

## **Individuals, Companions, and Groups**

(Fellowship from Minoru Chen on February 28, 2021)

### **Organization in Society**

Today, I want to fellowship about the third level in the organic structure of the church. Before we get into that, I would like to take a step back and talk about why we are talking about these things. In our church life, for many years, we never quite talked about things like the organic structure. This is because we are careful – and Brother Lee was certainly careful – that we do not organize the church. The church is not an organization, but an organism. If we are not careful to not have too many arrangements, we can fall into making the church something that is organized. That concern is always there, even now as I speak.

As human beings, this is the way we are trained up, the way we are used to things in the secular society. In almost every part of the human society, we need organization. Whenever you have a group of human beings involved in various endeavors, for that group's existence, for its maintenance, and for its function, you need organization. For a people to last like a civilization or a society, for it to be able to build itself up as a nation, and for it to function in many ways, whether it is education, family, military, commerce, or business, you need to organize those human beings. This is true even with animals, which are lower than the human beings. Otherwise, it is a chaotic and nothing will be done. You cannot wage a war if you have an unorganized military. In fact, it is an oxymoron, there is no such thing as an unorganized military. This is the human side. This is how man was created: he needs a community to belong, to serve, to work, to exist, to protect himself, to socialize, to relate.

### **A Divine-Human Entity**

What about the church? We know that the church, in essence, is divine. It is not human. It has the Triune God Himself as the element. However, it is not just the Triune God, it is the Triune God mingled, united, and even incorporated with the creature man, the highest creature that God made according to His own image and in His likeness. So now there is not only the divine element, there is also the human element.

In addition, this is not a singular human. Although all humanity came from Adam, who is the head of the created race and eventually of the fallen race, eventually there are billions and billions of these human beings. Christ sowed Himself as a seed into some of these human beings. Although manhood or mankind is a kind or a species, there are billions of units of this human species. The Lord saved a number of these. The Lord regenerated those whom He foreknew, redeemed, called, and one at a time. Eventually, His work is to not only to save each one of them and dwell and grow in each one of them, but also to blend them in Him into a corporate whole. This corporate vessel, we know, is the church of God, the Body of Christ. This is God's design. Ultimately, the New Jerusalem is the blending of the Triune God with man. They will be formed into this great divine-human entity, in the new heaven and the new earth. That is what the Lord wants.

### **A New Community**

However, in all of this work, the man that God created was never obliterated. There is no obliteration of the individual. God still saves one man at a time. God regenerates one man at a time. The Lord grows in one heart at a time. The Lord transforms one soul at a time. One day, the Lord will transfigure one vile body at a time. But these individuals are not made to exist by themselves, because they cannot. No human being, even in the world or in secular society, can exist and survive by itself. It is made with a need for community, for other human beings, and not to be alone. The church is this corporate vessel of God. It is also definitely an organism rather than something

organized. It is not mechanical. It is not robotic. It is living and organic. But the constituents of this church, in terms of its framework, are men, are human beings. The church actually satisfies the characteristic need in man to belong, to be part of a community, to be part of something corporate and collective.

### **Called Out Assembly**

That is why we have the gathering of the believers. In fact, the word *ekklesia* means the called-out assembly. That is the most fundamental, basic definition of the church. People among the fallen race that have been redeemed, saved, regenerated, called out, sanctified, separated from the world unto God, unto the Lord, form a new community on the earth, a never-before-seen community on this earth. The Jews in the Old Testament were a unique, special, peculiar treasure of God. They were special in that they were the called race. They became a nation. They had the law of God. Similarly, the church is the New Testament household of the faith, the household of God, the church of the living God, and the family of God.

Therefore, this church is something corporate, made up however of individuals, believers, saints, children of God, and members of Christ. This satisfies God to have such a corporate vessel, building, or organism like this for His enlargement and expression. For men, they now have not only the Lord, the Spirit, but also one another as human beings, except now they do not have a fallen, worldly, and sinful community, but a new community, and that is the new man.

