

## **Ministry Reading for 2011 Team Reunion**

**Austin, TX**

### **THE FOCUS OF THE CHANGE IN SYSTEM—THE HOUSEHOLD**

The focus of the change in system is the household. In the New Testament we see many sweet households, such as the household of Caesar (Phil. 4:22), the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:22-24), the household of Lydia, a seller of purple-dyed goods (16:13-15), and the household of the jailer whose name is unknown (vv. 29-34). There was also the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16) and the household of Crispus (Acts 18:8). In addition, there were houses in which the meetings were held, such as Aquila and Prisca's house (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19), the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15), and the house of Philemon (Philem. 1-2). These examples clearly show us that the unit of God's salvation and service is the household.

Even in the Old Testament, in the two great types of salvation, the household was the unit of salvation. The first was the type of the flood in which the eight members of the house of Noah entered into the ark and were thus saved from God's judgment on the world (Gen. 7:1; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5). The second was the type of the Passover in which each Israelite household took a lamb, killed it, put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel of the house, and ate the flesh of the lamb. It was not a lamb for each person but for each household as a unit (Exo. 12:3-8). In the past we have ignored these clear truths of the Bible; we were influenced by Christianity and were distracted and carried away.

From the beginning of the Lord's recovery in China, Brother Nee pointed out that the church needs to be built up with the household as a unit. I received this matter from him and brought the practice to Taiwan. In addition, I introduced the practice of the "groups." However, in 1984 when I returned to Taiwan, these two practices were almost non-existent. We were under the influence of the nations and were following their customs (2 Kings 17:33) to walk in the way of the denominations in Christianity by copying their practice of big meetings in which one man speaks while all the rest listen. This practice brings forth the "clergy" and the "laity," which prevents not every saint from functioning. Seeing this, I want to bring out a specific way for our practice at this crucial time.

### **DEFINITE STEPS NEEDED FOR PRACTICING THE CHANGE OF SYSTEM**

#### **Having an Average of One Full-time Serving One Out of Every Twenty Saints**

Out of every twenty saints meeting in the Lord's recovery there should be one full-time serving one. Although I cannot say that this is a revelation from the Lord, I feel very clear inwardly that this is an excellent way. I also trumpeted this call very clearly in the United States, hoping that all the more than six hundred churches on the six continents would be able to do this. This is the first principle for carrying out our change of system: that one out of twenty of the saints would be full-time.

Some news has come in from two local churches. One locality which has one hundred eighty in the meetings is willing to produce nine full-timers, and the other locality which

has eighty in the meetings will produce four full-timers. Now the church in Taipei, which has four thousand people regularly attending the meetings, has produced two hundred full-timers. This altogether corresponds to the principle of one out of twenty. I am very happy about this.

*The Furtherance of the New Way for the Lord's Recovery, chap. 1, pp. 13-14.*

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### THE LIFE PULSE IN THE PRACTICE OF THE NEW WAY—THE HOME

The crucial thing about the new way is to have the Lord's salvation realized in a practical way by every saint. We know that the only way anything can be sustained in human society is for it to be carried out in the homes. The home is the place where everything related to human existence is sustained. If we only have individuals in a society without the existence of the homes, nothing related to our human living will last; society will be short of the vessel needed to hold it together. The home is the basic unit of society; it is the foundation of a nation. According to God's Word, the church of God is firstly the house, household, or home, of God (I Tim. 3:15). After that it is the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17). It is hard for God's kingdom to exist without the existence of the homes. Without the home as a basis, it is hard for individuals to exist, and it is difficult for a nation or kingdom to be established.

Christianity has fallen prey to the wiles of Satan; it has completely overlooked the homes. In Christianity one cares only for the big meetings without any thought of the home meetings. A person in Christianity finds no vessel to hold his experience together. There is no vessel to uphold the testimony and no vessel to keep and maintain the truth. Consider Romans 16. Without a doubt, during the time of the apostles, the church was built up in the believers' homes. We know that the book of Romans is a book dealing specifically with the spiritual life in Christ and the spiritual living in the church. At the end of this book, one entire chapter is devoted to Paul's greeting of the saints. From his greetings, we can see that quite a number of homes were opened to the church. This shows us that the church life at the time of the apostles had a very strong home atmosphere. Under Satan's influence, Christianity has completely annihilated the spiritual atmosphere of the homes.

