

PRAYING THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson One

Praying the Word for the Building Up of the Church

Scripture Reading: John 4:24; 6:63; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 3:2a, 6, 9, 16; 1 Pet. 2:2-5; Eph. 5:25-27; 1:22-23; 3:8; 6:17-18

- I. **Since we have seen such a high peak of the divine revelation, we need to put into practice what we have seen; our practice will have a success, and that success will be a new revival—the highest revival, and probably the last revival before the Lord's coming back:**
 - A. We need a corporate model, a Body, a people who live the life of a God-man; from today our practice should be to live the life of a God-man by realizing the power of the resurrection of Christ to take His cross as He did, to be crucified, to be conformed to His death, every day to live another One's life—Phil. 3:10; 1:21; Gal. 2:20.
 - B. A revival should always be the practice of the vision we have seen; if we practice what we have heard, spontaneously a model will be built up; this model will be the greatest revival in the history of the church.
 - C. We should try faithfully to practice living a God-man's life by contacting Him through calling on His name, pray-reading His living word, praying unceasingly, not quenching the Spirit, and not despising prophesying.
- II. **We must realize that the proper way to deal with the Lord's Word is by pray-reading:**
 - A. We need to see the nature of the Word of God:
 1. God is Spirit; Spirit is God's nature, God's essence—John 4:24.
 2. The word of the Scripture is the breath of God, and whatever is breathed out of God is spirit; hence, the essence, the very nature, of the word of God is spirit—2 Tim. 3:16.
 3. God's word is the embodiment of God as the Spirit; it contains the very essence of God—John 6:63.
 4. Consequently, whenever we touch the word of God, it is not just a matter of touching the thought, revelation, teaching, or doctrine of God; it is a matter of touching God Himself in His essence, that is, the Spirit.
 - B. We need to see the function of the Word of God:
 1. The main function of God's word is to impart God Himself into us as the nourishment of life; the Bible is the means that God uses to dispense Christ into us—v. 63; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; cf. Eph. 3:17a; Col. 3:16.
 2. When we come to the Word, we must come not merely to understand, to know, or to learn but to enjoy, to receive, to eat, and to drink; the purpose of our reading must be to take God's essence into us—*Hymns*, #814, #816.
 - C. Since God's word is His breath, the proper way to receive it is to inhale it; as God breathes out, we should breathe in—2 Tim. 3:16.
 - D. We can breathe in the word by exercising our spirit to pray-read the Word; if we want to receive the Lord's words, we must use our spirit, because His words are spirit—Eph. 6:17-18.
- III. **Pray-reading is the best way not only to enjoy the Lord but also to defeat the enemy and to build up the Body:**

- A. We need to pray-read to be nourished with the riches of Christ for the building up of the Body to be Christ's fullness:
 - 1. The Body is the fullness of the unlimited and unsearchable Christ, the One who fills all in all; whatever Christ is as the Head is transmitted to the church as His Body—Eph. 1:22-23.
 - 2. The church becomes the fullness of Christ by being nourished with the unsearchable riches of Christ; what the church needs today is nourishment—3:8; 5:29.
 - 3. The Lord nourishes His Body through His Word—1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:2:
 - a. The unique way for the Body to be nourished is to receive the Lord in His word; therefore, we need to read the Word prayerfully, that is, to pray-read the Word in a living way in the spirit; pray-reading the Word paves the way for the Lord to nourish us—Eph. 6:17-18.
 - b. By enjoying the riches of Christ through pray-reading, we will become the fullness of Christ; He will make His home in our heart, saturating and occupying every part of our being, and we will be one with Him and with one another—Col. 3:16; Eph. 3:17a.
- B. It is by pray-reading that we are purified from all our spots and wrinkles to be the glorious church to satisfy the Lord—5:25b-27; *Hymns*, #1310:
 - 1. Spots signify something of the natural life, and wrinkles are related to oldness; the church today bears the spots and wrinkles from many centuries of its history—v. 27.
 - 2. The spots and wrinkles of our natural being can be washed away only through a metabolic cleansing by the inward water of life, the water that is in the Lord's word; when the water of life flows within us, all our spots and wrinkles are washed away—v. 26:
 - 3. The Lord's word is all-inclusive and able to impart glory to the church; by being washed in the water of the word, the church becomes fresh and refreshing.
- C. We need to pray-read to be equipped to fight the spiritual battle—6:17-18:
 - 1. Ephesians 6:17 speaks of "the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God"; this indicates that the sword is the Spirit, and the Spirit is the word.
 - 2. If we receive the word by reading without prayer, the word cannot be the Spirit as the sword to us, but the more we pray-read the Word, the more the words in the Bible become not only nourishment to us but also a weapon within us—v. 18:
 - a. The Lord Jesus defeats the enemy through our pray-reading, for through pray-reading we receive the sword of the Spirit, and our self, our concepts, and our dissenting opinions are terminated; this is a real victory, gained not only by the Lord directly but by our being equipped through pray-reading to fight the battle.
 - b. By our being equipped in this way, there is a sword in our spiritual hand, and many things are spontaneously killed by it; the more we pray-read, the more the Lord Jesus gains the victory.
- D. In order to realize and practice the built-up priesthood, the priestly body, we need to pray-read the Word—1 Pet. 2:2-5:
 - 1. According to the regulations of the Old Testament, an apprentice to the priesthood had to be twenty-five years old, and a full priest needed to be thirty (Num. 8:24; 4:3); this indicates that in order to serve as a priest, we need to be mature.
 - 2. We must realize that as newborn babes, we need to drink the milk of the word so that we may grow; the more we pray-read the Word, the more we are built up and coordinated with others in a spontaneous way; in this way we will become the genuine priesthood, the one priestly body—1 Pet. 2:2.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY

Growing in Life by Drinking and Feeding on the Word

In 1 Corinthians 3:2 Paul told the Corinthian believers that he gave them milk to drink and not solid food. Milk and solid food refer to the word of God as the supply for the regenerated believers in order that they may grow. Verse 6, which is related to verse 2, says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth." Much of Christianity today has degraded from life to mere knowledge and teachings, but Paul's ministry was to plant, which is a matter of life. In addition, Apollos helped the saints by watering them, which is also related to life. Finally, it was God who caused the growth. Planting, watering, and growing may be a new thought to some Christians. We need to drop our old concepts of preaching, teaching, and edifying and receive the new thought of planting, watering, and growing. We should consider not how much we know but how much of the Lord as the life seed and the life supply has been planted into us and how much we have been watered in life. We must be watered again and again, both in our homes and in the meetings. After the planting and the watering, God causes the growth. Planting and watering are for the growth in life. We all need to grow. In being watered, we drink of the word and are fed by it, and it is by this drinking and feeding that we grow.

Growing Christ to Produce the Body

Verse 9 continues, "We are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building." To consider only that we are the people of God or the children of God is not adequate. We are also God's cultivated land and His building. As God's cultivated land, we need to be watered so that we may grow Christ in a corporate way to become His Body. God desires that Christ grow in us in a corporate way to form the Body of Christ in order to fulfill His purpose. We must not only be saved, sanctified, holy, and victorious. These things are needed, but they are for the unique purpose of growing Christ so that the living Body may be produced. Moreover, the cultivated land is for the building. On the one hand, we are the land, and on the other hand, we are the building. As the cultivated land, we need to grow, and as the building, we must be built up.

Verse 16 says, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Many Christians isolate this verse and teach that the believers are God's temple, but where is this temple today? Instead of a builded temple, we can see only scattered stones. Instead of isolating the four verses that we have considered so far, we must see the sequence of these verses and the connection between them. Verse 2 speaks of feeding on the Lord's word; verse 6 mentions planting, watering, and growing; and in verse 9 there are the cultivated land and the building. Eventually, in verse 16 there is the temple. The temple comes out of the cultivated land and the building, which result from the planting and the watering through feeding on the word of God.

Pray-reading the Word Being the Practical Way for the Building Up of the Church

By considering the above verses, we can see that pray-reading the Word has much to do with the building up of the church. In order to be built up together as a living temple, we need to drink the word by pray-reading, just as little children drink milk for their nourishment. Pray-reading causes us to be nourished and to grow for God's building. Some Christians may have read and studied the Bible for a long time and may have accumulated a great deal of knowledge from the Word; however, they may not have drunk the living word. Without drinking the word, we are not able to grow.