When Colossians and Ephesians talk about putting off the old man, that old man is corporate. That is not just my personal old man. Yes, I need to put that off and that is the old man mentioned in Romans. In Romans, the old man is buried, ceases to exist, dies, and now there is a new man in me or I am a new man. Certainly, there is a new man within me, and that is Christ, a new person. But the old man that we are to put off in Ephesians and Colossians is more than just an individual old man. It is a collective old man, in other words, an old

community where we once belonged. We were all part of that community. When we got saved and when we are still being saved, we are to put off that old community and be into a new community. That new community or corporate group of people is the church. Practically speaking, that is the church life.

### **A Divine-human Community**

Brothers, when we bring people to the Lord and they get saved, we cannot stop in just saving them and helping them to grow a little bit or to read the Bible. Our ultimate goal is to bring them into the church life. That is not just so that they belong to the recovery. That is so that they can be part of this new community to which they belong. To put off the old man is to put off the old community. To put on the new man is to put on the church life, put on the new community, a new community that exists on the earth today. That is the meaning of the church: a divine-human community.

Community means a group of people with shared interests. There is something shared among them that is common among them. Surely, we have a lot in common. We all have been redeemed by the same person. We all have the same life, and the same life characteristics by virtue of that. We have the seven *ones* in Ephesians: one God and Father, one Lord, one Body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one faith, and one baptism (4:4-6). We share all these things. So today, we are that community on the earth.

We need to help the new ones soon after they are saved in their clearance of the past. This is not just to clear up their sinful past or the old habits, but to actually leave their old community, their old buddies, their old friends, their old companionships. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, Paul was fighting with this heresy that there is no resurrection. He told the Corinthians, "Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (v. 33). He was telling them to disassociate themselves from bad companions. What was that bad companionship? These were those who did not believe in resurrection, those who were the

heretics. He said to not associate with them, to get away from them, because they would corrupt the Christian virtue, the Christian morals and values. Eventually we need to help the saints to leave their worldly community and join with God's community. This is God's community for man. This community is holy, righteous, godly, and spiritual. It is a totally new community that we are in today. We have a different purpose. We have a different goal in life. We have a different culture, which is all Christ according to Colossians. In this new man, this new community, there is nothing called human culture, social class, or difference of religions. There is only Christ in this new community.

### **Practice of the Community Life**

Now, because it is a community, in a practical sense, there is the practice of this community, the living of this community. When the Mayflower came, there were so many adults there. Eventually, they had their first community. That was probably the first church life. They were all Puritans, believers living in Massachusetts and Plymouth Rock, and they had certain rules. My point is that what makes a community is the social relationships. Otherwise, there is no community. There is a social relationship. It is not wrong to say that in the church life we have a social relationship. It is holy and not worldly. It has a divine element; it is not entirely human. It is godly and spiritual, and not just soulish and fleshly. Being human beings, we have a need of that. There is a need. Some of us are happy to be a "monk" or someone living under a rock. But that is the minority. Most of us need a community to live in, to survive and to thrive. That is how God created us.

We are here studying and trying to practice this community life, this church life. I told you about the song that says, "The church is the highest communal life." That is what we are talking about. It is because of this that we consider this matter of the groupings, the "structure" of the church. Again, I say, brothers, this is not in the organized, legal sense, but in a very organic and life sense.

Nevertheless, there is this aspect of structure, in practicality and in practice.

I wanted to make this point clear, so that we do not fall astray into organization, and on the other hand, so that we would not be resistant to this thought. You may say that we just need the Spirit, or that the Spirit is good enough. Just the Spirit does not work so well. There is a human framework. The church has human beings as a framework, this community as a framework, for Christ to fill, for Christ to be the element, for the Spirit to be the essence, for God to be the source to mingle with us and to find expression practically on the earth today.

