

Considering Our Responsibility

Fellowship from Minoru Chen on August 8, 2021

Prayer

Lord, we pray again for your presence. May we sense Your presence by Your speaking and by Your moving and Your anointing. We pray we would experience this in all that do and talk about. We pray for Your forgiveness and Your cleansing of our sins. We pray that we would empty ourselves to be filled with Your spirit, and to know Your mind and feeling. We exercise ourselves in this way. Do be with us, Lord.

Responsible for the Condition of the Church

Brothers, we haven't seen each other for a couple of months so it's good to gather again as brothers who are bearing some responsibility by serving in these ten GTCA cities. As you know, the migration is one thing, and even our help to the saints, whether we call it perfecting or training or fellowship, is one thing, but really nothing can be more important than those in the so-called leadership as far as determining how the church will go on in the long term.

Over many years, at least in this country, we should have observed and learned that a local church does not automatically, magically, or miraculously become a good, strong, rich, and growing church. It simply does not happen like that. We tend to think what we have seen and experienced are because of a certain environment, or because the city we are in is a bad one, or we are on the wrong side of the tracks, etc. No, that is too easy to say. A lot of both the good and the bad, the positive and the not so positive things are due to the brothers taking the lead. Therefore, I would say the first thing is to stop blaming, criticizing, or complaining about this or that environment, the timing,

the pandemic, or even the saints. It is easy to blame others for the saints' condition or reason why the church is not going on. Brothers, let us stop all of that. If anything, we should look hard at ourselves, both personally or individually and collectively as a leadership. I won't even say eldership but to the brothers bearing the burden and taking the lead. This is why we have had these elders' lessons and trainings. But I will tell you that even if you go through that training and go through those lessons, this doesn't mean that you have picked up these things. You may not have learned the lessons to be more self-aware and more exercised to improve.

Responsibility is With the Leadership

In the Old Testament it was the same with those who took the lead. Consider ones like Moses, Caleb, Joshua, the so-called judges, the kings, and the prophets. All these bore a lot of responsibility for the condition of God's people. Yes, it is true that God's people committed sins and were drawn off to idolatry. They rebelled and were disobedient to God, but you have to believe the problems were not just with the people, but also with those who took the lead. The rebellion of the Korah started with those who were in the lead. The situation and condition of the people oftentimes is a mere reflection of the situation and condition of those who are responsible, the priests themselves. Look at Eli and his three sons. If you look at them, you wouldn't be surprised with the condition of Israel at that time. This is the same in the book of the Chronicles and in the Kings, and throughout the history of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the principle is the same. The responsibility is with the leadership, those who are bearing the main burden. Everything depends on whether you're a proper kind of apostle, prophet or teacher, or of the false kind. You could be one who has not learned the proper lessons and even leads the churches to deviate into apostasy from God's economy and from the teaching of the apostles. This is why Paul paid so much attention to the qualifications of the elders and deacons. Their character, their integrity, their

spiritual learning, even their spirituality is important. Their knowledge of the truth, their pattern, their faith, and so on are vital to the health and going on of the local churches.

This is our situation with these ten churches or even any local church. Whether the church is healthy or not depends on whether the brothers are healthy. Whether the church is spiritual or not depends on how the brothers are. There is no way around that. Whether the church is orderly, depends on whether the brothers are orderly themselves. If you have brothers that are unconsecrated, don't expect the church to be consecrated. There's no magic here, brothers. If the brothers are not one, don't expect this among the saints. You can exhort the saints, but they won't be one. If there is no one accord among the brothers, then there is no pattern, no example to follow. If the church doesn't bear fruit year after year, it is because the leading ones aren't careful about that. They think it's okay for the churches to be like this. The church will inherit the thought from the brothers that the less increase, the less problems, and things will be better. This will result in a routine kind of church life that goes on and on and that's it.