We all need to drink the word in the Bible as the very embodiment of the living God. God is abstract and mysterious, but He has embodied and condensed Himself in His word. We may compare the word in the Bible to a battery or to a match. When a battery is charged, it becomes the embodiment of electricity, just as a match is the embodiment of phosphorus. Similarly, the

word in the Bible is the embodiment of God. The living God as the Spirit has “charged” Himself, embodied Himself, in the word. The Bible is concrete and solid. It can be held in our hands and seen by our eyes. Moreover, it can be understood by our mind, and the divine essence embodied in its words can be touched, received, and assimilated by our spirit. Thus, it is not merely a book of teaching and knowledge; it is the very embodiment of the Divine Being. All that God is in His divine substance and essence is embodied in His word in the Bible. Therefore, we must not only read and study the Lord’s Word; we must also receive and assimilate it.

We need a radical change in concept to care not only for knowing, learning, and understanding but even the more for drinking and eating the word, considering it not as mere knowledge but as the very embodiment of God, the living One. We must come to the Bible with the intention to receive, eat, drink, absorb, and assimilate the Triune God in the word. In this way we will grow, not in an individualistic way but corporately with others in the Body. According to the Greek text, the word you in verses 9 and 16 is plural. Thus, the cultivated land and the building in verse 9 and the temple in verse 16 refer to the believers in a corporate way. It is as the corporate Body that we are God’s cultivated land, God’s building, and God’s temple. The more we grow by drinking and feeding on the word, the more we are spontaneously one with others. This oneness is not a mere association but a matter of being joined together organically. What grows out of the cultivated land is the Body, and the Body is the building, the very temple of God, full of the wonderful indwelling Spirit.

Being Filled with the Spirit by Being Built Up Together

The more we are built up together, the more we are filled with the Spirit. In the Old Testament the tabernacle was built with forty-eight standing boards made of acacia wood overlaid with gold (Exo. 26:15-30). Before the tabernacle was erected, God’s shekinah glory was not on the earth, but once the tabernacle was built up as a house to contain God, the glory of God came and filled it (40:34-35). If the forty-eight standing boards had remained isolated, detached, and separated from one another, the glory of God would not have come down. It was impossible for God to fill an individual board. It was only when all the standing boards were formed and fitted into one building that God’s glory came down to fill the tabernacle.

The best way for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be built up with others as the unique house of God. If we remain separated, isolated, and individualistic, it will be difficult for the Spirit to fill us, but if we are willing to be built up, we will spontaneously be filled with the Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit is for the Body, not for individual members. Therefore, the more we are built up, the more we will be filled with the Spirit. We will then be the living temple of God in reality.

Pray-reading the Word by the Exercise of the Spirit for Our Building Up in Oneness

In these days the Lord will recover the real and living temple of God, and the practical way for Him to accomplish this is through our pray-reading. This is the only practical way that avails. Christians have been studying the Bible for years, but they are still individualistic and separated, and there is no building up among them. If we pray-read in a daily way, we will spontaneously be joined and built together with others, and all the differing opinions and feelings will be swallowed up. The more we reason and dispute with one another, the more we quarrel, and the more we quarrel, the more we are divided. Because of this, each one goes his own way, and there is no building up. However, if we give up our natural reasonings and come together daily, open our spirit, and pray-read the Word, we will be filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Then all the differing thoughts, opinions, and concepts will be terminated.

If we come together to argue and reason, there will be no end to our arguments and reasonings. Moreover, the more we care for mere teachings, the more active our natural mind is and the more divisions there will be. However, when we come together to pray-read, all our natural reasonings come to an end. The best way for us to be built together is to pray-read, because pray-reading requires the exercise of our spirit, which kills the natural and divisive thoughts of the mind. Pray-reading brings us into the spirit, where we are all one.

The believers in Corinth cared much for knowledge and sought after the spiritual gifts, but they eventually became divided by these very things (vv. 5, 7, 10-11). Because of this, Paul told them that he planted Christ into them, Apollos watered them for their growth, and God caused the growth by means of the planting and watering. Their growth did not come through knowledge and gifts but by their drinking and feeding on the word. Growth results not from knowing but from being watered; it comes not from learning but from constantly feeding on the word of God. Drinking and feeding on the word paves the way for God to come in and grant us the growth in life. Then by this growth we are spontaneously built up together so that there will be a living and practical temple of God among us. In this way we will have more of the indwelling Spirit, and He will fill us not as a heap of materials but as the built-up temple. The practical way to be built up together as the living Body of Christ is to pray-read the Lord's Word. We all need to practice pray-reading in order to drink and feed on the word and be built up corporately.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Although 1 Corinthians and 1 Peter were written by different apostles, the thought of both books is the same. Paul told the Corinthians that they were infants in Christ to whom he gave milk to drink (1 Cor. 3:1-2), and Peter followed him to say, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2). First Peter 2 deals with the building and the priesthood (vv. 5, 9). According to the regulations of the Old Testament, an apprentice to the priesthood had to be twenty-five years old, and a full priest needed to be thirty (Num. 8:24; 4:3). This indicates that in order to serve as a priest, we need to be mature; therefore, we need to grow. Some may say in a humble way that they are weak, young, and childish. However, to be too young and weak excludes people from the priesthood. We must realize that as newborn babes, we need to drink the milk of the word so that we may grow. We must look to the Lord to give us the appetite, desire, thirst, and hunger for the Lord in His word.

According to 1 Peter 2:2, to drink the milk of the word is for our growth. Verse 3 continues, "If you have tasted that the Lord is good." The Greek word for good can also be translated "pleasant." Verses 2 and 3 prove strongly that the word is the Lord Himself, since to drink the milk of the word is to taste the Lord. To taste is different from to know. We may know that a certain food is good yet may never have tasted it. We need to taste that the Lord is good. The best way to taste the Lord is not merely to study the Word but to drink the milk of the word. We need to be balanced. On the one hand, the Bible tells us that we need teachings (Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:16), but on the other hand, we need to taste the word in order to be nourished and grow. We might have received the teachings from the Word for many years, but have we tasted that the Lord is good and pleasant? We are assured that the Lord is good not merely by our knowledge but by our tasting. No words can express the pleasant taste we enjoy by drinking and absorbing the Lord in His word. To taste the Lord in this way causes us to exult and to overflow with enjoyment.

As we have seen, to drink and feed on the Lord's word is for our growth in life. First Peter 2:5 says, "You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house into a holy priesthood." Again, Peter's thought of feeding for growth and building is the same as Paul's in 1 Corinthians 3. However, Peter adds something more by stating that this building, the spiritual house, is a priesthood. In the New Testament three Greek words are used in relation to the priests: *hierosune*, referring to the priestly office, as in Hebrews 7:12; *hierateia*, referring to the priestly service (v. 5); and *hierateuma*, referring to the assembly of priests, a body of priests, a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). The coordinated body of priests is the built-up spiritual house.

In order to realize and practice the built-up priesthood, the priestly body, we need to pray-read the Word. The more we pray-read the Word, the more we are built up and coordinated with others in a spontaneous way. To enjoy the Lord only by ourselves will not satisfy us. We enjoy a fuller satisfaction by pray-reading with a group of brothers or sisters. In this way we are spontaneously coordinated with others, and our differing thoughts and opinions are put away. We may declare

that we are one with one another, but we do not trust mere declarations. If we come together each day to pray-read, we will spontaneously be one without the need to declare it. In this way we will become the genuine priesthood, the one priestly body.

THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

Ephesians 5:25b-26 says, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word.” The Lord gave Himself up for the church so that He might sanctify the church. He accomplishes this sanctifying by cleansing the church by the washing of the water in the word. In Greek the word translated “washing” in verse 26 is the word for laver. The washing of the church in the water of the word is compared to the washing of the priests at the laver located outside the entrance to the tabernacle. In the word of God there is water not only to quench our thirst but also to cleanse us.

Verse 27 continues, “That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.” The church must be not only without defilement but also without spot or wrinkle. A person’s face may have no dirt on it, but it may still have spots and wrinkles. Spots signify something of the natural life, and wrinkles are related to oldness. The church today bears the spots and wrinkles from many centuries of its history.

It is possible to wash away dirt on our physical body by bathing it in water, but the spots and wrinkles on our body cannot be washed away by bathing. Likewise, the spots and wrinkles of our natural being cannot be washed away by outward water; they can be washed away only through a metabolic cleansing by the inward water of life, the water that is in the Lord’s word. The washing of the water in the word is a metabolic washing that removes all the old elements in our natural life and replaces them with the new elements of the divine life. When the water of life flows within us, all our spots and wrinkles are washed away.

Just as we may drink fruit juice for a metabolic washing and renewing in our body, we need to drink the water in the Lord’s word and take the nourishing element of the word into us and assimilate it into our inner being for a metabolic transformation. The nourishing elements in the word transform us by cleansing us, carrying away our oldness, and bringing in something new of the divine life. In this way the spots and wrinkles in the church are washed away, and the church becomes not only clean, proper, and perfect but also glorious. We all must be willing to be washed by the water in the word.