This is the reason that we must endeavor with all the energy, strength, and time that the Lord has given us to recover the proper atmosphere of the homes. The first thing we must do is to make every saint's home a place for meeting. At the present moment, many saints are burdened to open up their homes. This is a great step forward. Yet we cannot be satisfied with this initial step. We must not only open up the homes of those who are burdened, but we must also bring the meetings to the homes of those who are not burdened. We hope that every home can be opened to become a place for meeting. Each opened home means one more place for meeting. The smallest places of meeting in a church are the homes of every brother and sister in that church.

Witness Lee. *The Ministry Magazine*, Vol. 3[5]:4-5 (1999)

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## THE HOME MEETINGS BEING THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH MEETINGS

The topic of this message is "The Foundation of the Church Meetings." In anything you do, there is always a foundation. Even language itself has a foundation. The twenty-six letters of the English alphabet are the foundation of the English language. What is the foundation of the church meetings? It is not hard for you to find out from Acts how the three thousand and five thousand met after they got saved. They met in the temple and from house to house, from one home to another. When they were in the temple, it was mainly Peter and John who spoke. If you were to ask the Apostles Peter and John to visit the three thousand and the five thousand saved ones, who comprised at least a few thousand homes, even if they wore out the soles of their feet they still could not reach every one of them.

Acts chapter five also says, "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and bringing the good news of Jesus as the Christ." There were absolutely no different teachings at that time. Those who were saved, even though they were saved for only a day or two, began to meet in their homes. They definitely did not speak the teachings of Moses, nor did they speak the doctrines of Isaiah. Every household was speaking what they had personally heard from Peter's speaking in the temple.

The home meetings were the foundation of the church meetings. The big meetings in the temple were not the foundation. Once the big meetings in the temple ended, they were over. In the big meetings believers were produced, and they were then brought to individual home meetings. The church meetings were not built up in the big meetings in the temple, but rather, the church meetings were built up in every house, from house to house.

Acts chapter eight says that a great persecution arose in Jerusalem not too long after the three thousand and the five thousand were saved. They all left Jerusalem; only the twelve apostles remained there. From this we see that the propagation of the Lord's gospel and the spreading of the testimony of the Lord's church did not depend primarily on the apostles, but rather on those who were dispersed. They brought people to salvation everywhere they went. I can guarantee that no big meetings existed then. The big meetings are not the foundation of the church. The meetings from house to house, the meetings in the homes, are the foundation of the church. The big meetings are a kind of skating on ice. It is the home meetings that can actually keep people. This light is very clear in the Bible.

### **The Bible Stressing Mutual Fellowship**

Sixty years ago, the Lord showed us that the truth of the Bible was not to take this way, but rather to emphasize mutual fellowship. How can a ten thousand member church have mutual fellowship? If the way is through big meetings, then it is not easy to talk once to every member, even after meeting for ten years. But if people come into a home, they have to speak even though they normally do not speak much, and their situation will be made clear through this kind of speaking. You may even be able to discover what kind of

sickness they have through your speaking. The home meetings are the foundation of the church.

### **Only the Home Meetings Being Able to Keep People**

When it comes to God's work, the beginning is always the best. After it is handed over to man, it begins to go downhill. The beginning of Acts was the best. There was the "skating rink" in the big meetings to skate people in. Many skated in. Then there were the meetings from house to house to bring people into the foundation of the church. Once a person joined the home meetings, he was kept. This is God's wisdom.

*On Home Meetings, chap. 1, pp. 13, 16*

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### **MEETING IN EVERY HOME**

According to our study, experience, and observation, I would say that we have found that the home meetings are the unique way for the increase and building up of the church. There are many positive things that come out of the home meetings. In the home meetings, everyone becomes a seeking one, a serving one, a preaching one, a teaching one, and one that spontaneously witnesses for the Lord. We hope to encourage all the saints in the Lord's recovery to have meetings in their homes.

The Greek phrase in Acts 5:42 indicates that not one house was missed. They met from house to house. We should not take the way of selecting some promising homes, and then having the meetings in those promising homes. This is wrong. Every home of the believers is promising. We need to open up our home. First we can meet with our folks. We do not need to meet with others first. We can initiate our home meeting by meeting with our family members. We who have wives and children all can have a home meeting. We just meet with our folks, with our wife, and with our little children. To set up a meeting will stir up our heart and will fan the flame in our heart and in our spirit. First of all, we will be burned, and then our family will be burned. To set up a home meeting will keep out many evil things from our homes.