I think you get the picture. Brothers a lot is on our shoulders. Whether we have officially been appointed an elder or not, that is secondary. I'm talking about the reality of who we are, what we are, and how we will determine how the church will be where we are. Brothers, this is a very serious matter. I am concerned that we don't see this or that we take this lightly. We have witnessed many churches that just kind of die off. In name they are still there, they're still the church in such and such a place, but it's long dead. There's no oneness there. There's only infighting and jealousy there. And the victims, if I may say so, are the saints. I'm not saying the saints are perfect, but I am saying that they bear the brunt of that. We have seen churches that are the same after ten or twenty years with the same number or even declining numbers. There's no sense of advance or growth. There's no sense of increase in life or numbers. We have seen this over and over again, brothers. We've got to break this cycle. Now we are here in these ten

churches. Let's not repeat that history. Let's not continue to just put too much blame on some of the ones who left us, you know, the dissenters or opposers. Of course, they did what they did and caused problems, but you cannot always use that person as escape goat for everything. We have to point the finger at ourselves, not so and so who left twenty years ago, not so and so who did something bad in this region. Yes, that person did, but it's now twenty years later, so don't pull out the ghost of that person and say this is why we have a problem, a historical problem. Don't say that. It's too long ago. I know I speak these things in a bit of a hard way today and I am not so friendly or nice. But brothers, I have to say this.

Get Help from the Ministry

There are a lot of help that we have received from brother Witness Lee in his ministry and writings. A lot of this help is in the lessons with the elders. Sometimes it is good to read his messages and fellowship given specifically to elders or leading brothers. In the 80s and the 90s, especially, he gave a lot of fellowship to the leading brothers, calling special conferences. He even had elders training starting in the early 80s. He did it here and did it in Taiwan, but he actually spoke a lot more here in this country in the 80s.

Give Heed Less Perhaps We Drift

We just had the Chinese-speaking Perfecting Training which ended a week ago. We used the book, *The Ten Great Critical Ones for the Building Up of the Body of Christ*. It's a short book on the ten critical ones from six messages given to elders and co-workers back in 1995, less than two years before witness Lee died. I wonder how many elders and responsible brother have gotten into these messages. These things sometimes drift past us. This morning I was looking at this verse in Hebrews with the first warning. There it uses the word, *drift*. There are five warnings in Hebrews and the first warning occurs early on in chapter two "therefore, we ought to give heed more abundantly to the things which have been heard less perhaps we drift away." If you read the footnote, it explains that the word means to

drift pass something. For example, if you are in the middle of the river or stream and there's something on the banks, you just drift past it quickly and miss it. Drifting gave me a new kind of a thought. We all know drifting is a killer of the Christian life, but we always talk about it in a sense that we drift into something bad. In the Old Testament, Lot moved incrementally eastward with his tent and cattle until he ended up in the plains, which is where Sodom and Gomorrah are. That's drifting. It's incremental and unnoticeable. You're not aware of it before you know where you are. This is drifting to a bad place. Well, here in this particular verse in Hebrews, drifting is not just drifting to someplace bad, but it's drifting past something. That means that you didn't lay hold of something but missed it. Some word was spoken, but you trip past it. In this case, the first warning to the Hebrews was to give heed to what was spoken concerning the Son, Christ. The Hebrews just drifted past it. It wasn't important to them. They just kind of floated it by. Brothers, there are too many things that we have floated by, too many things we just drifted by. The ministry has spoken, the word was given, the fellowship is there even in print, but we drifted by, meaning we didn't learn the lesson. We didn't pick that up. So we drifted by, and we are in a bad place, we repeat history. Therefore, it is good to go back always to the ministry, to read and study particular lines or matters. We picked up this book on the ten critical ones, because it was given to the elders and coworkers. In a sense, the book was printed, but these messages never reached the saints. Many were not even aware there was such a book. It was printed twenty-five years ago but we drifted by it.

