandkids with us during this pandemic lockdown for almost a year. We have this precious opportunity to live with them. My wife and I usually don't live with them, but now we are with them in the same house. I find that I need to behave myself as a proper grandpa when I'm in front of them. Those little eyes are watching. If I'm like this or that, or say this or that, they will see it. The way we influence them as grandpa and grandma is not just by telling them to sit up, eat your food, or whatever. It is more by the other times that we're just living, we're just walking around, we're just talking to the other adults. In these little things they watch and are influenced. They pick up things from us. Brothers, this is the way to lead in a church. I've seen brothers who can give a good word, but their living does not match. As a result,

the saints will have a hard time to go on. They need to see patterns to follow and imitate.

Our faith needs to be a pattern to be imitated. This is concerning our personal knowledge of the Word and the ministry and our being constituted with the vision of God's economy and our clarity concerning the Lord's recovery. None of these come about overnight. This is the faith side of which Paul wrote, "God's economy, which is in faith." We need to be those who are really following this ministry and are really clear concerning the Lord's recovery and of God's economy. The way we enter into this ministry, follow this ministry and the present speaking of the Lord in the seven feasts is important. When you speak people can hear whether you are in the Word. Paul encouraged us to be in these things. This is the other side of being a pattern to the brothers and sisters.

Diligence and Laboring

The third thing is to lead with diligence. The word is "labor." The word of Paul is to those who take the lead and who labor. I don't know any other way to take a church on except by the laboring way. He who leads "in diligence." A good father is a diligent father to "bring home the bacon" so to speak. Proverbs 31 speaks of a woman worthy of praise to her husband is one who is a diligent woman. She is a diligent woman sewing, merchandising, and preparing. If the leading brothers are diligent in taking the lead in so many things in the church life, that church will be a diligent church. If the brothers don't do much, and are just kind of easy come, easy go, that church will be like that. Brothers need to be enterprising, industrious, laboring in the Word, but not only the Word, but laboring in so many areas to build up the church. We need to labor in visiting the saints, in shepherding, in preaching the gospel, in the meetings, and even labor in so many little levitical matters in the church.

If you would visit a home like this, you would just feel it has a future. It is not a lazy home where no one is doing anything. It's a robust, active home. This is the way for us to gain the increase, to preach the

gospel, to build up in twos and threes. Being diligent to labor is the way to build up a home-based church life, small groups, and districts. Brothers, all these things issue from diligence and labor. I don't know any other way. I can testify that for many years in my local church in Irvine that is all I knew to do. And now I'm engaged with another locality and I'm doing the same thing. Of course, I cannot be there all the time and I don't have the energy like I had twenty years ago, but I'm laboring to help reset and renew that church life. Brothers, this is the only way. Do not take "GTCA" as a two-year deal or one-year deal. No, plan for the next ten years brothers. Make a ten-year commitment in your service in your church. Then we will see something happen. Brothers, these are the matters I want to bring up to you.

An Example for Mutual Learning

Now, I'd like to say a few words concerning what we're doing in another locality for our mutual learning. Through our serious planning with much prayer and fellowship, about nine or ten brothers are gaining a full view of the church by each one bringing their perspective. This group of brothers includes two brothers who serve on the Spanish-speaking side because 40% of this city is Hispanic and it is an important part of the church.

Next week we will begin to schedule and make a plan for this year on a quarterly basis. The first matters that we need to tackle are the practical things in order to renew that church. We need to consider the meeting hall which is a crucial matter. Then the matter of bringing the church into the 21st century with regard to the use of technology. We need to think about the church website and the communication among the saints. By the way, BFA has a WordPress template if you need help with your website. In this day and age your address is on the internet. Your church website is your storefront. This is where people search to look for you. These are not spiritual matters but are very important and essential. We also are considering the matter of all the bylaws and all the legal side of things which have not been tended to for years. We also are looking at the matter of finances. You may not get into all these matters, but this also is involved with the

matter of planning. Then among the brothers, two or three may work as a committee to head up one of these areas to seek further learning from other existing churches. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We also will start to set up timelines and milestones for reports on these matters. We are seriously endeavoring. We are hoping that in the first quarter we can do a lot of house cleaning.

Then we will progress and go forward to consider the church service, the children's work, work with the young people and the labor on the campus. The tech and communication, maintenance of the hall, and how to serve and help the saints with how to use the ministry all need to be considered. So many areas need to be tended to. Then we could get into the whole matter of the twos and threes, of re-doing the home or small groups, and eventually the possibility of redistricting. Then we will talk about the need to have meetings for gospel friends and for new believers.

I am suggesting to the brothers that every Lord's day they have a third meeting besides the Lord's table and prophesying time for new ones. We have built this up in Irvine for years. They are also talking about a monthly zoom gospel time where saints can invite friends. We are also considering a restructuring of the leadership to add brothers to the core to serve and blend together. There are two groups of brothers, a smaller core and a larger group of brothers. Then we will also tend to the sisters' needs. Finally, I'm burdened to start giving the saints some training.

You see, it is not a simple thing to build up a church. You have to know where the church is, you need to know its history, you need to have a thorough view through a thorough prayer and fellowship. Then we incrementally take the church on and build it up. This is energizing, not just a matter of talk, but of hands on. Get involved brothers with this kind of a spirit. Then in all of these ten churches we will see something develop. It is not a problem if some are slower than others. It is the persistence, the fortitude, and the labor that will cause something to happen. I still hope every one of these ten churches will become a model. There's no reason why it cannot happen.