

**The Service of the Sisters - The Loving Mothers in the Church Life**

**Scripture Reading:**

**Romans 16:1, 13**

- 1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a deaconess of the church which is in Cenchrea.
- 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother as well as mine.

**John 19:25-27**

- 25 And there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister and Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary the Magdalene.
- 26 Then Jesus, seeing His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing by, said to His mother, Woman, behold, your son.
- 27 Then He said to the disciple, Behold, your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

**1 Peter 5:13**

- 13 The co-chosen in Babylon and Mark my son greet you.

**1 Timothy 1:2-3**

- 2 To Timothy, genuine child in faith: Grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

**Titus 1:4**

- 4 To Titus, genuine child according to the common faith

## Message One

### The Service of the Sisters - The Loving Mothers in the Church Life

Scripture Reading: Rom. 16:1, 13; John 19:25-27; 1 Pet. 5:13b; 1 Tim. 1:2-3a; Titus 1:4a

#### I. Romans 16 is a chapter fully on the practical church life; the emphasis in this chapter is on the sisters, not the brothers, and there is mention of a mother but no mention of a father—vv. 1, 13:

- A. Nowhere else do you find the phrase *our sister*; Paul began this chapter by saying, “I commend to you Phoebe our sister”—v. 1.
- B. There is another unusual concept in this chapter on the practical church life in verse 13: “Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother as well as mine.”
- C. Neither the sister nor the mother is the one in the flesh:
  - 1. “I commend to you Phoebe our sister,” is not a sister in the flesh.
  - 2. The mother is the mother of Rufus in the flesh, but she was also Paul's mother; surely she was not Paul's mother in the flesh.

#### II. According to the record in John 19, near the end of His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus looked at His mother in the flesh, and in a sense it was as if He said to her, “Mother, don’t behold Me, but behold your son”; at the same time, He said to His cousin John, “Behold, your mother”—vv. 25-27:

- A. This account is not merely a story, and there is a reason that it is recorded only in the Gospel of John, not in the other three Gospels.
- B. The Gospel of John is a book on life, not on the natural life but on the transferred and transformed life; the word of the Lord Jesus to John and to His mother was a word to show us that His life-imparting, life-releasing death transfers people’s lives—vv. 25-27.
- C. To fulfill his purpose John gives us a record to show how the life of the believers of Christ could be transferred by the cross of Jesus and by His resurrection; if you look at the cross of Jesus, you will be transferred.
- D. According to the life in the flesh, John was Mary’s nephew, and Mary was John’s aunt; but by looking at the cross, they received another life; in this second life the nephew becomes a real son, and the aunt becomes a real mother.

#### III. To have the practical church life to the uttermost, in the local church there should be some real sisters and some real mothers:

- A. As long as there is a shortage of sisters like Phoebe among us, the church life is not practical; yet the serving of that sister is at the beginning of Romans 16, in the first verse.
- B. When the church life in practicality reaches a peak, in every church there should be some real mothers—v. 13:
  - 1. There are a number of good, basic principles that have been missed among the believers for generations; if it were the practice for each one of the new believers to have someone care for them in a particular way as their real spiritual parents, so many of the new ones could be helped in their spiritual life and in the church life.
  - 2. In his training in 1948 Brother Nee told the saints, especially the sisters, that they should be a mother to another young saint; many sisters could each take care of two or three children in the spirit.

- C. The best way is to have a life transfer by looking at the cross; you need to bring a young one to the cross to look at the crucified Jesus:
  - 1. Jesus will say [to the young one], “Look at your mother. This is your mother.”
  - 2. And He will say to you, “Look at your son. This is your son,” or, “This is your daughter.”
- D. All the sisters of all ages need to be a mother to someone else; to pick up some younger ones as your children in the spirit will cause you to grow.
- E. However, to take care of some in this way is a big test; if your natural life has not been crossed out, has never had a transfer, this practice will become a snare; you will fall into the natural love and be trapped by the fleshly emotion.
- F. Such a practice will work only by a life transfer through the cross.
- G. All the sisters need to be encouraged to take care of some children in the spirit; this is not a matter that can be assigned to the sisters, but there is the need for you to pick up the burden.

**IV. No matter how young you are, one or two children in the spirit will be your protection and your support in many ways:**

- A. Without some children in the spirit, it could be so easy for the sisters to fall away.
- B. Two children would be a protection, a guard, and a limitation to the mother, but they would also keep her from being defeated.
- C. There is a need for all the sisters to be sisters in reality; “Phoebe our sister” in Romans 16:1 was a real sister; but to be such a sister in the church life is still not enough; in the church we need to have mothers.
- D. Even the servants of the Lord need to have mothers; the apostle Paul needed a mother; the mother of Rufus was his mother—16:13.
- E. Without a sister as a mother to take care of them, all those who bear the burden for the Lord’s service would be sorrowful.
- F. If you really love the Lord, you need to look at the church family, with a number of teenagers who need spiritual mothers to care for them; you each need to pick up the burden to care for at least one as your child in the spirit.

**V. All of us have had the second birth, and we have the second family; in the second family we all need to have the second family relationship—cf. John 1:12-13; Eph. 2:19:**

- A. The family is in the relationship; if the relationship of the family is gone, there is no longer a real family.
- B. Without the family relationship we cannot feel encouraged about the situation in the church life; without the reality of these matters we cannot have the practicality of the church life.
- C. The sisters need to be trained as serving ones, and they need to learn to be the mothers; until there are the real mothers in the church life, the church life is not practical.
- D. The matter of being a mother will bring in many lessons, and it will put you on the real test in every way; you will see how you love yourself more than others, how you care only for yourself.