Practical Talks to the Elders

I would like to recommend one book to you right now which is the book called *Practical Talks to the Elders*. It was given back in the early 80s. It's a series of messages speaking about the purity of the focus in the Lord's recovery. It speaks of the uniqueness of the Lord's recovery and the uniqueness of the focus of the recovery. I somewhat remember that we used some of these messages at the ITERO in Auckland, New Zealand. I would like to recommend chapters five and

six in particular. All these messages are good, but chapters five and six are what I want to recommend today. Chapter five is about indifference leading to narrowness and division, and chapter six is about avoiding family entanglements.

Apparently, these topics are not directly related to God's economy and other high things, but I tell you, these are the learnings and observations of our brother to give us some very strategic pointers in terms of problematic areas that could undermine and even undo a proper eldership and even cause harm to the church life. Brothers, I would encourage you to take some time to read these two chapters. The other chapters are wonderful also, but just take a look at these two. Even though I read them before, I was immediately warned and helped again. These speak of some gophers or scorpions, the things that are still around us and cause problems.

Indifference

To whet your appetite, I'd like to go over some of the subheadings in this reading. Chapter five begins with "Indifference Leading to Narrowness and Division." You may never have thought that indifference or passivity would lead to anything, but it leads to narrowness and division. The first subheading reads, "God Wanting Eager Seekers." You may read this and say, well that's easy, what's the point? But this is a huge point here. God is after seekers. Could the problem with us be that we're not seeking the Lord enough? Absolutely. Do you know where routine comes from? It's a lack of seeking. Where does emptiness come from? The lack of seeking. It's the same with losing heart, or why some have no burden, no hotness in their being. Today, we must realize that we need to overcome a few of these things.

Deadness and Lukewarmness

In Witness Lee's speaking on the second series of the vital groups, he said today we need to overcome the deadness of Sardis. Sardis is the picture of the Protestant churches yielding to deadness. The Lord said

you're not dead, but you're about to die, everything you do is dying and you are dying. Witness Lee said we need to overcome the deadness of Sardis, and then he said we need to overcome the lukewarmness of Laodicea. You know how these two churches are sandwiching the church in Philadelphia, right? Brothers, today we still need to overcome both of these, the darkness of dying but not yet really dead. This condition is where maybe we are still breathing but are always about to die. Then also, the condition of lukewarmness. The Lord says, "I wish that you were cold or hot." (Rev. 3:15b) It would be better that way. And He continues, "So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth." (Rev. 3:16) That's a serious warning from the Lord to a church. The church in Laodicea should be especially meaningful to us because it follows the church in Philadelphia which is a picture of the recovered church. The church in Laodicea is a church that had been recovered but is then defeated by becoming prideful while not knowing that it was actually wretched, naked, blind, and lukewarm. Lukewarm means indifferent. Witness Lee's second point was "The Peril of Indifference." Brothers, indifference is a peril, it's a danger. It's a blinking red light that should be a warning to us. And then Witness Lee's next point, to clarify the peril we face is "The Loss of Zeal."

Let me read this passage to you that is quite encouraging. Remember, Witness Lee was talking in those days to the Southern California churches. He said these evils came in because of this indifference and lukewarmness and he said, "None of us can have the assurance that we will escape this peril. It is very easy to fall into this situation. In fact, there's no need to fall into it; we may just be in it." He means here that it may be the default. We're in it by default. He continues, "Here we are in Southern California . . . Five years have gone by." He is speaking in reference from the time we had moved to the Orange County area. He said, "the churches are established, the problems are solved. Things are peaceful. We just go on according to our regular schedule." Here, he referenced the recent rebellion which was dealt with and how the peace was restored. The church had no trouble, but

we also had no goal or purpose. He goes on further to say, “This kind of situation is dangerous because we may unknowingly get into a state of indifference. According to history, quite often the Lord does something or allows something to stir things up. At present we have no trouble and no goal. Suppose we were in an atmosphere for migration. Migration might become the motivation for us to stop being indifferent.”

