

Petitioning for Fruit

(Fellowship from Minoru Chen on April 25, 2021)

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for gathering us in Your name again. We pray to remind You of the need in Your recovery, even the greatest need and the timeliest need, and that is that we would gain a normal increase for the growth of this divine organism, this vine tree, which is Your Body. We are here praying and petitioning You again. Lord, do an impactful and a new work in the local churches. We pray for the ten cities. We pray for all the saints in these places. Lord, grant us a new start, a fresh beginning. Lord, we ask You to do something that we have not seen, something that we would deem impossible, something that we would consider too high of a mountain to climb. Lord, this afternoon we pray again for a breakthrough, for You to do something in and through us that is seemingly impossible, that all the saints in all the churches will bear fruit in a regular way, Lord, in the way of life. Gain the remaining increase for You and Your testimony. Lord, cause all the dear brothers and sisters in these fellowships to stand up for You, to stand up for Your interest, to bear Your burden today. Lord, we want to cooperate with You. You must have a way in these days. Lord, we do not pray for another time or another year, we pray for now. Begin this work of grace now. Bless all the brothers and sisters in every way, that we would live for nothing else right now but for You. Gain so many typical Americans. Lord, bring them into Your recovery. We pray this in Your name. We are believing in You and expecting You to answer these prayers. Amen.

Present Need to Gain Increase

It is good to be here. As you brothers and sisters may realize now, we

have made an adjustment to make these Lord's Day afternoon fellowships a weekly thing rather than a bi-weekly thing. I think that should indicate the burden that is in our hearts right now, that eventually it is a matter of all the saints rising up and standing up for the Lord's need today. Just a few leading brothers, just a few responsible brothers, is woefully inadequate. Not only so, but it is not what the Lord wants. The Lord wants that all His members would be normal, living and functioning. All the saints can be perfected and do the work of the ministry. We all have a share, a part, in this New Testament ministry. This ministry has only one goal, and that is to build up the Body of Christ.

We will consider what is particularly needed right now, the present burden in the New Testament. In Peter, we have that word "the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12). That is the truth for a present time, for a particular age, for a particular time, that God reveals or gives to His people. That truth will establish His move. That truth will strengthen His move. That truth will actually define what the Lord, what God, wants to do in that particular hour. I would say that, today, we have a present need, a present particular need for this time, especially in the United States of America. That need is simply to gain the proper and normal, yet prevailing, increase in persons, in numbers, in the local churches.

Lord's Blessing on His Recovery

The Lord's recovery has been here, by next year, exactly 60 years. That is over half a century. That is a long time. In every way, by all measure, the Lord's recovery, as we have been speaking of the vine tree, is a plant that has been solidly planted in the soil of America in these 60 years. So much ministry has been passed on to us. Even with all the turmoil that we have passed through one after another, a kind of testing or proving of what has been planted, surely, we are here by the Lord's grace and mercy. Today, this plant called the Lord's recovery is solidly planted. It cannot be pulled out. It cannot be destroyed. It cannot be taken away. We are thankful and grateful for

that.

Here we are, all part of this vine tree that has spread in this country. Today, we have about 25,000 active saints in the USA. We have 250 to 300 churches. For that, we are blessed. The Lord has surely preserved and surely blessed His recovery. But as Brother Lee purportedly prayed as his last prayer on the earth, he said, “Lord, strengthen Your recovery.” Although the Lord's recovery is solidly planted, it does not necessarily mean that the Lord's recovery is as strong as it should be, as living as it should be, and as fruitful as it should be or as prevailing as it should be. Yes, it is not going anywhere, but that should not be our yardstick. That should not be the measurement.

God's Blessing in the Way of Increase

What the Lord wants on the earth today is a strong testimony of Himself in truth, in life, and, I would say, in building and also in numbers, that means in growth. This is the primary burden, I would say, front and center. That is why we have GTCA. That is why we have migration. That is why we raise up full-timers and teams to work on campuses. That is why we pay attention to the children's work and the young people's work. That is why we work in multiple languages and ethnicities. All of this is to gain a proper increase, so that the Lord's recovery would not only be holy in quality, but also strong in numbers. God's blessing in the Old Testament and in the New is always in this way: when someone or a nation or a people is under His blessing, the result is always growth, flourishing, increase, multiplication. That is a sure sign that the Lord's blessing and the Lord's hand are with that nation or with the people.