### **Revival of Each Individual**

The first level of this structure is clearly the individual: *each one*. I was so inspired two weeks ago when we had fellowship regarding this matter. Since then, I have given a few messages to the church in Long Beach on this. The more I speak, the clearer I become. I am not afraid to use the word *individual*. Do not be afraid of that word. We are “individually members one of another” (Romans 12:5b). “So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (v.5). If the individual disappeared, ceased to exist, is obliterated, then why would Paul use the word *individual*? No, brothers. I have given you enough proof that the New Testament pays too much attention to the individual.

One day, at the judgment seat, it will not be group evaluation on team performance. No, *each one* will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Each one will be judged according to his or her life and work in this age. I cannot stand there for you. You cannot stand there for me. *Each one* will have to face the Lord, for our own life. We are responsible for ourselves. This is consistent in the New Testament. By the way, the more we talk about the corporate, the more I am burdened for the individual. Talk about a revival, brothers, a revival starts with an individual. Do not try to have some top-down big revival thing. That is not trustworthy. True revival starts from *each one*. When

one saint is revived, the Lord will use this one to influence another next to him to revive that one, and so on. The revival of the whole depends on the revival of one. If you are revived, I am revived, he is revived, and she is revived, then the whole church is revived. The larger number of individuals that are vitalized, living, active, revived, spiritual, and growing, that is how much that church will be revived. Do you see this?

You have *each branch* in John 15. *Each one* has the gift. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, “Now you are the Body of Christ” (v. 27a). Paul was absolutely talking about the Body. But the more he talked about the Body, the more he mentioned the individual: the individual gift, the individual portion of grace, the individual measure of faith. And each one has to use it. Paul kept using the words “he” and “one”. Because how does the Body build up, dear brothers? The key verse is Ephesians 4:16. The Body builds itself up in love. How does that happen? How does the Body build itself up in love? It is very clear in 4:16, this marvelous, key verse in the New Testament. It says that it comes from the joining together and the knitting together of all the members. That will cause the growth of the Body, or the building up. The growth and the building up of the Body is the same thing. “The growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love” (v. 16c). But what is the means? It says “through every joint of the rich supply” (v. 16b). *Every*. Brothers, it does not say ‘through a bunch of joints of supply.’ No, it is “through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of *each one part*” (v. 16b). So *every joint* has to supply, and *every part* has to operate. When that happens, there will be knitting, there will be joining, and there will be the collective and corporate growth unto the building up. This is why I also add a word on Paul's work in Colossians: teaching every man, exhorting every man. Paul's work was on *one individual*.

### **Function of Each One Part**

Paul's work is on one because he knows when one is going on, that's another one added to the fire. You know what I mean? Another piece

of coal added to the fire. But we like to do the big things, the big meetings or when we have a good meeting then we're happy. The solid work, even God's work, is one person at a time. You work on one Abraham, one Isaac, one Jacob, one Paul (Saul), one Peter, and one John. God works on individuals, but eventually He wants to gain something corporate. 1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." Yes, you are the Body, but don't forget the individual members. We stress the Body in the Recovery like no other Christian group. Sometimes I'm concerned that, yes, on the one hand, we have the vision of the Body. But when it comes to building up a local church, we forget that the Body doesn't just pop out of thin air. The Body is the result of many individual members according to their different measures and portions all functioning because they are vital, living, and active. Each one operating and functioning issues in the Body being joined together. Of course, their function and their activity should not be *individualistic*. We should condemn that word "individualistic" or "individualism", but not the word "individual." In fact, we need that very much. The first layer of each one is the individual. I'm not afraid to use this word because it's in the Bible. I am very burdened. If you alone do not become vital and you do not rise up, then nothing will happen. But when you individually are vitalized, that's the beginning of a revival.