Do not say that you are weak, that you cannot overcome your self, that you cannot overcome your temper, that you cannot control yourself, that you cannot do this or that. Just set up a home meeting in your home. I have seen in many cases that when you set up a meeting in your home the Holy Spirit brings people to you. Gradually people will come. I would say that if you are a Christian, yet you do not have a home meeting, you are not up to the standard. You may know the Bible, be spiritual, be seeking, love the Lord, and so forth, but if you do not open your home, you are not up to the standard. Even a single sister could open her apartment for meetings. Every lodging of the saints, whether single or with a family, should be opened up for meeting. You may say, "With whom do we meet?" First, with the angels, then with a believer, then with a neighbor. You must pray, endeavor, and even fast until you get a neighbor to come to meet with you. If you determine to have some meeting with you in your home, surely there is a way. A lot of persons are around you every day. You have a lot of relatives and friends.

Are you going to be holy? Set up a home meeting. Are you going to be spiritual? Set up a home meeting. Are you going to know the Bible? Nothing will force you to seek the knowledge of the Bible more than setting up a home meeting. The home meetings will force you to seek after the proper, spiritual knowledge, and while you are seeking the knowledge for teaching others, you yourself will be taught, enlightened, and nourished. I can recall my own history. When I was trying to teach others I began to realize that I needed to be taught. The definite, single, and sole step for the Lord's recovery to take today is to promote the home meetings. This is the unique way.

*The Home Meetings—The Unique Way for the Increase and Building Up of the Church, chap 2. , pp. 19-20*

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### **MORE FRUIT AND MORE ENJOYMENT OF THE LORD**

John 15:2 says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes it away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit." Every branch in Jesus must bear fruit. Perhaps some may say, "The fruit-bearing in chapter fifteen does not necessarily refer to people. In Galatians chapter five, the fruit of the Spirit refers to love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and so forth." If you read the context of John chapter fifteen you will see that the emphasis there is on people as fruit. If a branch has only one fruit it is unattractive. But if a branch has no fruit at all, the Lord said that He will take it away. To be taken away means to be deprived of the enjoyment of the riches of the tree.

The fruitless ones are in danger of losing their enjoyment. As a branch, if you want to enjoy the riches of the tree, you must bear much fruit. The more fruit you bear, the more riches you will receive from the Lord. That means the more fruit you bear, the more enjoyment you have. You must go and bear fruit. You must bring in people. In this matter there are too many lessons to learn. I have mentioned this in the past. You must deal with different kinds of people in different ways. To teach gospel songs to your relatives' children is one way. To sing to your grandfather is another. Of course, you must pray for them. There are many ways. The question is whether or not you have the heart to take care of them.

We who are saved and are the Lord's are destined to bear fruit. Whether or not you have the desire, you must bear fruit. If you do not bear fruit, you are doing something other than the Lord's destiny for you, and you will lose the enjoyment of the Lord. Chapter one of the Song of Songs says that we, the seekers of the Lord, must not give up our "kids."

*Key Points on the Home Meetings, chap. 5, pp. 62-63*

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## The Homes

### I. The importance of the homes in God's New Testament economy

#### A. The Holy Spirit's invention

**Acts 2:46** And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of *their* food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

They began to meet not according to the Jewish congregational way of the Old Testament, nor according to the Roman way, nor according to the Greek way. Then who invented the way for the first group of Christians to meet? The Holy Spirit invented the way. We can say this because on that day, the one hundred twenty were filled with the Holy Spirit economically. And no doubt, the three thousand new converts were also filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, whatever they did on that day was initiated by the Holy Spirit. The main thing they did was to begin to meet in the temple for big congregations and in the homes. I like the two phrases in Acts 2:46, "day by day" and "from house to house." *The Home Meetings*, Chapter 1, pp. 7-8

#### B. The place where God's activity is carried out

**Mark 2:1-2**

1 And He entered again into Capernaum after a few days, and it was heard that He was at home.

2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even at the door. And He spoke to them the word.

**Matthew 9:10**

And as He was reclining *at table* in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and reclined together with Jesus and His disciples.

**Acts 16:14-15**

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple-dyed goods from the city of Thyatira who worshipped God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened to give heed to the things being spoken by Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, as well as her household, she entreated *us*, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide. And she constrained us.

The home gospel must go out from the homes. Even the campus work can go out from the homes. The homes are the foundation... For a nation to be strong, the homes must be strong. For a church to be strong, the home meetings must be built up. The homes are the foundation, the base, of all activities *On Home Meetings*, Chapter 1, p. 20

We are burdened to go to Europe in a team of at least four saints, including a couple between the ages of thirty to fifty, in whose home the meetings will begin. Every team of saints going to Europe should have a couple, and this couple may have some children. This family will be the center of the team. We will try to help them to get a home close to a college or a university... The newly-contacted people can be brought to this home for fellowship. This will be our way.