Increase for the Father's Glory

Today, I just want to remind us brothers and sisters, again and again, we are here in this nation, with absolutely still an unfinished work. In many ways, you can even say that the work is just beginning, in the sense that the work must have a fresh start and a fresh advance,

based on the foundation that is laid, based on all the riches that we have inherited, based on so many areas that are blessed by the Lord. For example, the FTTA, the seven feasts, and I would dare say, brothers and sisters, even in our own personal lives, we are under the Lord's blessing.

Again, why is this? What does the Lord want? I will tell you that He wants to be glorified further. It says in John 15 regarding the fruit-bearing of this vine tree, "In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit" (v. 8a). Bearing human fruit, human beings as fruit, people as fruit, renders glorification to the Father. It causes the Father to gain many more sons out of many more sinners. As a result, His family will be enlarged, the sonship will be greater, and His expression will be much more prevailing. And this will bring glory to the Father.

The Father's Desire in Hymn #203

I recall one of the most popular hymns among us in the local churches. This is, to me, one of the richest and best hymns written by Brother Witness Lee. It is under the "Praise of the Lord" section and the subheading is "His Increase." There is only one song in that section, and that is this one under "His Increase." Do you see the desire of the Father, as the husbandman, having planted this vine tree of His son on the earth? His one thought and desire is to gain increase, that is, fruit.

I do not need to go through this hymn since you know it. I am just going to read it (Hymn #203). Verse 2: "By Thy death and resurrection, Thou wast made God's firstborn Son; By Thy life to us imparting, was Thy duplication done." The word "duplication" means more copies, more duplicates, greater number, not just the only begotten, He wants many begotten sons. "We, in Thee regenerated, many sons to God became." What is in God's heart? What is in the Father's heart? Many sons. Countless, numberless sons. Human beings that are regenerated with His own life. "Truly as Thy many brethren, we are as Thyself the same." How about the Lord Jesus? He wants more

brothers, many more brothers. You may be happy with a couple, but He wants millions. We need to have our hearts broadened. We need to have the heart of Christ. We have to have the desire of the Father in us, brothers and sisters.

Verse 3: “Once Thou wast the only grain, Lord, falling to the earth to die” – this is John 12 – “that thru death and resurrection Thou in life may multiply.” There is this important aspect of the Lord's death that is non-judicial. There is that part that is the Lord's death for our redemption. But here is the other aspect, an important aspect, of the Lord's death and resurrection, which is organic. It is for the release of the divine life from His humanity and with the divine life that would be imparted into His chosen people through His death and resurrection. Just like the grain that fell into the ground, He died on the cross. Out of His side came blood and water – blood for redemption and water for regeneration – so that many grains like you and me could be brought forth. Today there are millions, who knows, maybe billions, who are still living today on this earth that have become these many grains. “As one loaf we all are blended, all Thy fullness to proclaim.” He needs a loaf, a bread. The bread that we partake of on the Lord's table is universal in space and time, including all of God's children, all of Christ's members. He wants a large loaf, a huge loaf. Eventually that loaf will become the New Jerusalem, universal in size to match this universal Triune God.

Verse 4: “We're Thy total reproduction.” Again, this word “reproduction.” He wants to reproduce. You know, to have children is to reproduce. God wants to reproduce Himself, so that there would be many gods on the earth, not in the Godhead, but in life and nature the same as He. They would form “Thy dear Body and Thy Bride, Thine expression and Thy fullness, for Thee ever to abide.” He wants a greater and more glorious and fuller expression of Himself. “We are Thy continuation.” You see the thought is still here – continuation. “Thy life-increase and Thy spread” is more than clear – life-increase, Your spread, to cover the whole earth. “Thy full growth.” How does

the Body grow? Well, you may say, we just grow in life. No, that is only one part, that we need to grow in Christ, grow in life. The other part is that the Body needs more members. Look at my body. It consists of zillions of cells. Every time the cell would split, my body grows. That is how a little child grows into an adult size. There is a multiplication. There is a spread. We are also His “rich surplus, one with Thee, our glorious Head.” Next time, brothers, when you call this hymn at the Lord's table, think about this and praise Him for this, that He has gained such a full expression in this universe.