The Lord’s word is all-inclusive and able to impart glory to the church. The word is the very embodiment of the Lord Himself, and He is the water not only for satisfying and quenching our thirst but even the more for sanctifying and cleansing away all our blemishes and oldness. By being washed in the water of the word, the church becomes fresh and refreshing.

In order to be built up as the living temple of God, to be coordinated as a priestly body to serve the Lord in a corporate way, and to be sanctified and cleansed to become the glorious church, we need to pray-read the Word. The Lord has impressed me and charged me to tell His people that pray-reading the Word is our need today. It is by pray-reading that we are built up together, coordinated as a priestly body, and purified from all our spots and wrinkles to be the glorious church to satisfy the Lord. (*CWWL, 1967, Vol. 1, “Pray-reading the Word,” ch. 3, pp. 417-424*)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967, Vol. 1, “Pray-reading the Word,” chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5*
2. *Pray-reading the Word*

PRAYING THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Two

Praying the Word Personally

Scripture Reading: Matt. 4:4; John 1:1; 5:39; 2 Cor. 3:18; Psa. 119:147-148; Lev. 11:26;
Rom. 8:4-6; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16

- I. **Pray-reading is the foundation of the Christian living—Matt. 4:4; John 6:57, 63.**
- II. **Just as we need to take our meals daily at set times, so we need to come to the Lord at set times every day to feast on and be filled with God through His word and His Spirit—cf. Psa. 55:17; Dan. 6:10:**
 - A. To pray-read the Word is to eat the spiritual food; others can do many things for us, but they cannot eat for us; we all need to pray-read.
 - B. It is not healthy to stuff ourselves with food for three days and then go without food for the next three days; all healthy people eat at set times and eat a fixed amount of food.
 - C. The most important time to receive Christ as food is the time of the morning revival; we need to spend twenty to thirty minutes every day to pray-read three to five verses; when we pray-read in this way, we are eating, drinking, and enjoying God—Psa. 119:147-148; 143:8; Lam. 3:22-26.
 - D. In addition, during our morning break, our lunch hour, our afternoon break, and when we return home in the evening, we can take out the Lord's Word and enjoy it in this way.
 - E. If we do this, we will become one who enjoys and receives the Lord through His word, and our spiritual life will surely be healthy and living.
- III. **True morning revival is one in which you take the Word of the Lord as the Lord Himself, and fellowship with Him face to face through His Word—John 1:1; 5:39; 2 Cor. 3:18; Hymns, #812, #813:**
 - A. Whenever we come to read the Lord's Word, we need to realize that the Lord's word is not only living; it is a living Person, the Lord Himself, who is waiting to come into us and dwell in us; for us to come to the Word of the Lord is to come to the Lord Himself—John 1:1; 5:39.
 - B. Prayer is your communication with the living Lord; while you pray-read you are converting the words of the Bible into your prayer; you are speaking to the Lord with His word; this is the proper way to fellowship with the Lord—Psa. 27:8.
 - C. Every time we have our morning revival, we should have the deep sense that we are there to speak to the Lord and to have the Lord speak to us—Exo. 33:11a.
 - D. If we have the right attitude—that the word we are reading is the speaking of our beloved Lord—our whole being will be brought into the shining of His face; deep within our being we will feel like we are bathing in God Himself—cf. *Hymns*, #784, stanza 6.
- IV. **Musing upon the Word is even richer, broader, and more inclusive than pray-reading; if we muse upon the Word of God, we shall delight ourselves in the Word—Psa. 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 99, 148:**
 - A. Rich in meaning, the Hebrew word for *muse*, or *meditate*, implies to bow down, to converse with oneself, and to utter; we muse upon the Word by talking to God, worshipping Him, enjoying Him, receiving grace from Him, and conversing with ourselves in the Lord's presence—1:1-3; 19:14; 104:34.

- B. Musing upon the Word includes prayer, worship, enjoyment, conversation, bowing down, lifting up our hands to receive God's word, rejoicing, praising, shouting, and even weeping before the Lord.
 - C. Usually musing upon the Word will be slower and finer than pray-reading the Word; in all our musing upon God's Word we should be spontaneous and full of enjoyment.
 - D. To muse upon the Word of God is to enjoy His Word as His breath; by musing upon the Word in this way, we shall be infused by God, breathe Him into us, and receive spiritual nourishment—2 Tim. 3:16.
- V. At any time—day or night, morning or evening—we can open up the Bible and pray-read a few verses; when we do, we receive the Spirit—Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:97; cf. 1:1-3; Deut. 6:6-9:**
- A. We need to chew the cud, eating the word of God by chewing it again and again—Lev. 11:26:
 - 1. Chewing the cud signifies receiving the word of God with much consideration and reconsideration; just as a cow chews its cud, we should consider and reconsider the word of God—Psa. 119:95, 97; cf. 2 Tim. 2:7.
 - 2. To chew the cud is to masticate the words of the Bible:
 - a. All day long we may repeat a verse, such as Romans 8:1, saying, “Hallelujah, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. When I am in Christ, who can condemn me? I am in Christ, and I can never go out. Hallelujah, I am in Christ. Hallelujah, I am not in Adam.”
 - b. This verse can supply, nourish, and water us throughout the day.
 - B. We Christians should never be without the Word; we need to either carry a small Bible in our pocket or purse or memorize many verses; beside spending time in the Word in the morning, we can pray-read a verse from time to time; this is a good habit.
- VI. Pray-reading is the best way to walk according to the Spirit—Rom. 8:4-6; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16:**
- A. Our daily life as Christians should be a life of walking by the Spirit to live Christ by expressing Him with all His excellent virtues—Phil. 1:21a; Gal. 5:22-23.
 - B. The best way to walk and do things according to the spirit is to pray-read the Word of God:
 - 1. If the husbands would pray-read with their wives, they would easily overcome their temper and be patient with their wives; the best thing to do when there is trouble with your husband is not to argue with him but to pray-read; this is the best way to exercise and touch our spirit.
 - 2. If we are unhappy and sorrowful, we should not try to comfort ourselves; instead, we should take God's Word and pray-read it; after some time, we will be comforted and will have the joy of the Lord—Jer. 15:16.
 - 3. We are like a battery, and the Lord is like the electrical power plant; the more we pray-read, that is, the more we touch the Lord, the more charged we become; after being fully charged, we should simply cooperate with the “electricity” within us; this is to walk according to the spirit.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

CHRIST AS DAILY FOOD TO THE BELIEVERS

Christ is all the elements for our growth. But how can we receive and enjoy all these items of Christ? First, we must know the Bible. The Bible is not a book for the increase of our knowledge. No doubt the Bible is a book of teaching. However, it is not merely a book for our mental knowledge, but one that supplies us with food through its teachings. The Bible is a heavenly, spiritual, and mysterious book. It is full of symbols. It says that Christ is the unleavened bread (1 Cor. 5:8), the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and the living water (John 4:10; 7:38-39). All these are symbols that speak of spiritual realities.

When we read the Bible, we must come before the Lord to have a quiet time to take in His word as food. We not only need to read the Bible, but we also need to pray with what we read. We must turn the words that we read into prayer. Through this kind of pray-reading, we bring the words that we read into the Holy Spirit, and the words will become spirit. When we read the Bible, we receive the Lord's word. When we pray, the words that we receive become the Spirit. The word and the Spirit are one. When we receive the word, this word becomes the Spirit within us. When we speak it out to others, it becomes the word again, and when others receive this word, it again becomes the Spirit in them. This is why the Lord Jesus said in John 6:63, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." This is the supply of life, and it is also the dispensing of life.

Christ is the bread of life based on His being the word, which is spirit and life (John 6:63). When we the believers receive the word of Christ, we receive and enjoy Christ Himself in spirit. By receiving the Lord's word in reading the Bible, and by contacting the Lord's Spirit in prayer, we receive and enjoy Christ (Eph. 6:17-18a).

Just as we need to take our meals daily at set times, so we need to come to the Lord at set times every day (cf. Psa. 55:17) to feast on and be filled with God through His word and His Spirit. It is not healthy to stuff ourselves with food for three days and then go without food for the next three days. All healthy people eat at set times and eat a fixed amount of food; they eat frequently but in moderation.

