

## **Four Levels and Four Functions**

(Fellowship from Minoru Chen on March 14, 2021)

### **Prayer**

*We pray, Lord, that You will be with us. Lord, you have shepherded and gathered us into Your name again out of everything into Your person and into the spirit. We pray this afternoon that You will say something timely to us. You must do something in all the local churches to make the churches strong, to make the churches rich, vital, and good for Your interests. There must be a fresh advance. There must be a renewal and revival. Lord, we pray for this earnestly, and we brothers make a resolution to cooperate with You that this can come to pass. Lord, we need Your presence, Your help, and we need Your guidance.*

### **A Genuine Revival**

You heard my prayer just now for the churches in the U.S. and not only for the ten cities, but for all the churches. To put it simply, the time has come for a new beginning, for a fresh advance of the Lord in this country, and nothing less. We're not here just to tighten a few screws and do a cosmetic paint job and say, "That's good enough." No. The situation, the need, and our condition compared to what the Lord wants and what our Brother Lee had expected requires, and I would even say, *demands* that we have a renewal and a revival. We cannot engineer such a thing. A genuine revival cannot be fabricated by us in some way, but there are things that we can do.

## **Making a Resolution**

Number one, we can all make a resolution, a deliberate determination or decision to cooperate with the Lord. To see this come to pass, we cannot manufacture anything. In the principle of incarnation today, neither can God do something by Himself without man, without us. It will be a God-man coordination and co-working to bring it to pass. Never forget the word in 1 Cor. 3:9 where Paul says, "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building." That is an astounding thought that God and we are co-workers. That means it's a three-legged race that requires two parties bound together and working together harmoniously to move. It is not only that we cannot do anything without the Lord, but we say reverently that the Lord cannot do anything without us. I hope that in these days we would be serious with the Lord like we have never been in our whole life. Don't use eleven use in your whole recovery experience and your whole church life in the past as a measurement because it will hold us back. We need to look to the future for something new that we have not seen or witnessed, for something far beyond our imagination in what we ask or think. Brothers, this is a serious thing. We're here at a threshold, but it depends on us. Will we continue in oldness and routine, excusing ourselves for our stagnancy and staleness, and for our fruitlessness and lack of vitality? Or shall we make a difference? I want to make a difference. I want all the churches to break through into new territories that will satisfy the Lord and will usher us into a condition that befits the Lord's name, the Lord's glory, and the Lord's testimony on the earth, what we call the Lord's recovery.

## **A Worthwhile Life**

Brothers, this is a high calling. So what if you make lots of money or you build a respectable career or you raise good families and have good marriages? All those things are good, but they pale in comparison to what's at stake related to God's interests. It pales in comparison to the Lord's interest on the earth. I've given my

whole life to this without an iota of regret. I wish I had more lives to give in this way. Let us not just say empty words when we say, "Come, Lord Jesus. Prepare Your bride. Build up Your Body. Bring in Your kingdom." Let us not give lip service to these great matters, these great expectations, and great hope. Let us do something to make this happen. I hope it's in our lifetime. It's in the Lord's hands, but at least we can do our very best and put forth a consecration, a devotion, a dedication, as we have not done up to this point. A lot of famous people became famous just by one event or by one decision they made. Likewise, one event or decision can bring infamy or disrepute. Watchman Nee said it would be the greatest thing if we could be a stepping-stone – if we could be used as a stepping-stone for the Lord just once and become useful to the Lord's move just once in our lifetime. That's a life well lived and a worthwhile life.

Have you thought about this brothers? One day on your deathbed, what will define your life? Will it be how much money you have in the bank account? Or even how great a family you have, which isn't a small thing. That's a great thing, especially against today's societal condition. But what else? I'd like that one day, when the Lord comes, He would say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master. You have been faithful in a little. Now I would give you more to be responsible over. I'll set you over more things." Don't you want to hear that, brothers, at His judgment seat? For me that is good enough. What I'm doing is hidden from man's sight -- where people acknowledge doings as praise from men, recognition and accolades. In this life, that means nothing. It's the Lord's appraisal that counts. It's the Lord's praise that counts. This is a serious matter related to the coming kingdom. Somewhere we lost this kind of heart and spirit and attitude and atmosphere in the church life. We became just good people, spiritual people, and responsible people. We never dropped out of the recovery and by God's mercy we will never turn against the ministry. We'll do our responsible part of things

in the church. That's all good, but just doing that won't get us there. That's the normal and good thing to do, but great work requires great sacrifice. That's just how things are. So in these days, I'm calling brothers, whether elders or serving brothers with a heart, to rise up and join this great work in the USA before us. I cannot stand to say, "There's another day that is coming in the future." It's now brothers. For me, it's now or never, and that makes me a desperate man.