Emptiness Without Reality

I thought that passage was interesting because we're talking about GTCA here. I believe the migration did stir something up. I think the Lord did something to stir up a number of saints, even in this round of migration to many of our cities, to stop being lukewarm and indifferent. Witness Lee, at that time, was saying that in the Far East the zeal did diminish. That's why he went back to Taiwan in 1984. But he also said that the churches in the Lord's recovery in the US, even though they're much younger compared to Taiwan, were in this danger. Then he said, “This lukewarmness will no doubt issue in emptiness. By emptiness we mean a shortage of the experience of Christ.”

Brothers, were you stirred up by this recent crystallization of those three Old Testament history books? In the first three pages of the outlines on the intrinsic significance of these three books, Witness Lee discusses possessing and gaining the land for Christ. Witness Lee was a bit crazy there. He said, this God is the energizing God who is now energizing us so that we have to write the history today with Him. We need to have faith to go and cross the river Jordan and possess the land. Witness Lee was stirring things up, going back to the reading here, he continues saying, “I feel very burdened about the present condition of the Lord's recovery on this earth. To my observation it seems that not many churches still have zeal. When some of you brothers came into the recovery, you came in with a zeal that was burning. Now your knowledge has increased, your experience has become more than in the past, but your zeal is less than it was when

you first came in.” That was his speaking at that time. Witness Lee’s next point, as you see in this fourth subheading which reads “Knowledge, But Not the Truth.” We have picked up a lot of knowledge over the years in the recovery, even one might say the best knowledge, but we may not have the reality. The truth means the experiential reality of these things.

Then in his next point, he discusses, “Division, the Fruit of Emptiness.” When we're empty brothers, don't blame it on so-and-so, saying that he was the one who opposed the ministry, he dissented, and he got the whole region into this big problem. We must realize that it could be emptiness that resulted in that kind of division. Witness Lee also said, “A revivalist is raised up because of the lukewarmness of God’s people. Their indifference offers an opportunity to the outstanding ones to take some action. Such action issues in division.” The indifference of God's people offers an opportunity to the outstanding ones, the not so good ones, to take some action and such action issues in division.

Narrowness

Witness Lee’s message continues to focus on narrowness, not just emptiness. The next subheading reads, “Narrowness, An Evidence of Poverty.” When you become narrow, meaning you just want to control the church, to assume more authority in a local church and have that church in your pocket, that is actually a sign of poverty. When you are in this kind of poverty, you have to resort to control. But when there is not this kind of poverty, there's no need for that kind of control. Brothers, a lot of churches are small and they stay small because the elders are small hearted. These elders think that as long as we have these thirty people as a flock, we’re good. Even for another twenty years, we still only have thirty people and that's good, that’s all we want, and they thank the Lord. There's no heart there to have a church of 300 members. I'm not talking about this just as a matter of getting numbers. No, I'm talking about how in a proper situation, like the grapevine, we should bear fruit and grow. It's

normal. It's not a campaign. But these small-hearted brothers don't care. The church is still just thirty members after twenty years. This is a sign that they don't care or that their heart is narrow and small. That's why this leads to control as thirty people are easier to control than 300. Brothers, this is a problem.

Witness Lee also makes another point of "Staying Too Long In One Locality." Have you considered this point? If you stay too long in that locality, you acquire seniority, people are afraid of you or respect you and pretty soon you replace others. These points are very helpful. The next subheading reads, "Dryness and Division in the High Places." These high places are referring to the idol places in the Old Testament. He said lukewarmness and indifference can create high places.

Now, brothers, just running through this reading like that is exceedingly enlightening and helpful. When I read this, I have to go to the Lord and say, "Lord, what about me? What about where I am? What about my service? Am I like this? Am I perpetuating emptiness, narrowness, lukewarmness, and bareness? Am I doing that?" I hope that all these ten churches in this current round of GTCA would not be like that. The key is us, brothers. We are the key.