### **Valuing Each One**

This is why Brother Lee was so strong in the Song of Songs crystallization study saying that we need to have a quiet, secret, private, intimate, affectionate, and personal relationship with the Lord. If everything is corporate, then why? What's so important about that? Because if each one does not have a life of abiding in the Lord, that relationship with the Lord, then there will be no way for God to gain what He wants to gain corporately. One of the brothers did a little quick calculation and said the one talent is the equivalent to 1.6 million US dollars today. If you invest it even at low interest, then you'll be doing pretty good. You're supposed to trade it and generate a return for the master. The Lord has given to us, even the smallest



member, one talent. I look at some meetings and no one speaks. Everyone has \$1.6 million in their pocket, but no one is spending a dime. This does not make sense. If your church has 100 people, and each one has one talent worth \$1.6 million, then that's \$160 million. How many meeting halls can you build with that? Brothers, we have been cheated. We despise what little we think we have when actually we are rich beyond compare. In these days we need to help the saints to see what they have. Each one has. Now, possess it, enjoy it, and use it. If each saint uses even just 50% or 25% of it, then that is still a lot of money and a lot of gifts. Instead, we fall prey to the enemy's work on Christendom in general to think, "I'm just a layman. I have nothing; I'm a nobody. What I have is just too little to show." We believe that lie as well in the Recovery, so the function of the believers is annulled, the gifts are canceled, and the Body cannot build itself up. The problem with Christianity is it's just a few bishops and cardinals and priests. The Lord's recovery is to abandon all of that. Every saint has and every saint can function and use what one has been given. If everyone would be responsible to do their part, then we would have a revival tomorrow morning. Of course, for that gift to be used in a consistent and good way, we need to grow in life. We need to have a solid relationship with the Lord. We need to have a spiritual and overcoming Christian life. Life and work are related.

The first level is the individual, and I'm getting clearer regarding this in these days. I will speak more along this line. This morning, I talked with the church about the ten virgins and the three slaves regarding life and service. All the saints will give account one day for their watchfulness and their faithfulness. Each vessel needs to be filled with oil, the Spirit, so that they can be in the wedding feast with the Bridegroom. They will also give account for what they do with the gift that has been given to them. There's an incentive there to rule over many cities, and also a disincentive that you may miss the wedding feast. That's a very real thing and that's personal. I will not miss that feast for you. Neither will you miss it for me. Whether or not you attend the wedding feast will be according to your life and how much

oil you have gained in your vessel. It is the same regarding the rulership in the kingdom. I think many saints need this righteous word.

Then we have these first verses in John chapter 15 about each and every branch: "He who abides in Me" and "He who does not abide," "He who bears fruit and he who does not bear fruit." This is related to the individual branch and is very sobering, and also very encouraging.

### **Second Level of Companions**

The second level is what we call the "twos and threes" but that is a bit of a mouthful. I would like to use the word "companions." The first level is the "individual," and the second level is "companions." Companion means a lot of things. It is someone with whom you're traveling on the same journey; you are companions on a trip. You are companions in war or comrades or fellow soldiers. Your partners in the business are your business companions. I think companions is probably a better word to use than just twos and threes, which emphasizes just the number. Last week, we were very much on Matthew 18. The companions in that chapter were together according to the Lord's speaking, and it was the smallest unit of companions that can enjoy the presence of the Lord in their midst. We know personally we enjoy the Lord's presence, but there's something very particular when we are with some brothers and the Lord is in our midst. There are also prayer companions to bind and loose in one accord and in harmony. That prayer obviously implies warfare, so they are fellow enjoyers of the Lord's presence and they are also fellow soldiers in the spiritual warfare. Then together, two or three, they visit this sinful person to recover him, and that means they contact people, they shepherd people, they edify people, they save people, and they take care of people together. This is a marvelous picture. What do the two or three do? They enjoy the Lord together and enjoy the Lord's presence. They pray together, and they contact people together.