**VI. Seventy percent of the practical building depends on the sisters; we all must pray that the Lord will have mercy upon the church that all the sisters will be Phobes and will be mothers:**

- A. Without such a coordination with the sisters in this way, no matter how much<sup>4</sup> the brothers labor in the church life, there will be very little result as far as the building goes.
- B. If you sisters would be serving as Phobes and loving as mothers, the church would be seventy percent built up right away.
- C. Through this there will be a strong connection in the spiritual building, and a prevailing revival will spontaneously be brought in; Satan will be defeated; it will be fully proved how much depends on the sisters.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### THE LOVING MOTHERS IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Romans 16 is a chapter fully on the practical church life. This chapter uses the term *church* or *churches* five times, and this term is used absolutely not in a doctrinal way. The first time chapter 16 uses the term *church*, it is in the way of a local church, the church in Cenchrea. Few other chapters in the Epistles use the terms *church* or *churches* so many times.

In addition, no other chapter in the Epistles uses the term *sister* more than once. The term *brother* is used often in the New Testament, but the term *sister* is used less often. Nowhere else do you find the phrase *our sister*. Paul began this chapter by saying, "I commend to you Phoebe our sister." In the following verses he greeted a number of brothers, but he did not say "our brother." Only in recommending Phoebe did he say "our sister."

### HIS MOTHER AND MINE

There is another unusual concept in this chapter on the practical church life in verse 13: "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother as well as mine." The emphasis in Romans 16 is on the sisters, not the brothers, and there is mention of a mother but no mention of a father. Neither the sister nor the mother is the one in the flesh. "I commend to you Phoebe our sister," not a sister in the flesh. The mother is the mother of Rufus in the flesh, but she was also Paul's mother. Surely she was not Paul's mother in the flesh. We do not have a verse to tell us the names of Paul's mother and father in the flesh. The mother in verse 13 is a mother in the flesh in relation to Rufus, but more important, she is a mother not in the flesh in relation to Paul.

The New Testament tells us that Paul had at least two sons, one named Timothy and the second named Titus, but these were not his sons in the flesh. Paul uses a very intimate expression to call them sons: "Timothy, genuine child in faith," and "Titus, genuine child" (1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). However, the New Testament tells us very little about the direct flesh relatives of the apostles. We cannot find a verse to tell us how many sons and daughters Peter had. But Peter did tell us that he had a son named Mark: "Mark my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). Surely Mark was not Peter's son in the flesh. The Bible tells us that Mark's mother was named Mary, but it does not tell us the name of his father in the flesh. Peter was Mark's father, not his father in the flesh but his father in the spirit, his father in the common faith.

Not one word in the Bible is wasted. According to the record in John 19, when the Lord Jesus was suffering during His crucifixion, He looked at His mother in the flesh. At that time four sisters were standing by the cross, watching how the Lord was being crucified. Mary was there, and her sister, and another two sisters also named Mary. Mary's sister was the mother of James and John, so James and John were the cousins of Jesus. Near the end of His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus looked at His mother in the flesh, and in a sense it was as if He said to her, "Mother, don't behold Me, but behold your son." At the same time He said to His cousin John, "Behold, your mother" (vv. 25-27). This account is not merely a story, and there is a reason that it is recorded only in the Gospel of John, not in the other three Gospels.

## **A LIFE TRANSFER**

The Gospel of John is a book on life, not on the natural life but on the transferred and transformed life. To fulfill his purpose John gives us a record to show how the life of the believers of Christ could be transferred by the cross of Jesus and by His resurrection. If you look at the cross of Jesus, you will be transferred. The word of the Lord Jesus to John and to His mother was a word to show us that His life-imparting, life-releasing death transfers people's lives.

Originally, John was not Mary's son, and Mary was not John's mother. But because of the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary, the mother of Jesus, became the mother of John. John, who was the son of Mary's sister, became Mary's son. This is not a story of adoption, and it does not mean that the Lord Jesus was like a judge to carry out the adoption as they all stood by the cross. This was not an adoption but a transfer. According to the life in the flesh, John was Mary's nephew, and Mary was John's aunt. But by looking at the cross, they received another life. Another life came into them. In this second life the nephew becomes a real son, and the aunt becomes a real mother....

## **MOTHERS IN THE CHURCH LIFE**

To have the practical church life to the uttermost, in the local church there should be some real sisters and some real mothers. In the previous chapter it was my burden to share with you that you need to be a serving sister, but now I am burdened to share with you that you need to be a mother. As long as there is a shortage of sisters like Phoebe among us, the church life is not practical. Yet the serving of that sister is at the beginning of Romans 16, in the first verse. When the church life in practicality reaches a peak, in every church there should be some real mothers.

Earlier I suggested that the sisters needed to be trained to be serving ones just as nurses are trained in the hospitals to care for the sick ones, but I have to say that there has never been a training school on the whole earth to train mothers to be mothers. I have never heard of one person receiving training to know how to be a mother before she became a mother. The only way anyone could become a mother is by delivering a child. Then the child forces her to train herself.

Many parents try to train their children. Eventually, they have to give up because the training is not practical. It is like something in a dream. For a young lady, the most practical training to be a mother is one little child. Yesterday she did not know how to be a mother, but today a child was delivered, and tomorrow morning she will begin to be trained. Before very long, she will graduate from this training.

There are a number of good, basic principles that have been missed among the believers for generations. If it were the practice for each one of the new believers to have someone care for them in a particular way as their real spiritual parents, so many of the new ones could be helped in their spiritual life and in the church life.

In his training in 1948 Brother Nee told the saints, especially the sisters, that they should be a mother to another young saint. Many sisters could each take care of two or three children in the spirit.

For the most part, children do not like to respect the word of their own parents, especially when they become teenagers. But if I would take your children as my children, they would respect my word. If my children have some problems, they would not open themselves to me. But if you would take them as your children, they would open up their whole being to you. Although they would not take anything that I would

say to them, they would receive whatever you would say. There are many problems with the parents and the teenagers. Very few teenagers would be submissive and obedient. Yet even the troublesome ones would be happy to listen to someone other than their own parents.

We all need a second birth, and we all need a second mother. If you sisters would pick up the burden by looking at the cross, getting yourself transferred in life, and take some young ones of junior-high age to be your children, within five years there will be a revival in the church. The best way is to have a life transfer by looking at the cross. You need to bring a young one to the cross to look at the crucified Jesus. He will say, "Look at your mother. This is your mother." And He will say to you, "Look at your son. This is your son," or, "This is your daughter."