### **Volunteers Needed**

Brother Lee went back to Taiwan in 1984. He was there for five years to find a way to break through the doldrums, the hibernated state, or the barren condition of the churches and even of the recovery. He succeeded in doing that in 1986. While he was in the thick of his study and work in Taiwan, he came back to the U.S. because he realized something was brewing here in the way of problems. Sure enough, two years later, it exploded as a full-fledged rebellion. But he came back because he discerned that there was a disharmony, a different thought, the loss of the one accord and a tendency to division. He knew well that without oneness and one accord, we would have lost the master key to all divine blessings and whatever the God-ordained way or new way could work out. So part of his calling in that elders training in 1986 was to talk about the one move of the Lord in the one Body under the one leadership of the one ministry. He was strong to talk about the need for the one accord and he also called an army. He even used that word to call or to marshal an army of saints to join him in turning the situation around. He said he wasn't expecting all the saints to join in, but he was looking for an army to rise up and join him to work this out. Just like in this country, there's the military and there's the civilians. They're all part of the country, but the army goes to fight. The civilians don't and eventually what the military does will ensure the country survives, ensure that there is peace to ensure that we can still go on as a nation. In the same way, today there is a need for an army of saints who will

enlist themselves because they see the need of the Lord's recovery. It's not required of them, but they see the need and they volunteer themselves. This is where the resolution comes in. You resolve and decide to give yourselves to this particular cause and respond to this special calling at this hour and at this time. He said to those who didn't want to join this, that it was okay, but do not criticize or resist or cause problems.

### **Cooperating and Coordinating**

We're at that kind of time in this country. A lot is at stake. You may not realize it, but I can tell you a lot is at stake. You may be just in your city, one of these ten cities, and that's all you see. But I want to show you the bigger picture. These ten GTCA cities must succeed not for our sake so we would get a good name or so we would become somebody, but so that there would be some models raised up that we can point to and say it works. There's a breakthrough and it's possible to have a new church life. The God-ordained way is implementable. Churches can grow in numbers. Meetings can be strong and attractive. Saints can live a vital overcoming life. It's possible, if not for every single saint, but for just enough saints, even if they may be in the minority. This is in the principle of being overcomers and normal Christian believers. That will not be a small thing. A little fire can burn a whole forest. The Lord would do something in your church, in my church, in that church, in this church, here, and there. Soon there would be a fire set and soon there would be a revival. Although God is living, the Lord is moving, and the spirit is acting, today the need is for ones to cooperate and coordinate with the Triune God to make this happen. Brothers, I want to put faith in you that it can happen. It doesn't mean that all the churches will be the same. It's happening in some churches with 50 people, it's happening in some churches with 100 people, and it's happening in some churches with 150 people. It is not that they will all look exactly the same way. No. We're not here to unify anything or to centralize anything. The Lord will work in different places and in

different churches according to their situations, but the outcome, in principle, will be the same. This is a revived testimony of Jesus in the USA. State by state, city by city, and church by church. But it has to start with saint by saint, one revived saint at a time, one vital brother or sister at a time. That's where it must start. Brothers, the calling is here, and we are here. Will we be those brothers who will take the lead this way? Or will we still be here just going through the motions and doing the same old thing?

I think a new consecration and resolution are needed right now. We need to be determined. We will fight as soldiers of Christ. We will bring this to pass. If not us, who? If not here, where? If not now, when?