Christ is our daily manna; He is our food (John 6:31-35, 48-51). The most important time to receive Christ as food is the time of the morning revival (Psa. 119:147-148; 143:8; Lam. 3:22-26). We need to spend twenty to thirty minutes every day to pray-read three to five verses. When we pray-read in this way, we are eating, drinking, and enjoying God. The word is the embodiment of the Triune God. When we eat, drink, and enjoy God's word, we eat, drink, enjoy, and assimilate God. In this way, we receive God's rich supply and His bountiful dispensing.

In addition to the above, during our morning break, our lunch hour, our afternoon break, and when we return home in the evening, we can take out the Lord's Word and enjoy it in this way. If we do this, we will become one who enjoys and receives the Lord through His word, and our spiritual life will surely be healthy and living.

Furthermore, when we pray-read the Lord's word, we not only need to receive and enjoy the sweet supply in the Lord's word, but we also must receive the enlightening and rebuking of the Lord's word, and the killing function of the Spirit in the Lord's word (Eph. 5:13-14; Rom. 8:13). The Lord's word always enlightens. With this enlightening, there is a rebuking. In our daily life, we often offend the Lord and are defiled by the filth of the world. We often walk by the flesh and make mistakes. Through His word the Lord enlightens us, rebukes us, and points out our shortcomings. We do not need improvement. Our only need is to hand over our transgressions to the cross through the Spirit in our spirit, and to allow the effectiveness of Christ's all-inclusive death to do the killing work. In this way, we will not only receive the supply and dispensing of all the riches of the Triune God, but we will also be washed and rescued through the water in His word. (*The Economy and Dispensing of God*, ch. 3, pp. 32-33)

THE MORNING WATCH BEING A TIME OF FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD BEFORE THE LIVING WORD

I can never forget the first article I read about morning watch. Its title was "Plan the Year Early in Spring, and Plan the Day Early in the Morning." The writer of the article said that morning is the most precious time, and that the best way to spend the morning is to have morning watch. Of course, a formal morning watch will not avail much. The true morning watch is one in which you take the Word of the Lord as the Lord Himself, and fellowship with Him face to face through His Word.

Sometimes when you have your morning watch, you try to hurry a little because you want to be on time to go to work. Under such a circumstance you would give inadequate attention to your reading and prayer. At other times you may not be in a hurry, but you may use your time to read in a light way and talk to each other. Neither of the above practices is good. If while you are reading the Word of the Lord, your spirit is not exercised and you do not take the words you read as the Lord Himself, your morning watch is not right. Whether you are having morning watch by yourself or with a few others, a principle must be kept: whenever you come to read the word of the Bible, you should regard it as the Lord Himself.

The Lord's Word is the Lord Himself (John 1:1). If you write me a letter, it is one thing for me to receive your letter, and it is another thing for me to talk to you face to face with the letter in my hand. When we come to the Bible, we should have the attitude that we are coming to the Lord with His Word in our hand, taking the Word as Himself. We are not merely reading His Word; we are coming to talk to Him, and to let Him speak to us. This is the way to make the Word of the Lord living to us.

The Bible is not a secular book. The words of the Bible do not originate from the human mentality. The Bible is the breath of God; that is, it is God Himself. This does not mean that we worship the Bible as an idol. We need to realize that the words of the Bible are God Himself. Whenever you read the Bible, God speaks to you there. You should not read the Bible merely with your eyes; neither should you merely memorize or understand it with your mind. You must pray-read it with your spirit (Eph. 6:17-18a). In other words, you must mingle your reading with prayer. Prayer is your communication with the living Lord. While you pray-read in this way, you are converting the words of the Bible into your prayer. In the end, you are not merely reading the word of the Lord; you are speaking to the Lord with His word. This is the proper way to fellowship with the Lord. This kind of pray-reading is most helpful to us. For this reason, every time we have our morning watch, we should have the deep sense that we are there to speak to the Lord and to have the Lord speak to us. (*The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings*, ch. 7, pp. 87-88)

PRAY-READING BEING THE BEST WAY TO WALK ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT

The best way to walk and to do things according to the spirit is to pray-read the Word of God. Many husbands find it difficult to be patient with their wives. If the husbands would pray-read with their wives, they would easily overcome their temper and be patient with their wives. When troubles come, we should simply pray-read the Word. We should not try to say anything, argue, be patient, be humble, or do anything to convince others. All these ways do not work. The more patient we try to be with our wives, the more troublesome our wives will seem to us. They will exhaust all our patience and humility. In a sense, every wife is a messenger sent by God. We may pray that as branches of Christ we will be pruned (John 15:2), but He may use our wife as a pruning knife. The same principle applies to the wives. The best thing to do when there is trouble with your husband is not to argue with him but to pray-read. This is the best way to exercise and touch the spirit.

If we are not clear regarding the Lord's leading in a certain matter, we should not analyze or consider the situation, because the more we analyze and consider, the more confused we will

become. We need to forget about our circumstances and environment and simply come to the Word to pray-read. We should pray-read the Word without being overly conscious of which verse we choose. After some time, we will become clear concerning the Lord's leading.

Likewise, if we are unhappy and sorrowful, we should not try to comfort ourselves. Instead, we should take God's Word and pray-read it, regardless of the verse we select. After some time, we will be comforted and will have the joy of the Lord (Jer. 15:16). To pray-read is simply to "switch on," to "plug in." When we "switch on," we have everything. Whatever we need is in the Word.

When we have trouble with our wife, the only thing that works is for us to touch our spirit. I cannot explain why this works, but we I know from experience that this works. We cannot explain electricity, but we know that when we plug something in or switch something on, the electricity causes it to operate.

When we pray-read the Word by exercising our spirit, we touch the Lord. We are like a battery, and the Lord is like the electrical power plant. The more we pray-read, that is, the more we touch the Lord, the more charged we become. After some time we will be fully charged with the Lord as the divine electricity. The more we pray-read and the more we touch the Lord, the more we will be charged with the riches of Christ. After being fully charged, we should simply cooperate with the "electricity" within us. The "electricity" within us requires our cooperation.

Suppose we have a problem with our wife. There is no need for us to try to be humble or patient or to argue. The more we do this, the more trouble we will make. The best thing to do is to pray-read, because when we touch the spirit, we are charged with the heavenly electricity. However, after being charged, we still need to cooperate with this electricity. After pray-reading the Word and touching the Lord, gradually and spontaneously the Lord within us will cause us to realize that we need to be pruned. We will realize that it is not our wife who is wrong but we who are wrong and need to be adjusted and pruned. Therefore, we all need to be willing to cooperate with the divine electricity within us. This is to walk according to the spirit.

Sometimes after we have been inwardly charged, something within us that is not human or natural but spiritual, divine, and heavenly shows us that we are short of love toward our wife. We need to be pruned and adjusted not by man's word but by the inner electricity. We may pray-read some verses that do not contain the words *love* or *patience*, but after we pray-read them, the Spirit with whom we have been charged will work within us, showing us that we are short of love and patience. We must cooperate with the Spirit's working in order to be adjusted and pruned. This is what it means to walk according to the spirit.

Today the Lord, after being resurrected, is the divine Breath, the wonderful life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). By His mercy our spirit has been regenerated, and now this wonderful Spirit is in our spirit. We are one spirit with Him. Not only so, for our help and convenience, this Spirit has been embodied in the Word, and the Word has been printed and put into our hands. Therefore, whenever we open the Word and exercise our spirit to pray-read the Word, we touch the Spirit and are charged with the Spirit. The more we pray-read the Word, the more we will be charged with the Spirit as the heavenly electricity. Then the word within us, which is living and prevailing, will prune us. All that we need to do is simply cooperate. We should never rebel against the Spirit's inner working. Instead, we need to be one with the Spirit and cooperate with Him. Then we will walk absolutely according to the spirit and fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. Whatever God requires, we will be able to fulfill not by our own effort but by the Lord as the wonderful Spirit, who has entered into our spirit to be one spirit with us and who has been embodied in the Word, which is now in our hand. We simply need to open the Word, read it, and exercise our spirit to pray-read the Word. The more we pray-read the Word, the more we will be charged and filled with the Spirit.

This requires that we spend time to pray-read. Regardless of how busy we are, every day we make time to eat. At times we may think that we are so busy that we do not have time to eat, but the fact that we are still alive is an indication that we spend some time to eat. In the same way, we all need to spend some time to pray-read the Word.

We need to have a radical change in our concept of the Word. We should not consider the Word merely as the written word of God; we must consider it as the embodiment of the living Spirit. We should not come to the Word primarily for understanding, knowledge, or teaching. Instead, we should touch the word in the Scriptures by exercising our spirit to pray-read it. When we touch the divine word in this way, we strike it with our spirit, and the word becomes the Spirit. The more we pray-read the Word in this way, the more we will be charged with the Spirit, just as a battery is charged with electricity. This is what we need.