All the sisters of all ages need to be a mother to someone else. Taking care of a child will cause you to grow and to be mature. In the natural life the best way for the young ones to mature is for them to have two children. Even more, to pick up some younger ones as your children in the spirit will cause you to grow.

However, to take care of some in this way is a big test. If your natural life has not been crossed out, has never had a transfer, this practice will become a snare. You will fall into the natural love and be trapped by the fleshly emotion. Such a practice will work only by a life transfer through the cross.

In the church life we need the real sisters and the real brothers, and especially we need the real mothers. All the sisters need to be encouraged to take care of some children in the spirit. This is not a matter that can be assigned to the sisters, but there is the need for you to pick up the burden.

### **PROTECTION AND SUPPORT**

Without some children in the spirit, it could be so easy for the sisters to fall away. No matter how young you are, one or two children in the spirit will be your protection and your support in many ways. Caring for these children will bring about a big change in you. A young lady who has

no children would be too free. She would have no bondage and no limitation but also no protection and no support. Two children would be a protection, a guard, and a limitation to the mother, but they would also keep her from being defeated. Without children it is so easy for the sisters to make mistakes, but if there are two or three children there all the time, the children keep the mothers from making mistakes.

There is a need for all the sisters to be sisters in reality. "Phoebe our sister" in Romans 16:1 was a real sister. She was serving, she was caring for others as a nurse, she was a patroness taking care of all the needs of others. But to be such a sister in the church life is still not enough. In the church we need to have mothers. Even the servants of the Lord need to have mothers. The apostle Paul needed a mother. The mother of Rufus was his mother. Without a sister as a mother to take care of them, all those who bear the burden for the Lord's service would be sorrowful.

Many sisters need to become the real mothers in the church life. The best way to deal with the ladies who are so talkative is to give them twelve children. The more children they have, the more they do not like to talk, and the more they have to be practical. They realize talk is too much theory. Their talk becomes a plea for help. They have just finished nine and still have three little ones to bathe. They have no mind, no energy, no strength, no heart, no capacity, and no time to talk about who is

getting married. The children will change the whole situation.

If you really love the Lord, you need to look at the church family, with a number of teenagers who need spiritual mothers to care for them. You each need to pick up the burden to care for at least one as your child in the spirit. All the parents will tell you that they need your help.

### **THE PRACTICAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIP**

If we call one another brothers and sisters in the church life, and yet when we come to the practical things, we do not care for each other's children, all the second generation would realize that our brotherhood and sisterhood is not genuine. To them the brotherhood in the church life becomes something in the air. But if someone would pick up those young ones and care for them as their own child, the brotherhood in the church life becomes the real brotherhood. Both parties will get the benefit. This was Paul's concept in writing Romans 16. Otherwise, how could he write in this way: "I commend to you Phoebe our sister... Greet Rufus,...and his mother as well as mine"? This means that all the people in that time in the church life had the life transfer through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The cross is here. On this side of the cross Mary was Mary, and John was John. These two in blood and flesh had nothing to do with one another. But on the resurrection side John becomes Mary's son, and Mary becomes John's mother. They have a second relationship of the family, not the first. The first relationship is in the flesh, but the second is in the transferred life. This matter is in the Bible, but it has been missed by most of today's Christians.

In the New Testament it is really hard to trace the flesh family of the apostles. But it is so easy to see that among the early believers there was the second birth with the second family relationship. Among today's Christians there is talk about the second birth, but there is nearly no talk about the second relationship. If we have the second birth, surely we have the second relationship, surely we have the second family. If we have the second family, surely there should be the family relationship. It is not enough to say that we are in a big family. We must have the family relationship with the real sisters and the real mothers.

To take care of others is not an easy thing, and it is even harder to be taken care of by others after we are grown. Nevertheless, we all need the care of others. Their care is our real nourishment, our real protection. The older sisters should not consider that they are no longer the daughters because they have become mothers. They need to learn to be daughters also and let others take care of them.

All of us have had the second birth, and we have the second family. In the second family we all need to have the second family relationship. The family is in the relationship. If the relationship of the family is gone, there is no longer a real family. Without the family relationship we cannot feel encouraged about the situation in the church life. Without the reality of these matters we cannot have the practicality of the church life.

The sisters need to be trained as serving ones, and they need to learn to be the mothers. Until there are the real mothers in the church life, the church life is not practical, and more is needed.

The matter of being a mother will bring in many lessons, and it will put you on the real test in every way. You will see how you love yourself more than others, how you care only for yourself. All these things will be tested and exposed. Without this testing,

you could never realize how selfish you are and how much you are in yourself. These things would not be exposed until you pick up some as your children. These good children in the spirit would expose you to the uttermost.

You may talk about being broken. Many times I have said that the sisters need the husbands with some little helpers to break them, but the best ones to do the breaking are the children in the spirit. How much breaking will come if you pick up one to care for as a mother. We need the grace to take this way. It is not adequate to be a brother or a sister in a general way. All the sisters need to be serving sisters, and whether or not we have children, we all need to be the mothers. This is the best way to receive the blessing, the growth, the spirituality, and the real enjoyment of the Lord.

When you become such a mother, everything in the church life would be practical. There would be no more vain talk. The sisters like to talk so much because they do not have children, and they do not take care of their children. If you would pick up a child and take care of that child, right away you will become very practical. No one else can help you so much to stay away from your natural disposition. Such a child will take you from the earth to the third heaven....

Romans 16 is a chapter on the practical church life, not in doctrine but in practicality. Until we see the real serving sisters and so many mothers, our church life is not practical; it is not sufficient.