I don't know how you feel about last week's Lord's day meeting with those saints. So that's not a small thing, say 400 brothers and sisters who would care to join. I surely hope that that number would not drop, but rather would increase. But it's your job to encourage the saints. I felt quite good about the time as an introductory fellowship to bring the saints back to the strategic importance of this country and give a brief history of the Lord's move, where we are today, and what the Lord is doing today. They heard the same calling especially in these ten cities to leverage this wonderful opportunity of migration, of revamping the church life in all these places, to build up a collective model of the kind of church life that will affect the Lord's move in this age. We will continue that fortnightly, and we continue this kind of fellowship with just the brothers on the alternate Lord's day afternoons.

### **Organic Structure of the Church**

This is not some kind of legal thing or secret sauce or some theory we apply. But based on our learning and experience over these decades, especially after Brother Lee went back to Taiwan to study this new way, or the God-ordained way, there is something quite wonderful and quite workable. That is two sets

of four items that are somewhat parallel. On one side is the so-called “organic structure of the church,” which starts with the individual member or the individual saint. I still don't like the word individual since to be individualistic has some kind of a bad connotation. Second is the companionship level. We need the companions, not just the individual, what I call the twos or threes, or twos and threes. Third is the groups, the bigger groups with 10–12 people or thereabouts. None of these are legal numbers, but we just conveniently put some numbers to it just to help our understanding, to have a common understanding. Finally, what we call a district, and in some cases, the church, because the church is smaller. I use 50 as a round number because that's the number the Lord used to gather people to feed them. Companies of 50s and 100s. So you have these four things. We need to build up our church life with these four things, not in a dead or organizational way, but in a very living way.

## **The God-Ordained Way**

### **1. To Beget**

So on this side, brothers, we have also four things. And those are the four things of what is called the God-ordained way: 1) to beget. I said to you before, and I want to repeat this again, this new church life, or even the proper church life, must be not only a Christ, or God-centered church life, but a people-centered church life. This is one of our big problems in the churches: not being people-centered, not being people-focused. And so that's why there's a lack of care. There's a lack of gospel, there's a lack of shepherding, because we're not focused on people. It's about people, brothers. It's not about cleaning the meeting hall, although we clean it. It's not about signing checks, even though we do need to sign checks. That's not the church life. Those are the supportive things, those are just the practical things we need to do. The real church life is about people. We need to devote most of our time and energy on people.

## **2. Feeding**

Number two, feeding. Whether you call it nourishing, nursing, feeding the lambs, feeding the young, feeding of the new ones, it is the feeding of people with a life supply, so that they will begin to grow in the spirit.

## **3. Teaching**

Number three, the teaching. Not only do people in the church need to grow, they also need to know the truth through the growth and through the knowledge of the truth. They will then be perfected in their function and service. These are the two things we need to take care of after begetting them through the gospel. We need to feed them to help them grow with the pure milk of the word. Number two, to teach them the truth that they would know the truth, the word of God. This is to perfect them into their function, their usefulness, their service. All this requires time and dedication. None of these are easy work; that's where the labor comes in.

That's what the apostle Paul did, setting an example for us. First, he said I begot you, you have many teachers, but you don't have fathers. He said through the gospel I've begotten you Corinthians. He first begot. Number two, he said "I am a nursing mother and an exhorting father," that's to feed, to nurture, in First Thessalonians. Number three, he said, "I teach you. I exhort you, I warn you with the truth." He spent three years in Ephesus doing just that from house-to-house, sharing the deeper counsels of God with the saints. And eventually, Ephesus because of his labor became one of the most strategic churches in Asia Minor. The first church, actually, of the seven in Revelation.

## **4. To Build**

Lastly, to build. To build means to speak in the meetings, to share in the meetings, to offer something in the meetings, in a mutual way, one to another; to edify, to build up one another, and



by that to build up the church.

These four things match, in a way. Every saint has to beget, I would say every branch. Go back to John 15, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, I will cut it off. Every branch in Me that bears fruit, I will prune so that he can bear more fruit.” The saints have to realize they are a branch. And they also have to realize they are a father or mother to beget some spiritual children, for the Lord. Every saint should do this.