### **Fellow Workers and Shepherds**

This companionship is not just to hang out or to gossip or to do other

things. This companionship has a purpose and a goal. In the church, it would be wonderful if every saint had some companions and maybe two sets of companions or maybe three sets of companions according to the need and the situation. God made us this way. Joshua needed a Caleb; Paul needed a Silas, and at other times Paul needed a Timothy. John, Peter and James out of the twelve comprised a small companion group that received the Lord's particular training and dealing, for example. This is not just numerology, studying numbers. It is a very practical matter to be built up with the saints into a holy companionship with a purpose and a function to pray. That's a huge thing in these days, to pray with companions. These companions of two or three work with a ministry to shepherd people, to preach the gospel, and to edify people. If we have such companionships in the church life, if every saint has some companions like this, then with these companionships we can actually call each other not only fellow brothers, but fellow soldiers and fellow workers. We can say we three brothers are just soldiering together, fighting together, and praying together every week. I like to see that the sisters have two or three companions, not for gossiping, but to come together to pray for the saints and for the young people. They pray for the children, for the other moms in the park, and together they find ways to contact those people and to shepherd them and bring the gospel to others in a daily way. Two or three brothers working close by may gather somewhere in the downtown area as companions. At lunch, two or three times a week they can come together and get into the word and pray and contact their workmates or colleagues. Don't go and arrange this, brothers. It should be very spontaneous and organic. But we should promote this practice, and in fact, we need it. Don't we all need it? Two or three brothers can be fellow workers, fellow soldiers, fellow intercessors, and fellow shepherds.

### **Third Level of Groups**

The next level I would call "groups." I eliminate the word "small" because what's small? It's all relative. So individuals, companions, and groups. People always want to think how big a group should be.

Maybe a half dozen to 15 or 16, and the happy middle is 12. By the way, it just occurred to me, there were 12 spies and among the 12 spies there were two overcoming companions. That was Caleb and Joshua. Those 12 spies are what I call a group, the same as the 12 apostles or disciples of the Lord. Please don't ask whether it can be 13 or whether it can be 11. My point is that a number of believers or brothers or saints is more than just two and three companions. That group is the beginning of a community or a larger community but not as big as the church or district. But in this number, you begin to practice a church life. There are some small churches that are about that size in a locality. You can have a church life with a group that size. I don't know about a church life with two or three. But a dozen saints? Yes. A few families? Yes. And don't forget the children in these families. Couples, singles, young and old. They're in a certain life stage or they live in a certain part of town. There's something common among them in that sense. They are a group.

Brother Lee, over time used different terms like "home group" or eventually "home meetings." Then he used the word "small groups," indicating the size, and then he used the "vital groups." As a result, the saints got all confused. "Is my group a vital group, a small group, or a home group?" There are a lot of debates on that. Well, I'd like to be the one who settles all these debates once and for all: It's the same. "Small" refers to the size, so it's not a big group. Fifty people or 30 people is not a small group. "Home group" merely refers to the venue that you gather in. If you meet in a park, then you can call it a park group. The name is just the venue or the place for convenience. "Vital group" speaks of the condition, but it's the same thing. If you are small, if you are vital, if you meet in a home, then that's it. You're everything. Don't fight anymore as to what it may be called. For a sizable church, there's no way to go on without these groups. The old way is just to meet on Sunday or Lord's day. We need that, and we can discuss more about that in terms of the church meeting together in one place or in districts. But in our experience, these groups are absolutely necessary. They are the smallest community. The twos and

threes, while you can say it's a community, it's more of a companionship. But when you have a dozen people, a number of families, you begin to have the beginning of a community, which is a fuller church life. Therefore, the social relationship and the spiritual relationship between these saints are important. The assembling together as a group is important.

The main verse Brother Lee used for groups was always Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider one another so as to incite *one another* to love and good works, not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near." Brother Lee always used that verse to talk about group meetings. This kind of gathering typically does not and need not happen in the meeting halls, but it can happen everywhere else. And in the home is a very biblical and New Testament way to meet. Brother Lee studied that and we have studied that very much. The church is in this house and the church is in that house. The churches in those days were not big. They fit into somebody's house – in Philemon's house, in Nymphas' house, in Prisca and Aquila's house. But that is just the place. My point is the home is a very convenient and relaxing place to meet. It is also a very homey place to meet versus a meeting hall. I don't like to go to your meeting hall; I'd like to go to your house and have a meal. It's much more friendly, much more attractive, and much less threatening.