God's Desire and Our Purpose

However, this is not finished. The Lord is still not here yet, and the Savior God's desire that all men be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth is still on the way of being worked out. And brothers and sisters, you and I have a role to play in this. Absolutely. In fact, that is the only reason why we are here as a branch in the tree, in this vine tree. We have an exclusive, dedicated, one and only purpose. That is to bear fruit, to bear much fruit and to bear fruit that remains.

We need to see this. When I say see this, I mean that, number one, we need to see that this is what God wants and needs: this growth, this increase, these fruits for His glory. Number two, we need to see that we are a branch in Him, and that the meaning of our lives, the purpose of our existence, even the purpose of our being chosen – “you did not choose Me, but I chose you” (John 15:16a) is to bear fruit. The reason that we have been saved and regenerated by God is to be part of this expression, no doubt, but that we would bear more expression, bear more fruit, gain more increase for this vine tree as a branch. We need to see this is our responsibility, our obligation, and this is why we are even here in the church life.

Until we see these two things, brothers and sisters, we can be in the recovery, we can enjoy the Lord's recovery, but we will find ourselves sometimes not living in a meaningful way, not living in a fulfilled and

satisfied way. Why? Because Someone is not yet joyful. Someone is not yet satisfied. Someone is still burdened. That Someone is the tree itself and the husbandman Himself. So, brothers and sisters, I hope that in these days we will have a re-identification with this heart's desire of God. We would have a re-consecration to this purpose, to this obligation, to this responsibility, of being a Christian or being a member of the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, I do not know how to make this point clearer. There is just an overwhelming burden within me. Please forgive me if I seem to be saying the same thing over and over again after so many months, but the burden is alive. The burden is ringing. This burden must be discharged. This afternoon I was praying strongly, "Lord, You must break through in the United States of America. You must break through in these ten cities, these ten GTCA cities."

I asked the Lord, "Lord, in these 10 cities, raise up 300 brothers and sisters." I don't know how many total saints there are in these 10 cities, but I was desperate before the Lord. "Lord, You must do this now. I believe that You want to do this. We asked for 300 to migrate, and I'm not just saying this is limited just to the migrants, but I am saying Lord, out of the total number of saints in aggregate in these cities, raise up 300 like Gideon's 300." We pray for those who would stand up, those who would rise up, those who would respond to the Lord's need and the Lord's call at this time. I hope you are one of them.

Practice These Things

Now, today I must continue with my burden from last week when we covered six words to help us in this matter of becoming a vitalized and fruit-bearing person. I would like to unpack these things and touch them in a more thorough and an even more practical way because the burden is not merely to see the vision or merely to be inspired, but the burden here is to practice and to do these things and to make things happen. Before I get to that, I just want to tell you that for each of these six matters: confession, consecration, resolution, petition,

prioritization, and coordination, each of these are very practicable and very doable if only we would practice it. In Paul's word to the church in Philippians and in his word to Timothy in 1 Timothy, he used this word, and he charged both the saints and his co-worker to practice what you have seen in me and what you have heard from me. Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. It does not help just to understand or just to nod your head and be inspired. We need to practice. The need in the Lord's recovery today is to apply what we know. It is to do the word and not just be hearers of it. It is to practice these things.

In my experience, if you want more grace and if you want to experience and enjoy Christ more, then do the things and not just be happy that it is in your notebook or in the books. We say the Lord's recovery and the ministry is so rich, and I agree with you, but the problem is the churches are not rich and I am not rich. The books are rich, the ministry is rich, but I am not rich. What's the problem? The problem is that I have not applied those riches to myself, I have not been constituted with those riches, and I have not experienced those riches. Those riches are objectively rich to me but are not subjective. We can have a rich ministry, but the church life is still poor, in poverty, and Laodicean. It's quite possible. Just to boast on what we have is not good enough. Brothers and sisters, it's time for the Lord to boast in us. He will point to Satan and say, "Look at these people. They are rich. They're not just talking about it. They're living it. They're walking it. They're doing it."