### **Four Levels**

#### **The First Level – Each One**

I'm going to maybe start next week at that level with the saints. Last night, I gave a word to the church in Long Beach to tell them every saint has three statuses when it comes to this: 1) branch in the true vine; 2) a father in the family of God, to beget children, to enlarge that family; 3) a laboring priest of the gospel to offer up men as sacrifices for worship to God, for God's satisfaction. I said that in all these things we are individually responsible to be and to do things—bearing fruit, having children, raising them, then then offering them to God, as Paul did as a priests of the gospel. This is the first level. I have much to say to help the saints know how to do that when I meet with them.

#### **The Second Level – Twos and Threes**

Then at the second level, which is the twos and threes, there is the feeding level. In a normal situation, it takes two parents. Today there are many single parent families, but I'm saying in a normal situation there should be two. Sometimes you may even have a big brother help. In some families you may even have a nurse to help out. You need a few to raise up a child. Twos and threes, partners, a couple to raise up a child. For many years, my wife and I, and even today are a couple not only physically, but also spiritually, to raise up spiritual children in the church. Or two brothers coming together as partners in the gospel, two or three

sisters, in the same neighborhood, mothers who will pray together, they will care for people, touch people together. They will shepherd together. How good it is when the church is full of twos and threes like that. We need to build that up saints.

### **Third Level – Groups**

Number three, we need to teach them and perfect them and that happens in a bigger group setting. A group of 6-13 people, bigger than two or three. A group situation, a kind of a miniature church life, Body life, meeting in a home somewhere. That's not just a meeting, I'm not talking about a group meeting, I'm just saying "group." It's a living; it's a life. It's a life that the saints live with a group of saints. Maybe in a certain geographic neighborhood, maybe with a certain emphasis on a target like here we have a university. We have many groups that are targeting that, you see. And there are other groups in the church here that are targeting more toward the community. We need a revolution, even in our group life, brothers. Our Friday night or group meetings have also become stale, just kind of a meeting that will go on forever. Many with no increase, no growth, no perfecting of people. There are some that are doing that, but many are not; it's just a thing that we do as a routine.

### **Fourth Level – District or Church**

Lastly, we come together as districts or as churches, it depends. And there we gather for a stronger testimony because it's bigger, more people with more impact. There's more power and more riches. But still keeping it to a certain number so that more saints can function. When you have 250 people it's hard to function, only the strongest can function. But with the smaller group, 50 people, you can function. There you have really a church life, in the districts. You can prophecy and have the Lord's table. You pray together, church prayer. You take care of practical matters of the church. So that the bigger church is decentralized, you see. In all these districts more saints can function. There are

more playgrounds and opportunities to learn and to perfect the saints. By all this, this church becomes a growing church, ever growing. Not just preaching the gospel, but there's a whole pipeline here, a whole process here to bring a sinner to God, to make sinners sons of God, but also to make them functioning members in the Body. Brothers, I'm not painting an impossible picture. This has happened in church history, here and there, in a wonderful way. And you see the Lord's move in the same principle. That's what Brother Lee wanted to see. That's what he tried to work out, but he didn't have the time to do so. Brothers, let's work this out. Shall we? What else are we to do here? We have all the truths. We have all this wonderful ministry, we're not short of that. What we're short of is a strong church life, a rich church life, a fruitful church life, an impactful church life. I just do not agree with churches that go on year after year, being held back by weakness, emptiness, lukewarmness, even deadness and barrenness. That does not fit the Lord's recovery. And it doesn't have to be so. Brothers, rise up to respond to this call. And take the lead to do these things, to labor yourself. Don't just first go and tell the saints what to do and work that way. You do it first. You learn first, then you bring others with you. You become a pattern.

### **Being Vigilant Not to be Ensnared or Entangled**

Today I have another burden on the side. It's important, but a bit on the side. Even though I'm not talking here to all elders, not all of us are elders and not all of us will be elders, but we all need to learn the same thing as either leading brothers, responsible brothers, or serving brothers in the church. We all have to learn the same things. What I'm going to raise today is one thing that has caused and is still causing problems in the church life. It's something we have to be very vigilant about, very aware about so that we don't get trapped or ensnared. And the one word that I would use is entanglement. Entanglement means you are ensnared, you just got caught in this web. You just got mixed up

with some personal situation and you cannot extricate yourself. That's to be entangled. It is a snare. I use the word "ensnare" because it is a snare. In the past, we have learned that when brothers are not careful or watchful, they become negligent and get entangled. This brings in problems in the church in a negative way.