And gathering in our homes has a way of sanctifying our homes. What is the purpose of groups? One, it supplies a practical, smaller sized community, which is the beginning of the church life. When I talk "group" don't think meetings. Think people, it's not a Friday night, 8 pm to 10 pm affair. You bring potatoes; I will bring salad. That's not all; that's just a slice of the group. One activity is a meeting. This group does a lot of things. They live together; they are a community; they have other activities. They're active during the week. And in fact, the more ideal situation is that within this group, they have the twos and threes. Just like Caleb and Joshua within the 12. Just like Peter, James

and John within the 12. We're not legal, but you cannot have 12 people having an appointment with one new one, but two people can have an appointment with one. The twos and threes are like the arms reaching out to bring the new ones or a young one or a needy one, to the home, to the small group, which is their initial church life. So this group is also a shepherd's tent. This group is a gate of entry for new ones, and for dormant ones that we're trying to recover.

And this size of a church life makes the church life very relatable. You know everybody and everybody knows you. You have each other's back. This kind of small situation really strengthens the mutuality in the church life. Even couples looking after couples, families looking after families. And we have new ones come in as a family, because they like what they see. They see a very healthy group of Christian families together. That's very attractive. They say "I want that community." They have never been in the meeting hall. They don't know the elders; they don't know the recovery. But they like that they're in that neighborhood. They found these folks. And that's where we will incubate them for a period of time. Don't try to drag people to Sunday morning meeting so quickly. Even when they ask, keep them away. We have too many people that come to one Lord's Day morning meeting and never come back again. It's too much for them. But in the local community, there's someone like them, someone's who in their human lives have challenges like them. They share the same age kids with the same needs, according to the human side of thing to it. And then of course, there's a spiritual side of things to it, the Lord's riches, the word and all of this. Who's not looking for this? That's where the church life is. Companions and groups should be about 80% of our church life.

### **Groups as the Entry Point**

But to have groups not only promotes mutuality; it promotes the functioning of the saints. Of course, the companionship also promotes that, but that is not quite a community yet. Groups are the first and smallest community. Some have six saints in it, some have eight, some

have ten, sometimes twelve, some have maybe even a few more. But don't let it get big, too big. The beauty and the intimacy and the mutuality is in its smaller size. When you have such a group, you need some core members to coordinate certain things, to send out the information, to bear some burden; it is a miniature of the church.

Many churches grow in this way. They were twos and threes, then they become bigger, and then they become bigger. But we have faced this problem in the past, that is, that the church, after it gets to a certain size, cannot grow. It is because it's too big. And too meeting hall centered. You want the church to grow and have groups. And these groups should have a great deal of, not autonomy, but responsibility, and freedom, as the Lord would lead them. They are there to hold the saints together, to keep the saints, to uphold the weak ones in this kind of small community. And they are a shepherd's tent. That's where you bring the little lambs to get fed. These groups also have a gospel station. You can invite some new ones there to have a neighborhood time with the neighbors, and as the Lord leads, at the right time, you can share a few words of the gospel. But what the people touch is not just you - what they touch is a community.

There's a lot to this, even the companionship, there's a lot to this. I just spoke with some saints in Oklahoma. This couple have now been in a church for 30 some years. And they were Southern Baptists and they just got disgusted with that, but they didn't know where to go. And then somehow they stumbled on the saints. For months, maybe for years, another couple visited them. That couple is the twos and threes. That's Prisca and Aquila, that's a vital companion. They visited them every Lord's Day afternoon; I don't know for how many months. Eventually the new couple became so dependent on this feeding and care. Then they came into the church life. We need the bigger meetings; there's a place for that. But in the God ordained way church life brothers, we need a revolution in change. Firstly in our head, in our concept, then in our practice. By this way, more saints will function. The bigger the meeting, the less saints will function, right?

There's not even enough time and it can be scary. The smaller it is, the easier it is. And the relationship between the saints will be more intimate, richer, and dearer.