I want to give you another six words, and don't be overwhelmed. These words work. I apply them, I practice them, and these are the words that Brother Lee used all the time regarding spiritual practice in the church life.

1. Normal

Don't think this fellowship is only for the superman or super Christians. Don't think, "Super people, super brothers, and super

sisters can do it, but I cannot bear fruit. Only super Christians bear fruit." You are absolutely wrong. "Every branch in Me can bear fruit." Fruit-bearing is normal, so have need a change in concept, brothers and sisters. Right now, have a change in concept from "I cannot bear fruit." You must reject that. You must speak the truth. Just read John 15, and not only read it, but declare it. "I'm a branch in the vine. I can bear fruit. I will remain in Him to bear much fruit. I will let Him prune me so I can bear more fruit." You must declare this normal fact. The youngest one among us, even a high schooler, is a branch that can bear fruit. A schoolmate? A sibling? A cousin? A college age student? Absolutely. When we were in college, we had nothing in mind but to bear fruit to gain our fellow students. Fruit bearing is not only for full-timers. Fruit bearing is a normal thing for every saint. It's the same thing with these practices on confession, consecration, making a resolution, petition, and all these things. These are normal things, a normal life, and normal Christian practices. Now there is always a miraculous aspect to the Christian life because God is involved. I agree with that. Brother Lee coined this phrase, "When we say normal, we mean *miraculously normal*." It's a very meaningful phrase. We're normal God-men, we're normal believers, and we're normal branches. We can live like that and serve like that. We can be like that normally, yet it is God, it is Christ, it is the Spirit in us that causes us to be able to live this way, to work this way, and to be this way. It is not by our natural ability or our human life; it is entirely by the Lord and by His life. That's why we need to abide in Him and to be one with him. Then we can be a normal fruit bearing branch. We can all bear fruit. Every one of us, brothers and sisters, we can all bear fruit. We're made that way. We're re-created in the new creation in that way by the Lord.

2. Regular

Brothers and sisters, when we talk about fruit bearing these days, we're not talking about gospel campaigns. We're not talking about some evangelical movement. We're not talking about collecting hundreds of thousands of people in a stadium. We're talking about a

normal brother and a normal sister enjoying Christ, living in the church life, and being one with the Lord's heart's desire in a regular way. He or she does not go on a campaign or do something for a little bit. No, day in and day out, week in and week out, month in and month out, year in and year out, he or she just does these things regularly. He or she bears fruit regularly. He or she abides in the Lord regularly. He or she would be pruned by the Lord regularly. Isn't that what farmers do on the vineyard? It's a regular thing. There's no campaign in a vineyard. There's no movement in a vineyard. These vine trees with the branches are just regularly bearing fruit season by season and year by year. So banish the thought of some kind of flow or a stirring up of some big campaign. Even GTCA is not a campaign; it should now have a culture of something so regular. This is so regular that in another two years there would be another 10 cities, and no one would raise an eyebrow because it is so regular. Even to migrate would become something so regular. Last time I talked about something becoming habitual, something about that being cultural, the Spirit and the atmosphere. This is a regular part of our church life and our Christian life, so normal and so regular. "Regular" means "constant and steady."