### **Five Areas of Entanglement**

I would mention today five areas of entanglement. Well, before I do that, I would encourage you to go read again, the Elders Lessons concerning the qualifications of elders and deacons in First Timothy 3 along with the verses with the footnotes. That will help a lot, just even reading that. And studying that, learning from that will help a lot.

#### **1. Personal Entanglements**

The first one is personal entanglement. This is when you, yourself, or I, myself, got entangled with certain things, or persons in the church. Let me just say this, brothers, do your best not to be entangled, not to be caught in matters with saints in the church in a personal way. Now, that doesn't mean that we don't care for the church, or we don't serve the saints, or we don't shepherd, or get involved. Far from it. But I'm saying don't get entangled. I will just give some examples that come to mind.

One entanglement is natural affection. You, as a brother, have a particular affection with some. It could be some co-serving ones, it could be some saints. You got too close. You know we have spiritual fathers and spiritual sons. That's very real. We have brothers who serve together, that's very real. There is nothing wrong with all of that. But be careful not to get too close and fall into a natural affection. Natural affection is honey in the Old Testament. It allows natural things to fester, to ferment, and to cause problems. You may love a brother or a saint and you care for them. You perfect them and raise them up. You mentor them.

This is no problem. But you don't have natural affection. Brother Lee always talked about his relationship with Watchman Nee. They were as father and son, co-workers, but no natural relationship or affection. They remained pure in their relationship.

Another personal entanglement is partiality. You become partial, biased. You like this brother more than that one. You like this family more than that one. Or sometimes even you like this service more than that one. All these things can cause you to become biased. One of the hardest things, brothers, is to be even, balanced, inclusive, not prejudiced. Paul says, "love with the same love." That means to love without partiality. This can happen brothers. We have seen these things at work in various turmoils. And those natural affections eventually pull people away from the church life. It's the affection; it's not the truth.

Also remember, brothers, the church is not ours. The church is God's possession, His peculiar possession. The church is assigned to us for our temporary stewardship and care. The moment you think that this is mine, or this saint is mine, or this service is mine, it will affect your judgment. It will affect the way you relate to that person or that service or that matter. All I can say is, brothers, do your best not to be entangled.

An entangled person is a person that has lost his objectivity. You become subjective. You make decisions subjectively, even in the elders meeting, you will begin to defend a certain brother or a saint because you're partial to them. You will despise another because you're partial against them. Don't think that this cannot happen, brothers. We're all human beings.

## **2. Marriage Entanglements**

The second one I would say is marriage entanglements. Firstly, our own marriage. That's why the qualification speaks of being the husband of one wife. Brothers, we need to be pure.

Even in our own marriages, we must be careful. In our relationship with the opposite sex, with sisters. We have to be careful that we don't fall into what the world calls an "emotional affair." We have to maintain our marriages before the Lord and before the saints. When there are marital disputes, problems in the church, we have to be super careful. It is best to not get involved. That does not mean we do not fellowship, listen, or pray. But be very careful. Do not think that you are a marriage counselor and do not play that role. You will be sucked in before you know it. The saints look to elders like elders know everything. Elders do not know everything. It is better to stay away from marital disputes and problems. We pray, we fellowship, and we support, but we do not get entangled emotionally or otherwise. We need to exercise great discretion. We have to be discerning. We have to be very careful in these things. Even now, we have problems in the recovery that got blown up, problems which issued from marital disputes, the mishandling of marital disputes. Do not be accused one day of breaking up a marriage, brothers. That risk exists.

I would like to add an additional word. Yes, we do need to help the young people to be married properly, to find a mate. But you have to be very discreet that you do not go too far, doing this and doing that, helping this one get married, helping that one. I have seen that. And some are too quick, too sure, without checking the background, and the marriage soon blows up. Brothers, marriage is a very serious matter. We cannot be light about it. We cannot think we know who is for whom. This word should go to the sisters as well.