Family Entanglements

Now in chapter six he speaks of, "Avoiding Family Entanglements." He said, family involvement is an entanglement. He talked about the wives of elders and failing to draw a clear line between the leadership and the family. There are places where the eldership is de facto run by sisters and wives. I'm not dreaming this up, it has happened more than one time. We brothers have to be strict. The eldership is composed of the elders. The family is the family. Any practice against this principle will cause suffering to the church eventually. Witness Lee then talks about "No Friendships." He states that he and Watchman Nee were never friends. They were compatriots and comrades in the Lord's ministry, of course, but they were never friends, meaning they didn't have a natural relationship. The next

point was, "Succession in the Eldership." There should be no succession in the eldership where my son is presumed to be the one who is going to take over. There should be no such thing. The so-called succession is all in God's hands and the Lord's sovereignty. We may pray Lord, keep my children and let them serve You and so on. Of course, this type of prayer is right and is fine. But to groom your children, your sons, to try to be the next whatever, brothers, this way is wrong. Witness Lee also mentioned the point of "No Honey," meaning no natural relationships in the church by natural affection. He even makes the point that we need to "Avoid Natural Affection." Brothers, these chapter are not on God's economy or any high kind of truth. But these are like little screws, if they are not tight, I tell you, this engine is going to shake and wobble. It's only a matter of time that this engine will blow up, at least in your locality.

Legality

Another sign of narrowness is legality. There are elders who are just too legal. It is of good character to be a straight arrow, to a point. But I'm telling you, there is a kind of straight arrow and narrowness that translates into legality, which restricts the saints and kills the saints eventually. Another point to consider is an elder being too subjective. In other words, if you are subjective that means you see everything from your viewpoint, your angle, and you won't even bother with the facts. You don't see the real situation because you have made up your mind already when something comes to you. Another issue is favoritism? These are not in the reading but come to mind now. I tell you brothers, it is too easy for brothers to have favorites, like a teacher's pet. Brothers, all these things may be small, but they have the ability to kill the church. We very much need, brothers, to have an exercise in our taking the lead to provide the church with a healthy, robust, spiritual atmosphere in which the saints, as plants in God's farm, can grow and bear fruit. The supply of that healthy situation depends on us. You can pray, and we need to pray. But just prayer alone won't do it. We need to be a certain kind of person. We need to model the church in that kind of a way.

Tending the Garden

Consider if you gave me a garden, even if it's a lush and healthy garden, in one month it may all be dead because I'm a lousy gardener and I don't have a green thumb. There were plants here, but you don't see the plants anymore. This one plant may be gone where I used to have two. The one that is still there is surviving but even this one is now almost dead. And it was because I didn't do anything. I didn't know what to do. I may have forgotten about it or I don't care. So that plant there is now almost dead. Then I might either overwater it or underwater it and I'm just praying for it to live. But will it actually live? It depends on whether I have the green thumb or not. It's not just prayer. Do you understand, brothers? Yes, the church is a happy place, it is comparable to a garden growing like that song says. But that's just a song. Is the church really like that? Who is going to provide that kind of atmosphere? In the principle of incarnation, a lot depends on you and I.

Rise To the Occasion

It may seem like I'm a bit negative today or down, but I'm not negative, neither am I down. I feel these words are necessary. I feel that all of this should make us all self-aware. I am not asking us to be introspective, but we should be self-aware. We should take these things to the Lord and adjust ourselves and improve ourselves. Don't point the finger at the saints, at the church, at your city, at your neighborhood. We need to do more of this and ask the Lord, what about me? What about us? Not just me, but us brothers. Where's the one accord? Where is the blending and the building? It is so easy to tell the saints what to do, to exhort, to admonish, and to teach. Let's start instead with ourselves. I hope that with this kind of fellowship, we can have a change in our church life. I believe in the Lord's blessing. I believe the Lord is blessing. I believe the Lord is raining on us or at least beginning to rain on us.