3. Definite

Another adjective I would like to use to describe this fruit bearing process or life is definite. I'll say something in a moment about my main burden today which is the matter of prayer and the matter of asking the Lord for fruit. You must be definite. I mentioned confessing your sins. Learn to be definite. Learn to be what the Hymn #1178 says, "Be specific for reality." You know, generalities don't take us anywhere. We must be specific with the Lord. If you want something from the Lord, then be specific and be definite with Him. That's why we talk about making a list of names of family members, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, people around us, and our children. Be definite with the Lord. Don't be general and say, "Lord, save the world." That's a wonderful prayer. I don't mean that it's a wrong prayer, but it's not definite. The Lord will turn around and say, "Which part of the world do you want me to save?" Even if you say "America", it's an

improvement, but eventually we need to pray for persons. We need to have names. We need to have souls in our heart, brothers and sisters, and not just pray in general for the gospel. Be specific. That's the meaning of "definite." In everything we do, let's be definite about it. When something is definite it becomes something very practical. Otherwise, it's still in the air; it's just a burden in the air. But when I mention to you that these are my names of the people that are in my heart. These are the ones that I'm asking God for as fruit for their salvation and their regeneration and I'm starting to pray for these ones. That's definite on all these points.

4. Thorough

We like to do things touch and go. If you just do something that is touch and go, then you will get nothing done. Things are done by us by being thorough and careful. Especially in caring for people, we must be very thorough and not general or superficial. We must be very fine, careful, and thorough in our burden for people, in our care for them, in our feeding and nourishing them, and even in the way we shepherd them through the different stages of their Christian life.

5. Diligent

All work with results and with meaningful outcomes is a result of someone applying diligence to it. Diligence is the most important trait of a growing Christian. In 2 Peter, Peter talked about the growth of the Christian and named the various kind of Christian virtues. He kept using the word "applying diligence, being more diligent." You may say, "Well, I just enjoy Jesus and I will grow spontaneously." Well, that's one side. But Peter said if you want to grow, to have self-control, to have godliness and then eventually brotherly love and love, etc., then that path of growth belongs to someone who applies diligence. Diligence implies effort, and not just a little effort, but a strong, particular, and steady effort to something. Then the Christian grows. Through all of this I'm asking you to have a change in concept when it comes to the matter of the gospel and of fruit bearing.

6. Persistent

The last word is simply persistent. This implies there will be pushback. There will be head wind. There will be disappointments. There will be things that do not seem to be working. There will be times that you feel like you're taking two steps forward and three steps back. Do we give up? Do we call it quits? Do we throw in the towel? If we do, then we cannot bear fruit. We need to persevere. We need to persist. I think that was my first message in the recent ITERO training. I gave the brothers three words, to pray, to practice, and to persevere. Practicing once is good, but it does not require persistence. You need to keep practicing. When I look at these phenomenal pianists, it's just so mind boggling how a human being's fingers move so fast and play these unbelievable melodies. It sounds like three people playing the piano, but it's only one person playing all over the keyboard. You think, "Oh, that that person is a genius." Probably he or she is a genius, but what you don't know is the amount of practice and perseverance, and persistence this person puts in. That you don't see. Brothers and sisters, to bear fruit we need persistence. To save someone, to bring someone into the kingdom of God, to feed someone, it takes persistence. That persistence will pay off big time and we will gain the increase for the Lord.

Now let us focus on fruit-bearing with the remaining 15 minutes or so. The last two weeks, I covered confession and consecration. I told you that you should learn how to be specific and thorough in your confession and consecration. Last week, I believe, I asked all of you to confess particularly this matter of being fruitless, of being barren, of not bearing fruit or of not having spiritual children. We need to confess this matter of not having a heart for people, a burden for souls, etc. Be very specific with the Lord. And in our consecration to the Lord, similarly, not just "Lord, I give my life to you." But "Lord, I give myself to you now, this time, just to bear fruit." Now, that's a specific consecration. That is a very specific offering that you're making. "Lord, I give my hours; I give my home; I give an hour a week." This is a very specific consecration for bearing fruit.