Following this, we need to cooperate with the Spirit in us. The Spirit will work out many things in us for the Lord. The Spirit will adjust us, correct us, prune us, transform us, subdue us, and even break us. We simply need to cooperate with Him. Then we will be living, powerful, and aggressive.

This is absolutely different from Christianity, which is mainly a religion with a set of teachings and forms. Rather, this is a matter of living in the spirit. Moreover, the Bible is not merely a book of teaching, but a book of the Spirit. It is the embodiment of the living Spirit. Thus, we need to exercise our spirit to strike the word of the Scriptures with our spirit so that we may receive the Spirit in the word. The more time we spend pray-reading the Word, the more we will be filled with the Spirit. (*CWWL, 1967*, vol. 2, "Sacramento Conference," ch. 5, pp. 90-93)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Economy and Dispensing of God*, ch. 3
2. *The Living Needed for Building Up the Small Group Meetings*, ch. 7
3. *Life-study of Exodus*, msg. 57
4. *Life-study of Leviticus*, msg. 36
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967*, vol. 2, "Sacramento Conference," ch. 5

PRAYING THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Three

Praying the Word Corporately

Scripture Reading: Eph. 5:29-30; 3:18; Col. 2:19; 3:16

- I. **The Lord as our divine food is for the Body, not just for the individual members; when we exercise to pray-read not just by ourselves but with a few of the members of the Body, we keep the principle of the Body—cf. Col. 2:19:**
 - A. Eating is for the Body; it is not for the individual members only—Eph. 5:29-30; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13.
 - B. When we pray-read not only individually but also in larger groups, we apprehend the riches of the word; in order to realize just how rich the word is, we need the Body—Col. 3:16; cf. Eph. 3:18.
 - C. “To pray-read properly, we need the Body. I have proven this by my experience. I enjoy pray-reading privately, but whenever I practice pray-reading with a group of believers, I am transported to the third heavens”—*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967*, vol. 1, p. 415.
- II. **There are several points that require our attention when we pray-read corporately:**
 - A. Our spirit needs to be stirred up; just as every member in a basketball team is stirred up and ready to play, our spirit must be stirred up and ready to move when we come to a meeting—Hag. 1:14:
 1. We should always exercise not our mind and emotion but our spirit.
 2. We need to drop our fear, timidity, excessive cautiousness, and self-consciousness and be bold in spirit—2 Tim. 1:6-7; cf. Prov. 29:25.
 - B. As we practice to pray-read corporately, we need to remember four words: *quick*, *short*, *real*, and *fresh*:
 1. To be quick is to forget about our mind; when we are quick, we have no time to consider.
 2. Then our prayers need to be short, because long prayers need some composition.
 3. We also need to be real; we must not pretend.
 4. Finally, we need to learn to be fresh.
 - C. We need instant utterance; our utterance should be living, not old; we need new utterances with new inspiration.
 - D. We need the skill of functioning with one another; this is the skill of cooperating with one another; no matter how many saints there are in a meeting, we need an attitude of cooperation; we need a spirit of cooperation and the skill to cooperate.
 - E. When we pray-read, we should not be too loud; pray-reading should have the flavor, atmosphere, and spirit of prayer; otherwise, it cannot be called pray-reading.
 - F. When we pray-read the Word, we must be liberated from our habit:
 1. We need to pray-read according to the need and the atmosphere.
 2. We should shout not according to our habit but according to the situation, the condition, the environment, and the atmosphere; we need the release of our spirit, not the release of our habit.
 3. With a small number we need to experience the Spirit to pray-read in a low voice; with a large number of saints we need to pray-read with a loud voice in the Spirit.

- G. In our corporate pray-reading, we do not always need to pray sequentially according to the points in the verses we read:
 1. We should not be bothered when others do not pray sequentially or according to the main points in the verses.
 2. We must not be overly legal when we pray-read, because the Holy Spirit is like the wind that blows where it wills; it blows sometimes here and sometimes there—John 3:8.
- H. The moment we have an inspiration, we should not hold back or overly consider:
 1. In our pray-reading we should not adhere to conventions, hesitate, or overly consider; we should also not fear that we cannot pray well.
 2. We should simply continue the sense of the one who prayed before us and add something more.
- I. We should not pray-read too many verses at a time:
 1. If we use too many verses, we may be confused about the main points and become distracted, and the inspiration we receive will not be accurate.
 2. There is no need to do anything in a rigid way; if there is nothing that we comprehend in one verse, we do not need to force ourselves to digest it; simply skip to the next verse.
- J. While praying, we should be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit and not have distracting thoughts:
 1. Whenever the Spirit moves, whether others pray well or not, we should avoid having differing thoughts and always try to be open to others.
 2. If we have improper thoughts and thus close ourselves to the Spirit, He will not be able to flow through us.
- K. We must avoid damaging the saints when we lead them to pray-read:
 1. When we lead the saints, we should not abruptly tell them that what they have been doing is wrong; if we say this, we will hurt their spirit; if we damage the spirit of the saints and they become averse to us, their spirit may not rise up again.
 2. Therefore, we should be slow in leading the saints to pray-read; this requires patience.

III. We need to see the benefits of corporate pray-reading:

- A. When the brothers and sisters come together to pray-read, it brings us into coordination with one another; when several of us pray together, our spirits are blended together, our love for one another deepens, and our concern for one another increases.
- B. Corporate pray-reading can help us to open our mouth in the meetings to pray, testify, and speak of the Lord's grace—Col. 3:16; cf. 1 Pet. 4:10-11.
- C. Corporate pray-reading causes our spirit to be burning—2 Tim. 1:6-7; Rom. 12:11:
 1. With only a single, large piece of wood, it is not easy to have a flaming fire; it is best to put many small pieces of wood into a pile; then when one piece is lit, the fire starts immediately.
 2. In the meeting the most precious thing is for all the saints to be burning in spirit, and pray-reading in small groups is the best way to encourage this.
- D. The church also receives the benefit by allowing the Holy Spirit to flow freely in the meeting, which causes the meeting to become living; gradually, we will see that not only are we made strong individually, but at the same time others also receive the help, and the church becomes living.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE PRAY-READING MEETING

During this time of fellowship, our meetings have definitely changed. We have put aside most of the ways and methods of meeting in Christian worship services. This is not a light thing; what we are doing is revolutionary. What we are doing is unprecedented in Christianity. It is a new thing and a new way. In this new way of meeting, we need to pay attention to several principles.

Everyone Functioning

We hope that by the Lord's mercy and by the leading of the Spirit every saint among us would function in the meetings. Whether a saint is seemingly great or small, old or young, strong or weak, experienced or inexperienced, he can function in the meetings. Even though the members of our body, such as the shoulders and the fingers, differ greatly in size, the large members have their function, and the small members also have their function. While I speak, every member of my body exercises its function along with my mouth. It is not only my mouth that speaks, but my whole body speaks through my mouth. Every member of my body exercises its function.

Even though we saw this principle many years ago, we were unable to find a way to practice it, and there was not such a practice in Christianity. Moreover, we were still influenced by the conventional ways of Christianity. We can use speaking a language as an illustration. A person who grows up in a certain place naturally learns to speak with the local accent, and it is difficult for him to change his accent when he is older. It is difficult to avoid the subconscious influence and control of our background in Christianity. Even though we did our best to attain to the goal of all the brothers and sisters functioning in the meetings, only half of the saints functioned to some extent; the other half behaved as if they were attending a traditional worship service.

The Lord has enabled us to find a simple, practical, new, and living way that allows every one of us to function in the meetings. We believe that by pray-singing the hymns, by pray-reading the Scriptures, by speaking to one another, by reading the Word aloud and to one another, and by sharing and testifying, we will afford the brothers and sisters numerous opportunities to function; it will be easy for everyone to open his mouth. In our practice of pray-reading and pray-singing, we do not need to offer long prayers, nor do we need to compose prayers. We only need to pray with the words in the Bible or with the phrases and clauses in the hymns. This is easy to do. With this change, every brother and sister can open his or her mouth and function in the meetings.

Exercising the Spirit

The second principle is for the brothers and sisters to exercise their spirit in the meetings. We have all experienced that when we remain silent from the beginning to the end of a meeting, we are deflated when we leave. But when we open our mouth a few times, we are inwardly refreshed and truly enjoy the Lord. Therefore, the first principle concerning the meetings is that everyone should function, and the second is that we should exercise our spirit. When people play basketball, they exercise their body; when we meet together, we should exercise our spirit. If we shut our mouth and do not utter a word, we cannot exercise our spirit. We thank the Lord that everyone has the opportunity to exercise his spirit in the meeting.