### **3. Family Entanglements**

The third is family entanglements. Be very careful, brothers. Let us say you are a leading brother. Then people will tend to look at your wife as the first lady. That is just how it works. No, there is no such thing as a first lady in the church life. Even the wife has to be super careful. There is to be no first family in the church. In the

church, it is church first, not family first. When you bring in family interest into the church life, you are just looking for trouble. There is no family succession, where you just give all the jobs to your family and friends. No such thing. That is impure. And that will cause problems. There should be no favoritism including family favoritism. This is hard. It is very hard to treat all the saints the same, fairly. It is not easy, brothers. It is very easy to lose our objectivity.

For sure, we should not mess in others' family affairs. Some have dysfunctional families. Some have problematic families. Do not think you can go and solve all these problems. I say again, that does not mean we do not care, we do not fellowship, or we do not support. But again, we need much sobriety, much discernment, on just how far we go.

#### **4. Financial Entanglements**

The next one is financial entanglements. In this list of qualifications for elders and deacons, this is a big one. This is about money, about greediness, about fondness for money, about base gain. Be very careful. Do not think this has not happened. This has happened, the using of church money for this or that. Be very clear on money matters, on church money matters. You get a church credit card, and before long, you are using it to do this and do that in the name of church activities. Brothers, we have to be careful about even the appearance of evil, what's called "the optics." Be very careful. Personally, I always stay away from church finances. Some brothers take care of it. I just stay away from it. I do not even want to know about it, as long as it is taken care of. Of course, the entanglement could bite us, and cause the church to be disgraced, to be discredited before men.

#### **5. Business Entanglements**

Last is business entanglements. I have seen this also, where

brothers, even leading brothers, get into business with saints. And their position is compromised. They cannot render proper care to the saints because of that relationship. Needless to say, the church is not a house of merchandise. We suffer from that. Saints have brought in these pyramid schemes to sell different things like vitamin supplements. This has happened and damaged the church. In some cases, even the leading one, or the wife of the leading one, is involved. It has happened, brothers.

### **Irreproachable and Unreprovable**

In the list of qualifications of the elders, the word is “irreproachable.” In the list of the deacons’ qualifications, the word is “unreprovable.” Two particular words. If you read the footnotes, it is very clear that *irreproachable* does not denote that the person is perfect. No, because nobody is perfect. But it does denote a kind of condition, an irreproachable condition in the eyes of men. That is possible. What does reproach mean? Reproach simply means you are not approved, but disapproved, blameworthy, faulty to bring about criticism. A leading brother must not be like that. He should be irreproachable, clean, proper decorous, full of self-control.

The matter of *unreprovable*, similarly, does not mean this person is perfect before God. It just means this person is approved. This brother is really approved, proper, somewhat blameless and faultless before men. These are for our testimony before men, including the saints and outsiders as well.

Brothers, this may sound a bit negative, but I think it is very helpful. In all the years, Brother Lee certainly touched these things and helped us in these things. We have seen some tragic situations, unfortunate events, that took place because good brothers, due to their carelessness and weakness, failed in some of these things, sometimes drawing the whole church into a mess, embroiling the whole church in a mess. How can that church go on? It will be very hard.



## Questions and Responses

*Brother Minoru, you mentioned some unfortunate situations that brothers got entangled in. My question is, how can we help them to be restored? Maybe some of them were used to taking the lead. Some of them may still be around. Some of them may not be actively meeting. Do you have some advice for us?*

It depends on the complexity, the severity, and the scope of the entanglement. Some are small, which are not that complicated. Others can be super complicated, web-like, entangling and embroiling different saints and people. It really depends on the situation. For sure, certain situations, small or great, can have a compromising effect on our service and our function, especially as some who bear some responsibility or take some lead in the church. If you cannot solve the problems and help the situation, you need to look to other brothers or some co-workers to help. It depends on who is involved and how difficult that situation is.

Sorry to say that some situations cannot be helped or solved. The person almost canceled themselves. They just cannot serve in that environment. They have no way to serve. They have lost their credibility and their trustworthiness among the saints. And there is nothing you can do about that. This person may have to stop his service for some time, to withdraw, possibly, because it is just bringing the church down or really negatively impacting the church life. Some can be helped, because the situation is simpler, not deep or widespread, so we can help them to extract themselves from that situation or entanglement.