If you sisters would be serving as Phoebes and loving as mothers, I can assure you that the church would be seventy percent built up right away. Seventy percent of the building of the practical church life depends on the sisters. Without such a coordination with the sisters in this way, no matter how much the brothers labor in the church life, there will be very little result as far as the building goes. When the sisters are serving and are mothers, right away the church will be built up. Through this there will be a strong connection in the spiritual building, and a prevailing revival will spontaneously be brought in. Satan will be defeated. It will be fully proved how much depends on the sisters. Seventy percent of the practical building depends on the sisters. We all must pray that the Lord will have mercy upon the church that all the sisters will be Phoebes and will be mothers. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "A Word for the Sisters," ch. 2, pp. 47-55)

### **Study Questions:**

1. Based on John 19, how can the sisters have the real transfer of life to become the spiritual mothers?
2. How does having a few spiritual children under your care become your protection and support while you are functioning as a spiritual mother?
3. What do we mean by a "second family relationship" and how can we practice this in the church life?

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "A Word for the Sisters," ch. 2.

**Motherhood (1)**

**The Need of Mothers in Raising Up the Next Generation for the Church Life**

**Psalm 127:2-3**

2 It is vain for you to rise up early, / To stay up late, / To eat the bread of toil; / All the same, He gives to His beloved while they sleep.

3 Behold, children are the heritage of Jehovah, / The fruit of the womb a reward.

**Proverb 22:6**

6 Train up a child according to the way he should go; / Even when he is old, he will not depart from it.

**2 Timothy 1:5**

5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you.

**Titus 2:4**

4 That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

**1 Samuel 1:1-20**

1 Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite.

2 And he had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other was Peninnah. Now Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

3 And this man went up from his city year by year to worship and to sacrifice to Jehovah of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of Jehovah, were there.

4 And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters.

5 But he would give a double portion to Hannah, for it was Hannah whom he loved; but Jehovah had shut up her womb.

6 And her rival provoked her bitterly to irritate her, because Jehovah had shut up her womb.

7 And so it happened year after year; when she went up to the house of Jehovah, the other provoked her this way; and she wept and would not eat.

8 And Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why are you weeping, and why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?

9 Then after the eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah rose up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his seat at the doorpost of the temple of Jehovah.

10 And she was bitter in soul and prayed to Jehovah and wept much.

11 And she made a vow and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your female servant and remember me and not forget Your female

servant, but give to Your female servant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah<sup>11</sup> for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head.

- 12 And while she continued praying a long time before Jehovah, Eli watched her mouth.
- 13 And Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought that she was drunk.
- 14 And Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put away your wine from you.
- 15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord. I am a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before Jehovah.
- 16 Do not take your female servant for a worthless woman; for out of the greatness of my anxiety and provocation I have been speaking all this time.
- 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your request that you have requested from Him.
- 18 And she said, Let your servant find favor in your sight. And the woman went her way; and she ate, and her countenance was sad no more.
- 19 And they rose up early in the morning and worshipped before Jehovah; and they returned and came to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and Jehovah remembered her.
- 20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, For, she said, I asked for him of Jehovah.

**Message Two**  
**Motherhood (1)**  
**The Need of Mothers in Raising Up the Next Generation**  
**for the Church Life**

Scripture Reading: Psa. 127:2-3; Prov. 22:6; 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:4; 1 Sam. 1:1-20

**I. The responsibility over the future of the children of the next generation is on the shoulders of the parents—Prov. 22:6:**

- A. The church cannot go on if the parents do not have a sense of being entrusted—Psa. 127:2-3:
1. Throughout church history, the greatest failure among Christians is the failure in parenting; this is something no one cares much about.
  2. God has placed a person's body, soul, and spirit, and even his whole life and future, into our hands; no individual influences another individual's future as much as parents, and no one controls a person's future as much as parents.
  3. We have to realize how serious this responsibility is; it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children turn out the right way—Eph. 6:4b.
  4. Suppose we beget children, lose them to the world, and then try to rescue them back; if we allow this to happen, the gospel will never be preached to the uttermost part of the earth.
- B. We need to see the responsibilities of parents; we need to consider the Christian way of parenting; the knowledge of this will save us from many headaches:
1. All parents must sanctify themselves before God for the sake of their children—cf. John 17:19.
  2. Parents must also walk with God—Gen. 5:21-22:
    - a. After Enoch begat Methuselah, the Bible says that he walked with God.
    - b. When the burden of the family was upon him, he started to feel his weakness; he felt that his responsibility was too great and that he could not manage it by himself; so he began to walk with God.
    - c. His responsibility as a parent did not hinder him from walking with God; rather, it caused him to walk with God.
    - d. In order for us to bring our children to the Lord in a genuine way, we need to be a person who walks with God:
      - 1) We cannot send our children to heaven merely by pointing our fingers to heaven; we have to walk in front of them.
      - 2) Only then can we ask our children to follow us.
  3. The father and mother must be of one mind in order for the family to be healthy—cf. Phil. 4:2-3; 2:2; Rom. 12:16; 15:5; 2 Cor. 13:11.
  4. Parents cannot exercise despotic control over their children.
  5. Parents should not provoke their children to anger—Eph. 6:4a; Col. 3:21.
  6. Parents should nurture their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord— Eph. 6:4b; Prov. 1:8-9; 13:24, 22:6; 15, 29:15; 17.

7. Parents should lead the children to the knowledge of the Lord—2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Deut. 6:6-7:
    - a. No family can go on without prayer and the reading of the word—cf. 6:6-7.
    - b. Family meetings should be on the level of the children and should be encouraging and attracting; your meeting should be short, living, and never long; perhaps ten minutes is enough.
  8. The atmosphere in the family should be love—Eph. 5:1-2; 25-31; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4.
- C. “I cannot tell you how many strong believers would be raised up in our second generation if all the parents of this generation would be good parents. I have always wanted to say this: The future of the church depends on the parents. When God bestows grace on the church, He needs vessels. There is the need for more Timothys to be raised up. It is true that we can save men from the world, but there is a greater need for raising up people from among Christian families”—*Messages for Building Up New Believers*, vol. 2, p. 549.
- II. In one sense we need a good mother more than we need a good father; a good father can do much good for his children but what he does is not so practical and subjective; the real, secret, practical, and subjective help comes not from the father’s side but from the mother’s—2 Tim. 1:5.**
- III. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, was seeking God and spontaneously coordinated and cooperated with God; this afforded God the way to replace the waning priesthood under Eli with a new priesthood raised up by God through her son Samuel; Samuel, the issue of his mother Hannah’s coordination and cooperation with God, became a faithful Nazarite according to his mother’s desire for God and rendered to God the way to end the corrupted age of the judges and to bring in the age of kingship and the prophethood—1 Sam. 1:1-20; 3:20; 16:13:**
- A. We need to be impressed with Samuel’s origin, with his source; because he came out of such a strong source, he could not be an ordinary, worldly person; rather, he was the one who replaced the waning priesthood and brought forth David, who brought forth Christ—1:1-20, 16:13; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Matt. 1:1.14.
  - B. God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life; God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