Then we considered the matter of resolution and petition. On the matter of resolution, we should set up a goal. You might say, "What, do we really need to set up goals? This sounds so much like a business or some human endeavor or something like that. We don't set up goals, we are just being transformed. What's the goal here?" Well, I will tell you, God is a God of purpose. Do you think God has a goal? Yes or No? What's the eternal purpose in Ephesians 3? That's God's goal. God has a goal. In fact, He has a plan. It's called His economy to work out that goal. In fact, I will tell you even more that He has a schedule. You may not know this, He had a very definite schedule. And now we're 6,000 years into it as far as the earthly part of the outworking of His economy. How about Christ? Well, we have a word in Hebrews "For the goal set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." What is that? That is to accomplish redemption, that is to resurrect and regenerate many of his chosen ones, to be God's sons. Jesus had a goal when He was incarnated, when He came to this earth. That goal is not just to live a human life. But that goal eventually was that through the cross, through death and resurrection, He would accomplish what God wanted to do. He had a goal set before Him which allowed Him to endure.

Brothers and sisters, again, change your concept. Does Paul have a goal? What do you think regarding Paul the apostle? Well, it's very clear in Philippians 3. Paul said, he counted everything as trash, as dung. He was forgetting what was behind and was reaching forward that he may gain the prize of the upward calling. Yes, he had a goal. His goal was to enter into the kingdom, the manifestation of the kingdom in order to gain and enjoy Christ to the fullest degree. He desired to arrive at something called the out-resurrection. Paul had a goal, and for that goal, he counted everything as loss. He just set his mind to pursue Christ while living on this earth. That was the apostle Paul.

Brothers and sisters, in our Christian life, and specifically now, in this matter of fruit-bearing for the Lord, we need a goal. It is good to pray,

“Lord, I pray that I would bear fruit for you. And even “Lord, I’d like to bear fruit for you every year. I’d like to bear remaining fruit at least every two years. I may not have done so. But it does not mean it could not be done. But I never set such a goal. But Lord, now I mean business. This is my resolution. Lord, I will do this. I must do this. I’m burdened for this. I’m setting this goal before You in a holy and genuine way.” Brothers, do you think God will say what goal is that? I don't think so. According to the Lord's burdening you, according to the Lord's leading you, this is the way.

Petitioning

Now finally, in the last few minutes, let us consider this matter of petitioning. This is actually my main burden. Dear ones, I feel this is an area that we have been missing. We all pray, we all contact the Lord, we all exercise our spirit. I know we all do that because we love the Lord and that's what we do. But here, I'm not talking about prayer in general. Brothers and sisters. I'm using the word “petition.” It's like beseeching, like beseeching.org. It is not a normal kind of prayer. Petition means you have something specific that you want. You petition for something or you beseech someone for something. That means there is an element of urgency. There is an element of even anxiety on your part, an element of specificity. There's a very particular thing that you're asking or requesting to have. That's when you petition.

Prayer of Hannah

Here's an example that relates to fruit-bearing, that is, the famous prayer of Hannah, Samuel’s mother. Read 1 Samuel 1. Here's a woman who had no way to have children. She was ridiculed and despised by the other wife of her husband. She was sorely afflicted and bitter inside. So she went to the tabernacle and like a drunken woman (at least Eli thought she was drunken) she was just mouthing a deep and desperate *petition* to Jehovah which the Bible called a vow. She made a vow, a deal with Jehovah. If you would give me a son, I will lend this son for the rest of his life to You. That struck God's heart. This was

exactly what God was looking for, a person like this, looking for a Samuel. And here is a vessel, a woman who is ready. She touched God's heart. She may not know so many things, but her prayer was inspired by God Himself. She prayed that prayer desperately, particularly. Actually, that is that prayer is a Nazarite vow. For his whole life this person will be separated for Your use, Jehovah. This is what she prayed. It was not a long prayer, but it was a strong, desperate prayer for human fruit. Whatever you ask, it will be done. And the Bible says that at the right time, Jehovah remembered her prayer and she was given a son. And after the son was born, she gave him the name Samuel, that means the request of Jehovah. Then she gave Samuel back to God. Brothers and sisters, that's prayer. That's petition. Now let's apply this to our fruit bearing.

Asking in John 15

Here in John 15 on fruit-bearing. Asking is mentioned two times. First, John 15:7 "If you abide in me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you." Brother Lee, in the footnotes, said the context here for the asking is not asking for growth in life or for other kinds of spiritual blessing, it was asking for fruit. The Lord's promises that if you ask whatever you will, it will be done for you. Brothers and sisters, I just don't know what to say. What more can the Lord do to help us to bear fruit than to say to ask? Go ahead. Ask, why don't you ask? You're not asking for yourself, you're not asking for your own benefit. You're asking for fruit . . . that the Father may be glorified. The promise is that it will be done, it will be answered at the right time.