Contacting the Spirit of the Lord

The third principle is that we need to contact the Spirit of the Lord. The Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17); He is as real as the air, and He is living. The moment we open our spirit and call, "O Lord," we touch the Lord. When the inexperienced ones hear us calling, they think that this is far inferior to listening to messages. However, those who have experience realize that calling on the Lord in this way is much more enjoyable than listening to messages. Most of the saints who come to the meetings would rather call on the Lord than listen to someone give a message.

If I were not a minister of the word, someone could say, "Brother Lee is jealous of others giving a message. He is against the giving of messages because he cannot give a message." However, the Lord has given me this function, and I have given so many messages that I have the ground to speak this word. Among the saints in Los Angeles, some were pastors for many years, whereas others were preachers; however, if you asked them to give up pray-reading and go back to preaching wonderful messages or listening to good sermons, they would not be willing. They believe firmly in pray-reading and pray-singing, because they have tasted the flavor of these two things. The Lord is the Spirit. Now we have touched the secret.

Receiving the Lord's Word

The fourth principle is to receive the Lord's word. If we pray-read three or four verses of the Lord's word every time we meet, we will take in at least twelve verses through prayer, because we have three or four meetings weekly. These words will leave a deeper impression on us than the impression we receive through listening to a message or through just reading the Bible. By accumulating twelve or more verses a week through prayer, in a month we will accumulate around sixty verses, and in a year, around seven hundred verses will be in us. This is a tremendous matter. Some saints think that if we merely pray-read the Word without listening to messages, we will not have the Lord's word. This is inaccurate. On the contrary, we receive the word of the Lord in an even more practical and deep way by pray-reading.

Therefore, the new way of meeting has four principles: everyone functioning, exercising the spirit, touching the Spirit of the Lord, and receiving the Lord's word. If our spirit is open whenever we meet, and we all function, exercise the spirit, touch the Spirit of the Lord, and pray the Lord's word, the church will become more and more living and will be filled with the riches of God.

COMMENTS ON PRACTICES

Concerning Pray-reading the Word

In the past, when we practiced reading the Word aloud, we did not say Amen in a coordinated way. Some said Amen, while others did not. This was a lack. Everyone should say Amen. If we read the Word properly, we should receive some inspiration that will inspire others. Our worship does not depend on any one person; it depends on every person. Therefore, every brother and sister should endeavor to function.

There is still a certain degree of confusion in our pray-reading, which is evident especially when we have a large number of saints. This kind of confusion is not unavoidable, but to eliminate it we need to practice. If the five members of a team have never practiced playing basketball, there will, of course, be confusion when they come together to play. But if they practice sufficiently, there will be no confusion. Pray-reading is profitable. However, we have not had sufficient practice; as a result, sometimes no one makes a sound, whereas at other times everyone tries to pray at the same time. This results in confusion. It is not inappropriate to shout, but at times someone may shout in such a way that others cannot understand what he is saying. It is not enough to raise our voice; we must do it in a way that makes what we are saying understandable to others. We need to practice these matters until we can utter something at a proper pace and with a proper volume and emphasis. Then the confusion will disappear.

Hence, we must pay attention to coordinating with others. Whether in pray-reading or pray-singing, we must use our ears to listen to others and our eyes to look at others. When I notice that someone is opening his mouth, I should close mine; when I hear someone speaking, I should stop. We should be alert to exercise our hearing and our seeing. Initially; this will not be easy, but the more diligently we practice, the more skillful we will become.

We also need to coordinate with others, to link with them, in the content of what we utter in the meetings. Sometimes a brother is released, but it seems that he considers himself the only person in the universe; he does not care for others. He does not care what the person before him prayed or how the next person will continue. He only cares about his shouting. If all the saints

behave in this way, everyone in the meeting will shout something that conflicts with what others say; everyone will pray whatever he pleases. This is not acceptable. We must always care for others and coordinate with others. Suppose you shout, "Jehovah is my Shepherd," and then I shout, "Your rod and Your staff, / They comfort me." There is no linking, no joining, no coordination, in the two prayers. On the other hand, suppose I pray-sing, "Jesus, Thou alone art worthy," and another brother continues, "Ceaseless praises to receive." These two prayers are connected in meaning. Our pray-reading and pray-singing should be connected in both voice and meaning.

Whether we are pray-reading or pray-singing, our words are directed to the Lord. Therefore, we must not shout as if we are shouting slogans. We need to have the proper tone of prayer and praise. We are not merely shouting and screaming, nor are we speaking a message to others. We need to practice until our pray-reading is more refined. Worshipping God is a refined matter; it is not like the squabbling in the market place. Sometimes we need to shout in order to release our spirit because we are pressed down by many things that prevent us from releasing our spirit. However, it is not right for us to constantly shout; we also need to be refined.

Some brothers are in favor of shouting, whereas others are against it. It is wrong to be against shouting, and it is also wrong to insist on shouting. The present age is the age of the Spirit; thus, everything we do should be done in our spirit. However, we still need to take care of others. If we are aware of the fact that our shouting bothers some saints, we should lower our voice for their sake; our spirit can still be released. We should not insist on shouting, nor should we oppose shouting. We need to bring these matters to the Lord. If our spirit is open to the Lord, He will lead us.

When we pray-sing and pray-read, we should earnestly exercise our spirit and also our mind in order to receive inspiration and to express the inspiration that we receive. If we practice until we are skillful, not only will our spirit be living, but also our thoughts will be logical. It will be easy for us to receive inspiration. In the beginning I may not have any inspiration, but I receive inspiration from the inspiration uttered by others. Their utterance causes me to be inspired, and when I utter my inspiration, someone else is inspired. When one saint after another utters his inspiration, the meeting is enriched. This is very important. Whether we pray-sing or pray-read, the focal point is to express our inspiration. Expressing our inspiration touches people the most.

In our pray-reading, we can also sing hymns at appropriate times. We should not wait until we finish pray-reading before we sing a hymn; this is too rigid. We can sing a hymn in the middle of our pray-reading. Moreover, it is not necessary to always call out the number of the hymn. We can simply take the lead to sing a familiar hymn; this is to be living. Sometimes we can take the main words that we pray-read and sing them to a familiar tune. In this way the singing is full of flavor.

I have noticed that some saints say Amen and others say Hallelujah too many times. When we pray-read and pray-sing, saying Amen after every phrase, clause, or sentence can become a habit and can be without meaning. We should respond by saying Amen when a prayer touches us. We should not say Amen to every sentence spoken by others. However, we should not be so rigid that we do not say Amen at all. Saying Amen depends on what touches us.

I have also observed that some saints share in a way that is similar to admonishing or speaking at another person. That is not sharing. To share is to display the benefit that we have received; it is not to exhort others to do something. It is to bring out a dish for others to eat; it is not to teach others to cook. We should always receive something after we pray-read a portion of the Word. We should put out what we have received for others to enjoy. For example, after pray-reading Psalm 23, a brother may stand up and say, "In the past I did not see that Jehovah is my Shepherd, but today I see it." Another brother may say, "What is written here is so wonderful—having eaten and drunk to the full, we are restored." Yet another brother may say, "After being restored, we begin to walk." This is sharing what we have received for others to enjoy...The Lord is leading us to take a new way, not the old way of Christianity but a way that is

altogether in spirit and in His Word. We need to learn to take this new way. (CWWL, 1968, vol. 2, "The Practice of the Pray-reading Meeting," pp. 293-297, 308, 311-314)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1966*, vol. 2, "Being Delivered from Religious Practices by the Exercise of the Spirit," ch. 9
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1966*, vol. 3, "The Revelation of Christ and the Reality of the Church," ch. 10
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967*, vol. 1, "Pray-reading the Word," ch. 2
4. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967*, vol. 2, "Bearing Fruit in a Living and Coordinated Way for the Building Up of the Body of Christ," ch. 14
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1968*, vol. 2, "Turning to the Age of the Spirit," ch. 6
6. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1968*, vol. 2, "The Practice of the Pray-reading Meeting"
7. *Being Delivered from Religious Rituals and Walking According to the Spirit*, ch. 16

PRAYING THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Four

Being Saturated with the Word by Singing and Psalming the Word in Order to Live Christ for the Body

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:16; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17; Psa. 119:54; 1 Cor. 14:15, 26

I. The way to live Christ is to plug yourself into the Word all the day long; if you remain in this plugging, you live Christ—Phil 1:21a; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16-17:

- A. The Christian life is a life of living Christ for the constitution and building up of the Body of Christ—Phil. 4:1-3, 12, 16; Col. 1:24; 2:19:
 - 1. God's desire is for us to live Christ, to have Christ as our living, to have Christ as the reality, the real contents of the church life, making every local church a golden lampstand; the Body life will reach the reality of Romans 12 and this will be the spontaneous preparation of the bride for His coming back.
 - 2. From the very beginning, even from eternity, this is what the Lord has desired; this is the goal of the Lord's recovery.
- B. The way to live Christ is to receive His word into us and be filled with it—Phil. 2:16:
 - 1. If we exercise our whole being to take in the Word, we shall be filled, occupied, and saturated with the living Word.
 - 2. Because the Word is the embodiment of the Spirit and because the Spirit is the reality of Christ, we shall automatically be filled with Christ and whatever we do or say will be in the name of Christ; this is to live Christ—1 Cor. 15:45b; John 6:63; Col. 3:16-17.