Apart from the book of Proverbs, the Old Testament does not seem to give us much teaching concerning parenting. In the New Testament, however, Paul wrote something about being parents. Most books in the world teach children how to be children; not many books teach parents how to be parents. Most people pay attention to teachings for children. But the New Testament pays much attention to teachings for parents. It does not pay much attention to teachings about being children. Although it does teach us something about children, the emphasis is not on children. Both Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 put more emphasis on parents than on children. We should learn to be proper parents because God pays more attention to parents than to children.

If we try to summarize the words in the Bible concerning parenting, the main thing parents should do is nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them. This means that parents must exercise self-control and must not be loose in any way. This is Paul's teaching concerning the subject.

As difficult as it is to be a husband or a wife, I hope you will realize that there is something more difficult—being a parent. Being a husband or a wife involves only two people; being a parent involves more. Being a husband or a wife is a matter of personal happiness; being a parent is something that affects the well-being of the children of the next generation. The responsibility over the future of the children of the next generation is on the shoulders of the parents.

We have to realize how serious this responsibility is. God has placed a person's body, soul, and spirit, even his whole life and future, into our hands. No individual influences another individual's future as much as parents. No one controls a person's future as much as parents. Parents almost have a say in whether their children will go to hell or to heaven. We must learn to be good husbands and good wives, but above all we must learn also to be good parents. I believe that the responsibility of being a parent is more than that of being a husband or a wife.

Here we will consider the Christian way of parenting. The knowledge of this will save us from many headaches.

#### **Sanctifying Oneself for the Sake of the Children**

First, all parents must sanctify themselves before God for the sake of their children.

#### ***The Lord Sanctifying Himself for the Sake of the Disciples***

What does it mean to be sanctified before God? The Lord Jesus said, "For their sake I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19). This does not refer to being holy, but to whether or not one is sanctified. The Lord Jesus is holy and His nature is holy. But for the sake of the disciples, He sanctified Himself. There were many things that He could have done which were not contrary to His own holiness; nevertheless, He refrained from doing them because of weakness in the disciples. In many matters the disciples' weakness directed the Lord and restricted His freedom. The Lord could do many things, but He did not do them because He did not want the disciples to misunderstand or be stumbled. As far as the Lord's nature was concerned, He often could have acted a certain way. But He refrained from doing so for the sake of the disciples.

### *Not Walking in a Loose Way*

Similarly, those who have children should sanctify themselves for the sake of their children. This means that we should refrain from doing many things which we could do for the sake of our children. There are many things which we could say, but for the sake of the children we do not say them. From the day we bring our children into our family, we should sanctify ourselves.

If you do not restrict yourself, you will not be able to restrict your children. The looseness of those who do not have children, at the most, results in trouble for themselves. But for those who have

children, looseness results in damage to their children as well as to themselves. Once a Christian brings a child into the world, he must sanctify himself. Two eyes, sometimes four, are watching you all the time. They will follow you all your life. Even after you have left this world, they will not forget what they have seen in you; the things you do will remain inside of them.

### *Acting according to Standards*

The day your son is born is the day you should consecrate yourself. You must set a standard for yourself in morality, in conduct at home, and in all moral judgments regarding right and wrong. You must set a high standard for what is ideal, and you must also set a standard for yourself in spiritual matters. You must act strictly according to these standards. Otherwise, you will have problems for yourself, and you will spoil your children. Many children are ruined by their own parents, not by outsiders. If parents are lacking in ethical, moral, and spiritual standards, they will ruin their children.

A young person makes decisions and judgments in his future life according to the training he received during his early years with his parents. A child may remember or forget what you say, but what he sees surely will remain in him forever. He develops his sense of judgment from you, and he also develops his system of values from you.

Every parent must remember that his actions will be repeated in his children; his actions will not stop with him. When you do not have children, you can do whatever you like when you are happy and give up and forget about everything when you are unhappy. But once you have children, you have to restrict yourself. You have to act according to the highest standard of conduct whether you like it or not. The whole life of Christian children depends on the behavior of their parents.

I remember a brother who said something when his son got into trouble. He said, "He is just a replica of me and I am just he." When a parent sees something in his children, he must realize that he is seeing himself. He must see that they are his very reflection. They are just reflecting him. Through them he can see himself.

This is why every couple should consecrate themselves anew to God as soon as they have a child. They should come to the Lord and consecrate themselves to Him again. From that time forward, the Lord has committed a human being, with his entire spirit, soul, life, and future, into their hands. From that day forward, they have to be faithful to the Lord's commitment. Some people are committed to a work for one or two years when they sign a contract. But this work lasts for their entire life; there is no limit to the term of this commitment.

### *The Sense of Being Entrusted*

Among believers in China, no failure is greater than the failure of parenting. I think this is due to the influence of paganism. Failure in one's career cannot be compared to failure in parenting. Even failure in being a husband or a wife cannot be compared to failure in parenting. A husband or a wife can protect himself or herself, because both are over twenty years of age. But when a child is placed in your hands, he cannot protect himself. The Lord has entrusted a child to you. You cannot go to Him and say, "You have entrusted five children to me, and I have lost three." You cannot say, "You have entrusted ten to me, and I have lost eight." The church cannot go on if parents do not have a sense of being entrusted. We do not want to see our children being rescued back from the world. Suppose we beget children, lose them to the world, and then try to rescue them back. If we allow this to happen, the gospel will never be preached to the uttermost part of the earth. Our children have been taught many teachings, and we have been taking care of them for years. At least these children should be brought to the Lord. We are wrong if we do not take care of our children. Please remember that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children turn out the right way.