In John 15:16 "You didn't choose me, I chose you. And I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit, that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give you." This time it is asking the Father specifically in the name of Christ, of Jesus. This is more than clear. This is totally in the context of bearing remaining fruit. How do you bear remaining fruit? Ask the Father. He will give that fruit to you. Eventually, all the fruit that we bear is a gift from

God. Just like our physical children, the Bible says they are a gift of Jehovah. It seems like we reproduced them, but actually it's God's gift. Similarly, when we ask for fruit, sinners, seekers, and God's chosen ones, they will be a gift to us in answer to our petition. Now, brothers and sisters, I would like to ask you now to take a step further, beyond your confession, beyond your consecration, beyond your resolution, to begin to practice this kind of petition. Every day or every few days as you are particularly before the Lord, ask for fruit.

Ask in Faith

This is where I suggest you would begin to make that kind of resolution before the Lord in the way of setting apart your schedule, an hour a week for reaching people and contacting people, to make the resolution to bear fruit for the Lord this year. After some definite commitment in this kind of a way, brothers and sisters, pray. The first thing is not to go out and set up some tables. The first thing I would recommend is to go to the Lord and the Father to ask, not just pray, but to ask. This is one thing I find missing very much in our prayer; we don't ask much; we just pray generally. In James 1, he was talking of course about Christian perfection, but still the principle he said was, "Ask in faith and it will be given to you." We ask, we pray, but not much faith is required. When we say "Lord, I enjoy You." That does not require much faith. But when you ask for *fruit*, oh my goodness, it's on the line. You're on the line and God is on the line. Ask specifically for names. The principal is from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Each one of us have our own little Jerusalem, that is, the people around us just like Cornelius had. Cornelius gathered his intimate friends and his relatives together to receive Peter and they all received the baptism of the Spirit. That is a marvelous picture of this godly man that God chose to pour out the Spirit upon. He would represent the Gentile portion of the Body to receive the baptism of the Spirit. So, brothers and sisters, start with names of all the people you know. Among that list, the Lord will highlight, spotlight, and shine on particular ones from that list of names that you have. Then you begin to ask the Lord. I don't know

how many names there would be, there may be two or three names. There may be four or five names. I'm coming back to this point, be specific for reality. I hope the times of generality would be over, brothers and sisters. Practice this. Be specific with the Lord and in your petition.

Finally, I will end just on this note. It may be good for you in this kind of specific prayer to start with yourself. Don't tell the whole church to pray. You pray as a branch and ask the Lord with these names on your list. In time it will be a good thing for all of us to have another companion, one or two gospel fruit-bearing and shepherding companions to pray even for each other's burden. But I would not suggest that you start with that; that can come later. But I would say start with your personal list before the Lord and begin to pray in this way. This is my asking for you to practice. Not just for one week, but for the coming weeks. It does not have to take too long, but when you get into this normal, regular, definite, thorough, diligent, and persistent practice, little-by-little the Lord will build up this life in all of us. Then we will go on in these 10 cities with a group of saints that will bear fruit normally. The whole church will have a fruit-bearing culture.

Book-Reading

Finally, I have these two books which I recommend to you on fruit-bearing. I want all of you to get these or access them on LSM. It is better to get a physical book like this. This is from 1966, *The Way to Bear Fruit*. The other book is my textbook for you, *The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*. I'm giving you some reading assignments. Between now and the start of the summer training, there are ten weeks starting this week. I'm going to give you ten chapters from these two books to read one chapter a week. In *The Way to Bear Fruit* start with chapter two to seven. That means six chapters. So, this week is chapter two of this book. And in *The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church* I want you to read four chapters starting with chapter

three to chapter six. This will be so helpful to you, as it was for me. These are tremendous, they changed my life. I want to suggest that we do this as well.