*I have a question that goes back to the organic structure of the church. I ask this because I am not always sure how to fellowship with my wife. I am just wondering, in terms of the individual or singular saint, what does that practically look like for a sister that might be at home with the kids, or working but also taking care of the kids or the house? What does that look like*

*practically for the individual? For the group, I can see that with the sisters. But what about the individual?*

Not group, but twos and threes. The companionship of sisters is very important. Two sisters, two or three, is very important. They need one another to encourage one another. I have a lot to say about the twos and threes, even according to the Scriptures. That is a real need among sisters to just have twos and threes, to pursue the Lord. They come together to read the ministry, to pray. They come together even to care for people or preach the gospel.

But the individual, you can never jump over that. One day, we will all be standing individually before Christ. There will not be any proxies. There will not be any representatives. It will just be you, alone with the Lord, that's it. So we cannot get past this. Especially in a growing family, the housewife is very busy. But if the sister has a private life with the Lord, it all starts there. She, I am not talking about your wife, I am speaking generally, must have built up a private, personal, deeper walk and relationship with the Lord. It starts there. In that relationship, the Lord will touch her and speak to her about certain things. For example, the Lord may touch her about a certain person, a certain sinner, a certain acquaintance, a certain neighbor, and puts this one in her heart. That is very personal. That is where you start. And she can pray, even without talking to other sisters. She can have the burden. She is earnest to bear fruit. She begins to pray to the Lord which is a very normal start. I am talking especially about the gospel, but also shepherding. She picks up a burden for a student in the church that no one is quite caring for, but she just has the heart, and she begins to pray. She may contact this person. She may invite this person for tea, to cultivate a relationship and to shepherd this person. Just herself. All these are very normal things.

In the church life, because we are very corporate, a lot of times we defer things to the corporate. Everything is corporate.

Then our personal service, our personal life before the Lord, is not as robust, not as strong as it should be. We really need to help the saints to build up that personal, individual life with the Lord, out of which the Lord will commission this person with some burden, a person to take care of.

*Brother Minoru, this is more of an observation, I guess. Tonight, when going through the four basic elemental parts of the organism, the structure of the church, I always have seen these as, in a sense, segmented. I realize the importance of companionship. Our group is so important. Then I saw the district. They are all interwoven. They all need to be functioning together. The personal life is the base, but I just saw that, in the organism, all four of these are essential and need to be functioning together. It seems like I live in a segmented life sometimes. Like you said, the personal life is more focused. And then it gets off into serving, and it is not like we do not experience the Lord in our service. But it still seems like a segmented life.*

That is why we cannot take these things legally. We all have this mind to compartmentalize everything; it is a perfect square. Forget about it. Our body does not work that way. It is highly organized, but the different systems and organs are all very intricate and very interrelated. It is the same thing with the Body of Christ. While we talk in this way, like there is a very clear-cut structure, actually they are all really organically interrelated.

It does not mean that this kind of putting some numbers to it does not help. Within a district or a church, there will be various groups. Let us say this is a church of fifty people. There would be four or five groups within this district, each with ten or twelve people. Some groups are smaller, some bigger. We have been practicing this. We find that this is not something spectacular. It is just very normal. In the district, you just see people once a week. In the group level, it is more than once a week. The members in

these groups could relate to each other and function. So sometimes we have district prayer and sometimes we have group prayer when we come together to pray. All that can be flexible and changeable. And within the group, ideally, you would have twos and threes. It is very normal for me to have twos and threes. My wife and I are a *two*. Two brothers with me are a *three*. This is not just one *two and three*. It is not that I can have only one *two and three* group. No, I could have *two*, I could have *three*. It depends. This is the smallest community unit, the one-plus unit that functions as companions to serve, to care for people. And then you have the *one*.

They are interrelated. We should not segment them like four strata. Also, brothers, I keep repeating that we must be careful to not make this into some legal diagram. We must be flexible in applying these things, and very flexible according to your local situation. The manifestations can be different, but in principle, you do have this. We need to build up the groups. I do not believe that a church is built up if the groups are not built up. That is my experience. But now, between the group size and the individual, we have wonderful vital companions. It is very flexible. It is a wonderful thing. It is a daily thing.