II. From experience we know that we can take the Word as food by pray-reading it; but now we must go on to see that there is no better way to receive the word into our being than by singing the Word; the more we sing and psalm the Word of God, the more it will sink into the depths of our being and saturate us—v. 16:

- A. We may compare our spirit to an automobile needing gasoline, and the Word, the Bible, to a gas station; in the Word we have an inexhaustible supply of spiritual gasoline; the way to pump this "gasoline" into us is by singing and psalming the Word—Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16:
 - 1. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-19 show that our reading of the Bible should become our singing.
 - 2. We are thankful for the recovery of pray-reading the Word; now we must go on to sing-read the Word of God; we need to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom by singing; this is the charge given by the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16.
 - 3. The highest way to enjoy reading the Bible is to sing the words with a spontaneous melody:
 - a. We need to exercise our spirit to receive God's written Word so that it may become the present, spoken word to us—John 6:63; Eph. 6:17-18.
 - b. Singing the Word is an excellent way to exercise the spirit; to pray is to exercise the spirit, but to sing is an especially good way to exercise the spirit—1 Cor. 14:15.
 - 4. If we do not know a melody to use in singing a particular verse, we may make up one of our own.

5. Whether or not we sing well, the Lord is pleased to hear us singing the Word.
 6. As we sing the Word, we need to exercise our eyes to read, our mind to understand, our emotion to love the Word, our will to receive the Word, and also our spirit to pray, sing, psalm, and thank the Lord for His Word—Luke 24:45; Psa. 119:140, 173; Eph. 6:17-18.
 7. We should sing the Word not only in the meetings, but especially in our daily life; in particular, we should sing the Word at home; when you are alone in your room or with others at the dining table, sing the Word of God.
 8. Let us build up the habit of singing the Word day by day; then our meetings will not be formal; they will be filled with an exhibition of our daily life; in particular, we shall sing in the meetings.
- B. We need to get into the word by psalming—Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16:
1. Psalming is higher, deeper, and more profound than singing; to sing the Word is better than reading it, and to psalm the Word is even better than singing it.
 2. Psalming is a type of singing that includes musing:
 - a. Singing itself does not include much musing, but in psalming we muse upon the Word; at such times we may worship the Lord, have fellowship with Him, or even converse with ourselves in the Lord's presence—Psa. 1:1-3.
 - b. As we psalm the Word, we dwell upon it, muse on it, and enjoy it, thereby giving more opportunity for the Word to saturate us.
 3. Psalming does not need much of a melody for singing:
 - a. You can psalm with your own tune and even with all kinds of irregular tunes.
 - b. You will see what will come out; there will be a sweet and strengthened receiving of the divine element.
- C. In Colossians 3:16 Paul tells us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly; we should regard all the words written by Paul, in fact the whole New Testament, as the word of Christ:
1. Certain Christians sing verses from the Bible; however, for the most part, they sing portions from the Old Testament; this is good, but it is not nearly as rich as singing from the New Testament.
 2. In particular, we should sing the four books which make up the heart of the divine revelation—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—to enjoy the unsearchable riches of Christ.
 3. We especially need to sing those verses which convey to us the riches of Christ; Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are books filled with the divine riches.
 4. "I hope that one day we shall be able to set the entire New Testament to music as a help in singing the word of Christ. Then we shall have a tune for every verse in the New Testament"—*Life-study of Philippians*, p. 366.

III. If we all would practice praying the Word, singing the Word, psalming the Word, and thanking through the Word, the church life will be much uplifted; we all need to be deeply impressed with the need to practice what has been presented, exercise our spirit to pray the Word, to sing the Word, and to thank God and praise Him; then we will enjoy the Lord, be one with Him, and live Him.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

ENJOYING THE TRIUNE GOD IN THE WORD

I would stress again that for us to realize and to touch the solid and concrete substance of the divine element, He has given us the Bible, the Word. You must realize that the Word is divine, and the Word is a very particular writing. It is the condensation of the breathing of God. This is why you do not need to exercise your mind, your mentality, so much. Of course, you need your mind, but you have to realize that the Bible is not a kind of human, secular, worldly writing. It is the very condensation of God's divine breath. So you must love Him, and you must love His Word, not in a way of knowledge but in a seeking and living way.

Remember these three points: First, God wants you to take Him as life and live Him. Second, He is now the Spirit, and third, He is the very Word as well. When you apply these two to your experience, you will find that they are one. The Word and the Spirit are one (John 6:63). When this wonderful One gets into you, that is the Spirit. When this wonderful One remains outside of you, it is the Word. But these two are one. Do not consider that the Bible is something separate from the Spirit. They are just one. It is somewhat like your body and your physical life. Your physical life and your body are just one; you cannot separate them. If you separate your body from your physical life, your body will become a carcass. If you separate the Bible from the Spirit, the Bible is just a dead body. This is what the Bible calls the letter (2 Cor. 3:6). The *letter* means the dead writings. We must keep these two one in our experiential enjoyment of our God.

Because the Bible is a writing, you need to read it. But from Psalm 119, Ephesians 5 and 6, and Colossians 3, I have been deeply and strikingly impressed that to touch the Word of God in the way of reading is just the initial step. You can never finish anything just by taking the initial step. The initial step is just the initiation; you need to keep on. What are the following steps? You must sing; you must pray; you must psalm; you must thank the Lord all the time. In addition to your reading, you must exercise the prayer, the singing, the psalming, and the thanking. Reading is only one part of these five. In the past we were out of proportion because we made our reading too big. Reading is the initial step; then it should be followed by praying. Then it should be followed by singing, by psalming, and by thanking. All these are in the Bible. In all three of the above portions, the word *read* is not used. But in our mentality and on our lips there is nothing but *read*. However, in these few chapters a lot of other predicates are used for the touching of the living word. How many different predicates are used in Psalm 119! Ephesians and Colossians say that we need to receive the word of God by means of all prayer and petition, even praying at every time.

THE NEED OF PRACTICE

Do not take this word just as a message. I do not like to see all these things taken as a kind of doctrine. This is not a mere doctrine. If you do not practice these things, you are wasting your time coming to this Perfecting Training. You must practice these things. Do not pray for other things; pray the Word. I surely hope that we all could pray through these four books: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Then not only pray through them but sing through them. Then you can psalm. Psalming does not need much of a melody for singing. You can psalm with your own tune and even with all kinds of irregular tunes. You will see what will come out. There will be a sweet and strengthened receiving of the divine element. Then we need to practice thanking through the Word. If we all would practice praying the Word, singing the Word, psalming the Word, and thanking through the Word, the church life will be much uplifted.

This is a direct word. Just these three or four things are worthy to talk about: First, our God today wants us to live Him. Second, He is the Spirit. Third, He is the Word. Last, He wants us to take Him in through the Word and the Spirit by praying, by singing, by psalming, and by

thanking. We all can testify that when we pray in our spirit, we get the infusion of the divine element, of light, of life, of love, of sanctification, of all the divine things we need. When you sing, that is a real musing upon the Word. To muse upon the Word is not just to have a deep consideration or a deep apprehension of the Word. To muse is to enjoy the Word. The best way to muse upon the Word is to sing. A deeper musing is psalming. Psalming even gives you more enjoyment than singing. Thanking may be considered as a kind of conclusion. You must pray, you must sing, you must psalm, and eventually you must give thanks to our God.