When someone is caught in this way, in this kind of group, without them knowing it, they are already in the church. They don't even know it. Then one day, the whole church comes together for a picnic, they say, "Whoa, wow, there's so many groups. I thought we were the only group in this town. There are so many groups; they are all nice people. They all love the Lord. Then before long they are in the church. The individual, the companion, the group. Then when a certain number of groups gather together at a certain time, that's your district.

The district, I mentioned, it's good to have fifty. Because when it's too small, it's a little weak. Now, I know there are churches that are not even 50 yet. So we will pray that very quickly, your church will become fifty. Today to start a new church that can really grow and sustain itself, it's better that church would have at least that number. Some of you are now that number due to the present migration, am I right? You can tell the difference just in the number alone, from even 30 to 50. There's a big difference just because of the size.

### **Concluding Word**

I'm not talking in any kind of a systematic way, but just to bring forth the burden with this view, of this kind of a structure. See, I hope all the GTCA cities will build up a church with this "blueprint." It will take time. It may not be as hard as you think, but it will involve labor.

When all these relational things are built up, these relationships, these connections, then we will realize what the Bible says in Ephesians 2:21, "in whom all the building being fitted together is growing." Then in verse 22, you have "In whom you are being built together." And of course, in Ephesians 4:16 we have "Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together." The word "join" implies the thought of joining together by fitting, you know, Paul had the same



concept of fitting together. Then the word knit together implies something interwoven like making fabric. It's interwoven, the concept here is that there would be the joining and the fitting and the framing together. This will take place through these divinely social relationships at these different levels. Then there will really be this kind of building up taking place in the church. And new ones who come in because of this church "structure" and "culture" will just fit in. They will come into a church life. You know, for some of us, we never had this kind of church life for years. Now we need to build it up. But once it is built up, it's not too difficult for new ones to come in and become instantly used to it.

I am now even more invigorated and stirred up and encouraged for GTCA, even as I talk about these things. But now I want to charge you all to work it out. That's what Brother Lee told us to do and I regret I didn't work it out, at least when he was alive. But we can do it in the US. A new church life should emerge.

### **Question and Response**

*You mentioned something before about shepherding people with the goal of bringing a new one into the church life. Is it correct that this is something different from proselytizing?*

Those are two different things. An example of proselytizing is when, if I'm a Jew, I go and try to convert you to my religion or faith in a proactive, deliberate way to get you into my religion. That we don't do. We should not go out there, especially with Christians, to try to pull them or yank them into the church life in that way. We shouldn't do that. Then you say, well, then what should we do? Well, we should speak. We should minister, we should dispense our riches. How they will respond to these riches is their business. In other words, we don't force them to do anything. Rather, we just put the food out, we dish out the food, the riches. Some will not respond, but others will. Some may take the food and just eat it. Praise the Lord for that, but they won't come into the church life. And that's fine, because our burden

is to feed first, not to get people into the church. But among those who would welcome the food, inevitably there will be some that are seeking for the church. And not only will they receive the riches and come into fellowship with us, but they also will actually have a desire for what we call the church life. These are the ones we need to shepherd. That's totally different from proselytizing. I hope this is clear.

*Regarding the footnote in Matthew 25, about the talent, I just wanted to put a clear number on it because it touched me. So a talent is 6000 denarii. A denarius is one good day's worth of pay. For example, my wife as a nurse gets about \$40 an hour, and that's \$320 a day. So for 6000 denarii, that's \$1.9 million. And what impressed me is that's why every man counts. If you realize, a person with a simple nursing degree is worth 1.9 million. So that verse touched me as you brought this out Brother Minoru in Colossians 1:29, "Admonishing every man, and teaching every man." If you just get one vitalized, one that would invest their \$1.9 million in the church, it immediately affects the situation. And so I just appreciated the GTCA and all your speaking because we came out with our six-month planning session, and we're doing things and we're taking care of urgent matters and practical matters, nurturing an atmosphere of fruit bearing. But what takes up, the primary part of our weekly brothers gathering is just this matter of the twos and threes just among the brothers. And that immediately impacts the individual. We're small and we just got grouped among the brothers, and that's affecting us individually. But I just feel like this is why each saint matters. Because if you realize each saint is \$1.9 million. And even if they didn't do anything but invest it in the church, there's immediate impact.*

Amen, I say amen to that. We are rich, and all the churches are rich. The problem is, we don't see this, we're blinded to this and we despise Paul's word. Do not despise what has been given to you. And that's the problem with that third slave, he despised his one talent. Well, basically that's what he did. It was called evil and slothful, lazy.