Please give me the liberty to say this word. Throughout church history, the greatest failure among Christians is the failure in parenting. This is something no one cares much about. The children are young; they are in your hands and can do nothing much themselves. If you are loose with yourself, you will also be loose with them. We must realize that parents must exercise self-control, sacrificing their own freedom. God has committed a human body, along with his soul, into our hands. If we do not exercise self-control and give up our freedom, we will have a difficult time answering to our God in the future.

### **The Need to Walk with God**

Second, parents must not only realize their responsibility and sanctify themselves for the sake of their children; they must also walk with God.

One sanctifies himself for the sake of his children. But this does not mean that he can be loose and careless when he is by himself. He should not exercise self-control merely for the sake of his children. The Lord Jesus was not short of holiness in Himself. He did not sanctify Himself just for the sake of His disciples. If the Lord Jesus sanctified Himself merely for the sake of His disciples, but was not holy in Himself, He would have been a total failure. In the same way, parents must sanctify themselves for their children, but they themselves must also walk with God.

No matter how much zeal you show in your children's presence, they can easily see through you if you are not genuinely zealous. They are very clear, but you may not be that clear. You may be a very loose person yet act carefully in their presence. In reality you are not the person you pretend to be. Please remember that your children can see through you easily. If you are a careless person and you try to act in a discreet way before your children, they will easily detect your carelessness and pretension. You must not only sanctify yourself before them for their sake, but you must also be genuinely holy in yourself, walking with God as Enoch did.

I would like to draw your attention to the example of Enoch. Genesis 5:21-22 says, "Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Before

Enoch was sixty-five years old, we do not know his condition. After he begat Methuselah, we know that he walked with God three hundred years. Then he was taken up by God. This is a special case in the Old Testament. Before Enoch begat children, we do not know anything about his condition. But after Enoch begat Methuselah, the Bible says that he walked with God. When the burden of the family was upon him, he started to feel his weakness. He felt that his responsibility was too great and that he could not manage it by himself. So he began to walk with God. He did not walk with God just in the presence of his son; he walked with God even when he was by himself. He felt that if he did not walk with God, he would not know how to raise his children. Enoch begat not only Methuselah but also many other children; nevertheless, he walked with God for three hundred years. His responsibility as a parent did not hinder him from walking with God; rather, it caused him to walk with God. Eventually, he was raptured. Please remember that the first person who was raptured was a father. The first person to be raptured was one who had many children and yet who still walked with God. The way one bears his responsibility in a family is a reflection of his spiritual condition before God.

We must see that in order for us to bring our children to the Lord in a genuine way, we need to be a person who walks with God. We cannot send our children to heaven merely by pointing our fingers to heaven. We have to walk in front of them. Only then can we ask our children to follow us. Even though Christian parents want their children to be better than they are in the hope that their children will not love the world and will go on in a positive way, there are many bad families because the parents themselves draw back. If this is the case, they will never realize their goal no matter how hard they try. We must remember that the standard of the children cannot be higher than the standard of their parents. This does not mean that we should set a false standard. We should have a standard that is genuine and spiritual. If we have this, our children will come up to our standard.

Please forgive me for saying something that sounds simple and elementary. I once went to visit a family and saw the mother beating her child because the child lied. However, both the father and the mother in this family also lied. I learned that they lied on many occasions. But when their child lied, he was beaten. Honestly speaking, the child's real mistake was only a deficiency in his technique of lying; he was caught lying. The only difference between the child and the parents was that one was caught lying while the others were not. It was not a matter of whether one lied, but a matter of skill. One lied, and he was caught and punished. If you have a double standard, how can you raise your children? How can you tell your children not to lie when you are a liar yourself? You must not have one standard for your life and another standard for your child's life. This will never work. Suppose your children see and receive nothing but lies and dishonesty from you. The more you punish them, the more problems you will have. Some fathers tell their sons, "Wait until you are eighteen, and I will let you smoke." Many children say in their heart, "When I am eighteen, my father will let me lie. I am not yet eighteen, so I cannot lie. But when I am eighteen, I will lie." This pushes your children into the world. You must walk with God as Enoch did, in order to raise your children as Enoch did. If you do not walk with God, you cannot expect to raise your children the way Enoch did.

Please remember that your children will learn to love what you love, and hate what you hate. They will learn to treasure what you treasure, and condemn what you condemn. You must set a moral standard for yourself and your children. Whatever your moral standard is, that will be their standard as well. Your standard of loving the Lord will be their standard of loving the Lord. There can be only one standard in a family, not two.

I know of a family whose father is a nominal Christian. He never goes to church, but he wants his children to go every Sunday. Every Sunday morning, he gives a little money to each of his children and tells them to go to church. The money is for the children to make offerings. Later in the day, he plays a game of mahjong with his three friends. His children, however, spend the money on snack food. They play until the pastor is almost through with his sermon, and then they sneak into the building to hear a verse or two. When they go home, they give their father a nice report. They have snacks, they get to play, and they make a report. This, of course, is an extreme case.

I hope we can see that God has committed our children to us. There can be only one standard in the family. Whatever we forbid our children to do, we should not do. There must never be two standards in a family, one for the children and another for us. We must keep the same standard for our children's sake. We must sanctify ourselves to maintain a standard. Once the standard is set, we must maintain it. I hope we will all take good care of our children. They are constantly watching us. Whether or not they behave well depends on whether we behave well. They are not merely listening to us; they are watching us as well. They seem to know everything. They know if we are pushing them around, and they know if we are acting in front of them. We should not think that we can deceive our children. No! They cannot be deceived. They know how we feel, and they are clear about the true picture. Whatever we demand of our children, we must take the same position in that matter.

After Enoch begat Methuselah, he walked with God three hundred years. What a beautiful picture this is! He begat many children, yet he could walk with God three hundred years. He was a genuine father without any pretense. Such a walk is altogether proper in the eyes of God. (CWWN, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," msg. 33, pp. 519-526)

### **Study Questions:**

1. Why is it important for Christian parents to have a sense of having been entrusted with their children by God?
2. In raising up children unto the Lord, why is the mother more important than the father?
3. How was Hannah able to bear and bring forth a Samuel, an age-turner, for the meeting of God's need?