LIVING CHRIST

If we would practice this all the day long, we would not need to talk about living Christ; spontaneously we would live Christ. If we do not practice singing the Word, praying the Word, psalming the Word, and thanking the Lord for the Word, yet we try to live Christ, we will find it impossible. I hope we all could realize that this is crucial. We must practice this. It does not matter how much you know. But if you will practice this, you will be fully infused, saturated, and even permeated with the Triune God. This is being one spirit with the Lord. When you are infused and permeated with Him, you are actually one with Him, and you are practically one spirit with Him. So whatever you do, that is to live Christ. Whate'er you do, you spontaneously do it in Him. You do it in His name, and that is not you; that is He. Because you have been fully saturated with Him, He surely becomes you, just like you become Him. This is to live Christ. This is what the New Testament terms in Christ and Christ in you mean. Do you think the words in Christ and Christ in you are just a kind of terminology? What do these mean? For many years I was bothered by these kinds of expressions. When you practice these matters, you will experience the real fact that you are in Him and that He is in you. It will not be just a kind of expression or terminology; it will be a kind of real experience. You will really experience that you are in Him and He is in you. You need to contact and receive Him and be saturated with Him and enjoy Him. Then you will live Him. (*CWWL*, 1980, vol. 1, "Perfecting Training," ch. 17, pp. 191-193)

HOW TO LIVE CHRIST

In the last few months I have been bothered for a further step that is, how to live Christ. No doubt while I have been so seeking, the Lord has answered His promise that if we seek, we will find (Matt. 7:7). Recently, I have told you that the first way to live Christ is that you have to pray before doing anything. Second, I also discovered that you have to continue your prayer. While you are doing certain things, you have to pray. Third, we have seen that we must practice a kind of breathing prayer. We have to make our prayer a matter of breathing. This means that we have to pray unceasingly; we have to pray continually.

Fourth, I also shared with you that we have to get into the Word not only by reading and not only by praying but also by singing, psalming, and thanking. You must get into the Word because the Holy Bible is God's word, God's breath. It is even the consolidation of God's breathing. Do not get into the Word like a scholar or a student, but get into the Word to pray-read it, to sing it, to psalm it, and to thank God all the time through it. I believe all these give us the way to live Christ. Although our experiences in these matters may be limited and shallow, yet we can testify that this is the right way to live Christ. When we pray-read, when we sing, when we psalm, when we thank God for the Word, we have the inner conviction that we are really one with the living One. At that time we really get some fresh air into our inner being. Every day I need about one hour's exercise, either to walk or to do this or that. Otherwise, I could not sleep well. But by exercising I breathe, and it refreshes me. In the same way when you pray-read the Word, when you sing the Word, when you psalm the Word, and you thank God for the Word, you get the fresh air into your inner being. (*CWWL*, 1980, vol. 1, "Perfecting Training," ch. 17, pp. 197-198)

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Colossians says, "Whatever you do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God" (3:17). How could we do all things in the name of the Lord? There is no other way but by praising, thanking, and praying. When we do all things in the name of the Lord, that is to live Christ. When you do everything in His name, you have become Him, and He has practically become you. If you are not one with Him, how could you do things in His name? If you do things in His name but are not one with Him, you are cheating people. If you are not one with me, but you do things in my name, you are deceiving people. But if you become me, whatever you do, you do it in my name. This is to live me. The way to live Christ is to plug yourself into the Word, into the prayer, and into the singing, the praising, and the psalming all the day long. If you remain in this plugging, you live Christ. All day long you need not only to pray-read the Word but also to sing-read the Word. It is not so adequate just to pray-read. You have to sing the Word.

The Psalms were written not mainly for speaking or reading but for psalming and singing. If we only read Psalm 119, that may kill us and tire us out. But if we psalm this psalm, singing it all the day long, the psalming will keep us in that plugging. Spontaneously, the heavenly electrical current will come through us all the day long. So we will just live Christ. An electrical instrument lives electricity. Whatever it does, wherever it moves, it acts electricity. This is the right way; there is no other way. Then you may think, we do not need to do anything; we can stay home and kneel and pray and praise and do nothing. We cannot. God did not ordain it in this way. We have a lot of duties and responsibilities. But we have a good illustration that regardless of how busy we are, we still breathe. While we do things, we breathe. We must build up such a breathing habit. We all need a clear vision; we have to condemn our prayerless life; we have to condemn our praiseless life; we have to condemn our psalmless life; we must have a prayerful life, praiseful life, and psalmful life all the day.

We have the Spirit as the antenna wire and the Word as the ground wire. The antenna wire is in us, in our spirit, and the ground wire is in our hand; we just need to remain here with these two wires. Then we will get the transfusion and the transmission. We will get the permeation and the saturation; then whatever we do, we will do it in His name. This is to live Christ. This is not a kind of teaching and doctrine. This is a little vision with some instruction. It altogether depends upon our daily practice. We must practice continual prayer and continual praising and continual psalming and singing and thanking because we are breathing Him in, making Him our saturation and making ourselves practically one with Him. Spontaneously we will live Christ. This is not a matter of doctrine and teaching but a kind of practice. Everything apart from this is vanity.

The Life-study messages and even the study of the Bible are vanity if you do not practice this. If the Bible remains letters of death killing you, it is vanity. The Bible could be living to you only when you breathe it, when you pray it, when you praise it, when you sing-read it, when you psalm-read it. All the lines of the Holy Writings will become the living God to you, the living pneuma, to you. Then you will get the transmission, the transfusion, the permeation making Him everything to you and making you one with Him. Then whatever you say and whatever you do will be Christ. This is to live Christ. You must put this into practice. (*CWWL*, 1980, vol. 1, "Perfecting Training," ch. 16, pp. 182-183)

SATURATED WITH THE WORD BY SINGING

If we sincerely desire to be saturated with the living Word so that we may live Christ, we need to follow the practice advocated by Paul in Colossians 3:16. This means that we must let the word of Christ inhabit us in a rich way, not by mere knowledge from the mind, but by every kind of wisdom from our spirit, including singing and psalming. Oh, we need to sing and psalm

the Word of God! To sing the Word is better than reading it, and to psalm the Word is even better than singing it. Psalming the Word includes musing upon it and enjoying it. As we psalm the Word, we dwell upon it, muse on it, and enjoy it, thereby giving more opportunity for the Word to saturate us.

If we only read the Word, there is little opportunity for the portion we read to sink into us and saturate our being. But if we sing the Word, and especially if we psalm it, we open our being more fully to the Word and give it the opportunity to sink into us and saturate us. For example, if we sing Psalm 1, we shall enjoy the riches found in this short psalm. Let us sing and psalm the Word of God not only in the meetings. Let us come to the Word daily to sing and psalm it with our whole being. In singing and psalming the Word of God, let us exercise our voice, our mind, our heart, and our spirit.

Furthermore, I hope that from now on in the church meetings more place will be given to spontaneous singing of the Word. Perhaps in a certain meeting we shall sing or psalm the whole book of Ephesians. No doubt, if we spend an entire meeting to do this, we shall touch the riches in this Epistle.

It is surprising that in Colossians 3:16 Paul does not mention reading. Instead, he emphasizes singing. It is possible to read the Word without exercising our spirit and without contacting God. But by praying, singing, and psalming, we are ushered into the Spirit. The best way to receive the word of life and to be saturated with the element of Christ is to sing the Word. (*Life-study of Philippians*, msg. 40, pp. 356-357)

By praying, singing, and thanking we are infused with Christ, permeated by Him, and mingled with Him. Many of us can testify that, as we were enjoying a certain portion of the Word, spontaneously a melody welled up from within. Then we began to use this melody to sing the Word to the Lord. By singing, we were saturated with the Word and nourished by its riches. This caused us to be thankful to God. At that time we were truly one with Christ. Whatever we did in word or work was done in the name of the Lord Jesus. Again I say, this is to live Christ....

Once again I would urge you to combine the rich Word, the bountiful Spirit, and unceasing prayer. Take the Word of God not only by reading, but also by pray-reading and sing-reading. Also praise the Lord and give thanks to Him. Combine the rich Word and the bountiful supply of the Spirit with unceasing prayer. Then you will enjoy the Lord, partake of Him, be one with Him, live Him, grow in Him, and magnify Him. This is what God desires today.

I hope that we shall all be deeply impressed with the need to practice what has been presented in this message. Do not pray according to the natural, human concept. Rather, exercise your spirit to pray the Word, to sing the Word, and to thank God and praise Him. In this way you will allow the Word to enter into you that you may be nourished with all its riches. These riches will then become the bountiful supply of the Spirit through your unceasing prayer. Then you will enjoy the Lord, be one with Him, and live Him. (*Life-study of Philippians*, msg. 37, pp. 328-330)

References and Further Reading:

1. *Perfecting Training*, chs. 16 and 17
2. *Life-study of Philippians*, msgs. 37, 40, and 46
3. *The Healthy Word*, ch. 8
4. *Life-study of Exodus*, msg. 58