I heard of an example of the Lord's blessing in Minneapolis. In Minneapolis, they're in a new situation where there are so many new

ones, I assume students. They have a new team there and they are beginning to gain Minneapolis. Minneapolis has certainly gained a name for itself this last year during this pandemic. So, I do believe the Lord is with us. The Lord is present with us, the Lord yearns to go on. The Lord wants to do a new thing in this country, in the recovery. And I believe that this GTCA, in a sense, is a spearhead of that. We're here in a very strategic place and it's up to us, brothers, to rise to the occasion, and not be so nice to ourselves. Rather, we must have more fresh dealings with the Lord, not for our own spirituality but for the church. We must labor so that the church may be in a right atmosphere and condition for the Lord to grow in the saints, for the Lord to perfect the saints, and for new ones to be gained. We need the right atmosphere for all these churches, large or small, to become model churches. It's possible.

One more thing to add, starting next week, we're supposed to resume the time with the saints. I'd like to ask you brothers how you would feel if we fellowship along the line of the church meetings? To touch the meetings of the church is a very important area of our church life. In fact, *ecclesia* means the assembly, the assembly of the called-out ones. I had some thought the other day about approaching it from the small group meetings. Then this morning, I was in the Irvine meeting. And the Lord led us for the whole morning after the table to talk about the Lord's table. Some saints have been on *Beseeking.org* where for a month now the focus has been on the Lord's table. Those bite-sized daily portions are just so crucial. Speaking about the Lord's table is another place to start next week's fellowship. I'd like to just open this matter up to see if you brothers have some feeling about covering this matter of the meetings which is a very important part of our church life.

Words of Response

Response 1

I'll just mention in terms of fellowship related to the meetings. To me,

it feels like a really good time to have that kind of fellowship. Many of the localities are beginning to meet face to face again or at least in a hybrid way. This is just bringing more attention to our church meetings, how we practice the Lord's table, and how we've even practiced the prayer meeting of the church. It seems like all these matters should be under this umbrella of an advance in our church life, and to me it feels like good timing for this kind of fellowship. So, I say amen.

Response 2

Amen. Yes, I think after this period of the pandemic, it's true that there is some coming back together again, at least in a hybrid way. But I think there's also a sense of not wanting to go back to an old way or to a way we had previously, but in a way to advance in a fresh way. I think there is a desire in saints to go on afresh. So, I think it would be a very good time to fellowship about the meeting life again.

Response 3

Amen. It's very timely for Minneapolis. We've been serving together with the saints in Brooklyn Park concerning the children, and now we are considering our next steps. We had almost an hour and a half of fellowship and prayer today about the meetings. First of all, the meeting life is challenging with COVID, but we really don't want to get back to just having meetings in a meeting hall once a week. We need a day-by-day house to house life, and so how do we balance this out? We're fellowshiping and praying about it, so I feel that yes, it would be very good. I think the saints do want to move on and not backward.

Response 4

Amen. I just want to first and foremost say amen to taking this line. In Cincinnati we are also, just like everyone else, coming out of COVID and considering how to go forward and even how to have a reboot. I just wonder if your burden was completely released regarding the matter of companions. That's one thing that locally I'm not sure we have been completely able to pick up on that burden. You released a

very strong fellowship on the responsibility of the individual, and I just would hate us to just jump over the matter of the companions. It's so easy, I think, even just in our church life for us to go right into the group meetings and still struggle with this matter of companions.

Response 5

In Lexington over the last month, I've been studying some of the ministry books on the Lord's table. This is something on my heart, especially as we have more new saints coming in. As ones migrate into these ten cities we have to go through this process of blending. How do we include them? How do we blend together? And the Lord's table is a key meeting for that. So, we still need a lot of help on how to have the Lord's table in a proper and high way with the Lord as the focus. Even for the sake of some new ones, when they join us, they have to understand the uniqueness and purpose of the Lord's table. It would be good to go over these books among the saints to kind of refresh us and crystallize our understanding of how important the Lord's table meeting really is. Also, there is still some reluctance among a lot of saints in a lot of places about coming back to the meetings. So, whether we have hybrid or not, it's a little bit more difficult to have the Lord's table meeting when you're on Zoom. We just need to have more fellowship. Maybe that kind of fellowship would help bring the saints back to the meetings. Some maybe are not concerned about health, but just got complacent. So, we just need a lot of fellowship and encouragement in this area.