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, "Messages for Building Up New Believers (2)," ch. 33.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "The Crucial Function of the Sisters in the Church Life."
3. *Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel*, msg. 2 and 38.

**Motherhood (2)**

**God's Ordination Concerning Motherhood and the Function and Love of the Mothers in Raising Up Children unto the Lord**

**Genesis 3:16**

16 To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply / Your pain in your childbearing; / In pain you will bring forth children.

**2 Timothy 1:5**

5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you.

**2 Timothy 3:15**

15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

**Titus 2:4**

4 That they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.

## Message Three

### Motherhood (2)

#### God's Ordination Concerning Motherhood and the Function and Love of the Mothers in Raising Up Children unto the Lord

Scripture Reading: Gen. 3:16a; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Titus 2:4

**I. “To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; / In pain you will bring forth children”—Gen. 3:16a; 1 Tim. 5:14:**

- A. The suffering in childbearing includes both pregnancy and delivery; the entire matter of childbearing, including pregnancy and delivery, is a matter of pain.
- B. We all know that childbearing is troublesome, but it was ordained by God as a restriction; the best protection to an unrestricted young woman is to have a number of children; children are a restriction and a protection to their mothers—1 Tim. 5:13-14.
- C. Childbearing and house affairs are a rescue and safeguard to idle busybodies; this is God's ordination to restrict and protect women since the fall—vv. 5:13-14.
- D. “Before a sister is married, she may not have any change regardless of how much others minister to her, but after she marries and has several children, these little ones become the best trainers to her; for this reason I like to see all the young sisters marrying and bringing forth little ‘trainers’”—*The Normal Way of Fruit-Bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, p. 52.

**II. “Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you”; “And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings”—2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15:**

- A. “Paul says that Timothy knew the Bible since he was a babe. I believe that when Timothy's mother was feeding him, she must have been speaking the Bible to him. The faith in Timothy came from his mother and his grandmother”—*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 5*, p. 163; cf. Deut. 6:2, 7a:
  - 1. In addition to the knowledge of the New Testament, Timothy also had, from his childhood, a good foundation in the knowledge of the Old Testament; he was one who was fully perfected and equipped to minister the word of God, not only in caring for a local church, but also in confronting the increasing decline of the church.
  - 2. Today all the saints in the Lord's recovery, especially the young people, need the understanding of the Word of God, an understanding of both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- B. The Bible does not emphasize spiritual education in schools; it emphasizes the homes; this refers mainly to the education rendered by mothers—cf. Prov. 1:8b; 6:20b:

1. Young sisters who are fourteen or fifteen years old will one day be mothers and wives; the best equipping to prepare yourselves to be mothers and wives is the spiritual education—2 Tim. 3:15-16.
2. Mary's poetic praise is composed of many quotations from the Old Testament; this indicates that she was a godly woman, qualified to be a channel of the Savior's incarnation; it also indicates that the Lord Jesus would grow up in a family which would be filled with the knowledge and love of God's holy Word—Luke 1:46-56:
  - a. Although Mary was a young woman, she was very knowledgeable concerning the Old Testament and could quote verses from it in her praise to God.
  - b. This proves that although Mary had never gone to a seminary, she was very familiar with the Old Testament; no wonder God chose her to be the mother of  
 Jesus.
- C. Before the church will be rich, there must be grandmothers like Lois and mothers like Eunice who raise, edify, and nurture their children in the discipline of the Lord; if there are no such people, the church will never be rich.

**III. "Train the young women...to love their children"—Titus 2:4; cf. Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17:**

- A. In a father's treatment of his children, the Bible emphasizes not provoking them to anger and nurturing them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4); in a mother's treatment, however, the emphasis is on love; mothers can never be successful if they do not love their children.
- B. If a family does not have a mother's love, it can never be a good family; without a mother's love, a family is crippled.
- C. Therefore, the young sisters who are mothers must learn to love their children—Titus 2:4:
  1. Our love should not be a natural love, but a love in resurrection—1 Cor. 16:24; 12:15:
    - a. Every parent has some partial love; if you have several children, you will love one of them more than the others according to your taste, and all the children will know who is the object of your partial love—Gen. 25:28; 37:3-4.
    - b. This partial love is not according to our spirit; it is according to our natural taste; we love a particular boy or girl because he or she suits our natural taste; this is the natural life—Gen. 25:27-28.
    - c. Natural love is like honey; instead of a "honey" love, we need a love that is in resurrection, a love that has been killed by the cross and resurrected with the divine life; there is no honey in such a love—Lev. 2:11.

- 2 The more we deny the self, the more we are in resurrection; the more we forsake our own love, the more we will love others; formerly, our love was low and limited, but our love in resurrection is heavenly and unlimited—Phil. 3:10-11; Rom. 6:5; 2 Cor. 4:10-12; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 16:24; 2 Cor. 12:15; John 3:16; 1 John 4:16-17.

## **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

### **The Discipline of Man by Suffering**

As we have seen, after man fell God did not come to condemn him, but to seek him and to judge the serpent. In His condemnation on the serpent God proclaimed the promise regarding the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). However, that was not the end. Although God had proclaimed the promise of His salvation, man still remained in a troubled situation. Not only was man in a difficult situation, but a sinful element had been injected into his nature. Therefore, man is both sinful outwardly and also corrupted inwardly. God had no intention of condemning man. All that God had in His heart toward man was love, and man was fully under God's loving care. Thus, God ordained some suffering for man's benefit. Although we do not like suffering, God has ordained it nonetheless.