*The World Situation and the Direction of the Lord's Move*, Chapter 4, pp. 48-49

#### C. The place to keep and care for the new ones

**Acts 2:47**

Praising God and having grace with all the people. And the Lord added together day by day those who were being saved.

The big meetings are not the foundation of the church. The meetings from house to house, the meetings in the homes, are the foundation of the church. The big meetings are a kind of skating on ice. It is the home meetings that can actually keep people. This light is very clear in the Bible.

*On Home Meetings*, pp. 10-11

The beginning of Acts was the best [in that there] was the "skating rink" in the big meetings to skate people in. Many skated in. Then there were the meetings from house to house to bring people into the foundation of the church. Once a person joined the home meetings, he was kept. This is God's wisdom.

*On Home Meetings*, p. 16

I am not joking. Based on my observation from every angle, I am convinced that the increase and spread of the church depend fully on the home meetings. This is based on my sixty years of experience. I have discovered the law for the increase and spread of the church. Everything has its own laws. Science is the discovery of these laws. The law for the increase of the church is the home meetings. *Key Points on the Home Meetings, Chapter 7, p. 79*

## **II. Our need to be connected to the homes in two directions to form a bridge for the new ones to enter the church life**

### **A. Connected to the homes of the new ones (during the semester and during the breaks)**

#### **John 15:16**

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and <sup>3</sup>that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

After we go forth to produce believers in the Lord, we need to care for them. The best way is to set up meetings in their homes to cover and protect them that they may be cared for by being nourished and taught, and may become the remaining fruit, living in the branches of the true vine, that is, in the Body of Christ, to be Christ's increase. *John 15:16, Footnote 3, Recovery Version*

#### **Luke 19:5, 9**

5 And as He came to the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay in your house.

9 And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham.

#### **Acts 10:22**

And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous man and one who fears God and is well attested to by the whole nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear words from you.

### **B. Connected to the community saints' homes (building a nest—purpose, nature, and condition)**

We estimate that each full-timer can take care of twenty new ones. While you are taking care of these twenty new ones, you should find a way to join the new ones with the old ones in the district. These old ones are experienced and should be brought in to coordinate with you. Their time is not so flexible as yours. The working ones have to go to their offices, and the sisters have to take care of their housework. You have to work according to their schedule and see how to put the new ones into the group. Only when these groups have been formed will there be a stable condition. All the districts should do their best to carry out these points

*Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 2, Chapter 19, pp. 73-74*

### **C. Connecting the new ones to the homes of the saints to enter the church life**

#### **Acts 8:1b, 3a**

1 ...And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem...

3 But Saul was devastating the church, entering house after house;...

What is the church life? The church life is not something stiff and dead. For a meeting to be considered a part of the church life we do not have to bring the saints to the meeting hall. I am not saying that we should not bring people to the meeting hall. What I mean is that the church life does not necessarily have to be experienced in the meeting hall. If there is a saint's house near the campus with a living room that can take up to fifteen people, and that saint is willing to open up his home for the students, then we can bring the students to have the Lord's table there, and we can care for the students there. *Vessels Useful to the Lord, Chapter 2, p. 49*

If we take this way, the Lord will have a living testimony, not a church life in big halls but the church life practiced in many homes. Every home will become a station of the gospel, a station of the truth, a station of life, and a station of the church life. I hope to see that each one of these homes would be a station to spread the gospel, the truth, life, and the church life.

*The Lord's New Way and His Ministry Today, Chapter 1*

### **Bringing people first to Christ and then to the church**

...When we work in this way, we should first bring people to the house of the couple who live near the campus. There we can bring them to the Lord. After we have brought them to the Lord, it will be easy for us to train them. By this training, we will bring them to the church life. It is true that the couple's home is their stepping-stone into the church life...

*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, Vol. 2 pp. 105-106*

### **A basic price to pay**

A basic price we need to learn to pay in our daily pursuit is that the younger ones must receive help from the older ones, and the older ones must try their best to help the younger ones. In order to become manifested before the Lord as those who are truly pursuing spiritual growth, we must take care of these two matters. On the one hand, we should do all we can to receive help from whoever can render us help, and on the other hand, we should do all we can to help whoever needs our help. This is real pursuing. However, usually our situation is that the younger ones seek out the younger ones while the older ones seek out the older ones. This is neither true pursuing nor paying the price.