*I'm fellowshiping with saints regarding the children and young people's work here in Richmond. I'm just wondering, for sake of my learning, about the burden for the home meetings. With every burden, it seems like there's one home meeting for the college students, and everybody else is kind of pushed out. If you're burdened for children, then there's no college students, no older people. It's just one or two children; it gets all sectioned up. But then you read the ministry about how the children should just be at the home meetings. Can you fellowship with us a way of bringing the children into this practically? It seems normal if we are aiming a normal community. But in terms of all these different burdens and focuses that we have, how do we bring the children into this and take care of all the different stages of life.*

I totally know where you are coming from, and that deserves another fellowship. But the point is that when we talk about community, it really means everybody in that community, including children, and adults and teenagers. In Irvine we used to have the college small groups and the young people's small groups. Then there was a time that we actually just took that away. Now, in the same group meeting, we have college age and we have young people and it worked. In fact, it became quite normal. A lot of these college kids, they actually want a family, they don't want to see their same peers in a small group all the time. They actually want to be in a family with children running around. Now, sometimes children get unruly, and so the meeting are disturbed. You need to find some ways for some sisters to take turns and take the kids in another room. The Bible never tell us exactly what to do. You have to work it out. There's certain things in which every place is different; every situation is different. You have to use your ingenuity, if I may say so, to work something out according to your situation. It is better not to standardize things. Standardizing things will always kill, but what matters is that the principle is kept. What Richmond should do or what your group in Richmond should do, you need to fellowship and work something out. Something that would be the best for your situation. There are other things we can talk about.

There are groups that are all students and a couple or two, whatever, and it works. Don't try to say that's bad. No, it may work for that group in their situation. So there should be all kinds of quite different groups or kind of groups in the church, like even the time they gather, or the activities that they do should be quite varied.

*A lot of times, in my experience in the church side, it seems that I have the most enjoyment when I'm with the family and with their kids, and the meeting is very organic. But how about sometimes when the saints are, pro meeting hall or meeting hall-centered. How do we help the saints who maybe have not read the books or read Brother Lee and know about small groups, or vital groups? How do we just help them to see that the goal is to have these small organic clusters are just normal day to day family life, church life, where you just blend? How do we help them to turn from meeting hall-centered, big group-centered, to small group-centered?*

This is why we need some conferences and meetings, to directly speak to the saints to help them in this regard. You're right, we're talking about a day-by-day, house-to-house church life. A church life that is focused on relationships, and not just a meeting, or an activity or an event. But really, we focus on people, we focus on relationships, we focus on the community. Of course, all this is spiritual, and not just worldly. And to some, this is not the way we church. This is not the way we church. Brother Lee went back to Taiwan to spend several years to change that concept and to bring in a new kind of a practice. That was not easy. There was a lot of resistance. He tried to even get rid of the one-man-speaking on the Lord's day and now we are prophesying, that was a hard one. And in fact, some didn't like it and they rebelled and left. But brothers, that doesn't mean it cannot happen. We need to be patient, we need to be clear ourselves and burdened. And we need to continue to minister to the saints, along this kind of lines to help them. And there is an abundance of materials, and we have given many kind of outlines and things to help in this regard. The first thing is that we ourselves have to be clear about this.

And then how to do it, we have to be of course, wise, we have to be patient, we must not be forceful. The Lord will help us to do this. But if we don't do this, we will not have a way to go on. We can still have the church life, but we will not be so prevailing.