Response 6

I feel this burden is really good on the meetings, just considering how many of the saints have not met for quite some time. I almost feel like we haven't been playing ball for so long, and now we're trying to jump right into what the Lord desires, the Lord's table and other meetings as well. I feel like it's a good time to go back to the basics, but also to consider the present advance of the Lord's recovery. What are we looking for in many different types of meetings? I think some of us may need some help to not go back to what we know and what our

experience has been, but to take this opportunity to have a fresh beginning and even a fresh learning as we go on.

Response 7

I sense the same thing, that it's time to really have fellowship regarding the meetings. For example, in Lexington half of the saints are local and half of the saints are new migrating saints. When these two groups of saints pray together, everybody is seeking the Lord and endeavoring to enjoy the meeting, but their preferences or emphasis is not quite the same. So, even though we enjoy the same Lord's table meeting, if we are not brought into a fresh vision of meeting, there's still a little bit of confusion because of the different backgrounds and desires. So, this may be good timing to bring all the saints into the right view and the right practice of the meeting life. This will be helpful to all the GTCA cities.

Response 8

Amen. One of the manifestations of the indifference is indifference towards the meetings, and I very much amen this burden. I feel personally, that from some of the fellowship I've heard, that this is a matter that's under attack. That the enemy would be very happy for the church to not come together in a corporate way. I mean, there's one place where the word says that others will see that God is among you, and that's in the meetings. Although we've gotten some benefit during this time of the pandemic for our personal fellowship with the Lord and with the small groups, I feel there's a real need for us to gird up and be recovered to some sense of the proper meetings of the church.

Response 9

I also feel that some saints are exhausted by all these Zoom meetings and by not seeing the saints. I think this is a good opportunity to learn afresh how to shepherd the saints in the twos and threes in a more personal way.

Response 10

I have the same consideration. It would be good to have some sharing on how to shepherd and care for one another unto the building up. With so many migrating, it's been very rich here in Lexington, but also there's a strong sense in me to really care for the saints that they're growing in Christ. A lot of that is in the meeting, but a lot of it is in our personal time or in the small group meeting also.

Response 11

Yes, I just want to strongly amen to this fellowship. Here in Richmond, Virginia, we started meeting together. This Lord's Day was the second time in a year and a half. I believe Brother Lee said that the table meeting is a barometer, an indication of the health of the church. We're encouraging the saints here to go back and get into the fellowship on the Lord's table on *Beseeking.org*. Also the saints here are starting to come together in groups and realize it's too many and are now considering what to do. We're not here to assign but to encourage them to go to the Lord and find vital companions. It would be good to have more guidance, fellowship, and direction.

Conclusion

This fellowship is very good. Thank you. We must not think, brothers, that the coming together of the twos and threes, which we dwelled on quite much right before the summertime, and the gathering of the church in a larger way are mutually exclusive. That's a wrong concept. To pit these two against each other is entirely wrong. We need both. The church in a daily way can only operate or function or live in a smaller situation, whether it's two or three or whether it is a smaller group with six to twelve people or whatever. But there is the other side. The other side is the church coming together for testimony, for strength, and for certain normal activities. And that is a big thing, too. There are those who despise the big meetings and those who despise the small meetings. Brothers, no they are not mutually exclusive. We need both. The burden is that we would recover the intrinsic significance of the meeting life, whether it's small, big, whatever the

case may be. We have to start there. Well, I don't know if the pandemic is ending now with this other variant going on. But the point is that we may be fortuitously in this situation where we have an opportunity to relook at the way we meet. We should look at this as an opportunity rather than as a problem. We can re-study the meeting life of the church in its essence, in its intrinsic significance. I'm concerned not many saints are so clear or have forgotten. Some might be asking, "why do we meet?" So regardless of how we approach this, it's a huge part of the church life. Speaking of Hebrews, remember 10:25 saying not to forsake our assembling together. Continue meeting and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.