*How to be Useful to the Lord, Chapter 2, p. 20*

#### **1. Entering into the homes and hearts of the older saints resulting in prayer, shepherding, and progress**

##### **Philippians 1:25**

And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,

#### **2. Seeing a pattern of Christ lived out in the daily life**

...If the saints in every locality are well coordinated, the new ones will be inspired with what they see. They will see the real social life, communal life, and family life. Our service in coordination will touch, soften, and warm up their heart to receive the living, piercing word (Heb. 4:12). Once a freshman is brought into your living room, most of the work is already done.

*Preaching the Gospel on the College Campuses, Chapter 2, pp. 27-28*

#### **3. Seeing their future**

If the older saints in the church can pass on the lessons they have learned in the Lord throughout the years to the younger saints, regardless of whether it is a burden for the gospel, knowledge of the truth, or a portion in the service, this would be wonderful. In this way, the older saints can rest and sleep in peace, the young people can function appropriately in the church, and the teenagers and children can grow up healthily in the church.

*Knowing Life and the Church, Chapter 9, p. 113*

## **III. The workability of the homes (attainable, doable, sustainable)**

### **A. Small**

#### **Zechariah 4:10a**

For who has despised the day of small things?...

#### **Nehemiah 3:2-3**

2 And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

3 And the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate: They laid its beams and set up its doors, its bolts, and its bars.

A local church is an expression of the Body of Christ in a certain locality composed of saints who mainly meet in small groups.

*The Conclusion of the New Testament, Chapter 192, p. 2081*

Every church after God's own heart bears the stamp of "one another" on all its life and activity. Mutuality is its outstanding characteristic.

*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Vol. 30, Chapter 3, p. 47*

We should not wait ten years to put these principles into practice. We need to practice them right away. From now on we all must go to the Lord, pray, and seek His guidance as to whom we should care for. The best way to help people is to open our homes and invite them in. It is especially easy



to help students in this way. We should invite one or two, not too many. If we feel the need, we can invite another one or two brothers to help us. We should practice this over the long run, weekly or biweekly, and not expect a fast success.

*Serving in the Meetings and in the Gospel*, Chapter 4, pp. 49-50

We should consider all the people we know and choose two or three unbelievers to care for the year round. We should not take care of too many. The best way to do this is to open our homes and invite them in. This is especially true for students. If we live on or close to a campus and have a way to contact people, it is easy to bring them to the Lord by inviting them to our home. Again, we should not invite too many, perhaps only two or three or even just one. Then we will know the best way to contact them. If we care for a certain one in this way and invite him to our home, he will be saved in half a year. Learn to do this.

*Serving in the Meetings and in the Gospel*, Chapter 5, p. 63

## **B. A gathering where nourishing and cherishing can take place**

At the same time you must be careful not to bring the atmosphere of the big meetings into the home meetings. Big meetings should be carried out in an orderly manner. In contrast, home meetings are characterized by their disorderliness, and it does not matter even if the meetings drag on a little. We really must learn to meet with the new ones just like a family and talk about things together, leading and helping them as the need arises but without replacing them.

*The Furtherance of the New Way for the Lord's Recovery*, Chapter 6, p. 80

In addition, we can open our homes one evening a week to allow the saints to relax and be comfortable. We should not take anything else as our enjoyment. We should read the Bible, discuss the truths of the Bible, speak of the Lord Jesus, and give testimonies, and we can play the piano to accompany our hymn singing. This is the way of blessing.

*Three Crucial Matters for the Increase and Building Up of the Church*, Chapter 4, p. 54

Whether it is in Germany, Japan, or America, everywhere there are young people; what they seek after the most is the truth. Today as we work, we must learn the secret that although many things can excite the young people, what retains them, gives them long-lasting satisfaction, and edifies them is the truth.

*Speaking for God*, Chapter 1, p. 20

We need to understand that the element of nonuniformity is the very characteristic of the small groups. This is a very distinctive feature of the small groups. It means that the small groups are able to take care of every saint in the group. This is the reason we say that the small groups are the life pulse of the church...

Still, we need to realize that it is this "unorganized" element that brings in new ones... We will not be afraid of the so-called "unorganized" element in the small groups. Once the small groups become uniform, the requirements increase, and it becomes difficult to bring in the new ones. The fact that the small groups are somewhat disorganized is proof that the new ones are being brought in. In order to care for everyone's condition, each one can come as early or as late as he pleases.

*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 1:*

*The Vision and Definite Steps for the Practice of the New Way*, Chapter 4, pp. 95-96