### ***The Purpose***

What is the purpose of the sufferings ordained by God? The primary purpose is to restrict man. The sufferings appointed by God are actually our security and protection. Never forget that as a result of the fall man has a corrupted and corrupting element in his nature. God loves man and exercises a loving concern over him, but man still has a satanic element in his nature. Immediately after the fall man probably did not realize his true condition; however, God understood the problem and thus He ordained sufferings for the purpose of restricting fallen man. Young people throughout the world want freedom; they desire to have their liberty. Nevertheless, we must realize that too much freedom removes the restrictions that God, in His love, has placed upon us. As fallen men with a corrupted nature, we definitely need restrictions as a protection and safeguard. Suppose a mother has a naughty boy. If she does not exercise any restrictions over him, that child would not live for three days. He would kill himself as a result of having too much freedom. No mother is so foolish as to give complete liberty to a naughty child. All children need restrictions. Restrictions are good for us.

As an older person I need to be and I love to be restricted by my dear brothers in the Lord. I am restricted even more by the sisters. Actually I have very little freedom. If you were to offer me freedom, I would say, "No thank you. You take your freedom home with you. I need restriction." How I thank the Lord that in all the past years I have been protected by restrictions. I have not suffered under the restriction of the saints, but have rather enjoyed it. All the limitations rendered to me by my brothers and sisters in the Lord have been my protection. Although, at present, you may not think that restrictions are pleasant, after the passing of years I believe that you will worship the Lord and say, "Thank the Lord for restrictions!"

Let me say a word about husbands and wives. No woman likes to be restricted. The dear sisters may be holy and seek after spirituality, but I do not believe that they are fond of being restricted. A wife does not like to accept any restraint from her husband or mother-in-law. I have learned from history and from experience that not many daughters-in-law like their mothers-in-law. It seems that this comes from God's ordination. God ordained that the mother-in-law be a restriction to the daughter-in-law and that the daughter-in-law be a problem to the mother-in-law. Humanly speaking, this does not sound pleasant, but actually it is good. Any sister who is willing to accept

restrictions from her husband, children, and mother-in-law will be protected.

Now I turn to the husbands. We brothers certainly need the restrictions that come from our wives. I thank the Lord for my dear wife. I can testify that the best help which she has given me has been her restrictions. She even restricts my eating. Although my stomach belongs to me, she determines how much I eat. Day after day I tell her, "I'm still hungry," but she answers, "It is sufficient. There is no more." Eventually, however, as a result of accepting her limitations, my stomach trouble was cured. I have learned that if you have stomach trouble or a stomach ulcer the best way to deal with it is to be restricted in your eating. Thus, any restriction is truly a great help. We all need restrictions. Therefore, God ordained suffering to man to restrict him, to rescue him by discipline, and to guard him.

### ***Concerning the Woman***

#### *Suffering in Childbearing*

Concerning the woman, God has ordained suffering or pain in childbearing (Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:15). The suffering in childbearing includes both pregnancy and delivery. The entire matter of childbearing, including pregnancy and delivery, is a matter of pain. It was not originally destined this way by God before the fall; however, due to the fall God ordained a portion of suffering for the woman, the leader in the fall. You may ask why God ordained suffering firstly to the woman and secondly to the man. God did this because the woman took the lead in transgressing God's prohibition. Thus, God came to her first. That was fair. If God had gone to Adam, Adam would have said, "Lord, don't come to me. I was not the leader in the fall. You must go to the leader." Thus, God came to Eve first.

Why do some women limit their childbearing? Because they want to enjoy a free life. That is against God's way. We all know that childbearing is troublesome, but it was ordained by God as a restriction. The best protection to an unrestricted young woman is to have a number of children. Although neither the woman's parents, husband, nor in-laws can restrict her, as long as she has some children these children will limit her undue freedom. Children are a restriction and a protection to their mothers. Thus, Paul wanted the young women to marry and bear children that they might not be idle or busybodies (1 Tim. 5:13-14).

#### *The Ruling of the Husband*

The Lord also told Eve that her husband shall rule over her. According to this word, every sister should be under the rule of her husband. Why did Eve fall? Because she did not care for her husband and assumed his headship. Therefore, God seemed to say to her, "Eve, from now on I appoint Adam to rule over you." Although this is a difficult word to accept, the Bible tells us that a woman must be ruled by her husband. We all must take this word as a security and protection. The ruling of the husband is a genuine safeguard to the wife. Hence, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul says, "Let a woman learn in quietness in all subjection; but I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man." Paul's teaching on this matter is based upon God's ordination in Genesis 3:16. I hope that the sisters will take heed to this divine word of the Bible. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 21, pp. 271-274)

## THE PRAISE OF THE MAN-SAVIOR'S MOTHER

In [Luke]1:46-56 we have the praise of the Man-Savior's mother. Mary came to visit Elizabeth. When Elizabeth saw Mary, she blessed her. Mary responded to this blessing not by giving a blessing, but by offering praise to God.

### Full of Quotations from the Old Testament

Mary's poetic praise is composed of many quotations from the Old Testament. This indicates that she was a godly woman, qualified to be a channel for the Savior's incarnation. It also indicates that the Lord Jesus would grow up in a family which would be filled with the knowledge and love of God's holy Word.

Although Mary was a young woman, she was very knowledgeable concerning the Old Testament and could quote verses from it in her praise to God. Actually, her praise was a composition of quotations from the Scriptures. Surely she was the right person for God to use in conceiving the Savior who was to be born.

Before Mary was visited by the angel to receive the word concerning the conception of the Man-Savior, she was already full of the knowledge of God's Word. Many verses of the Scriptures had been absorbed into her being. Therefore, at the proper time she could pour out what was within her as she offered up praise to God.

Mary's praise indicates that in order for us to be used by God, we need to have certain qualifications. One qualification is the proper knowledge of the Word of God. I hope that the young people in particular will learn of Mary in this matter. Do you intend to be used by the Lord to bring forth something of the Lord, even, in a spiritual sense, to "conceive" the Lord Jesus and bring Him forth? If so, then you need to be qualified by being filled with the Scriptures, filled with the Word of God. (*Life-study of Luke*, msg. 4, pp. 33-34)

We must be very clear that the church is the pillar and the base of the truth. Hence, the church meeting is a place where we come to learn the truth. In Taiwan, the standard of education is very high; education is also becoming very widespread. This is a worldwide trend. But before God we also need to receive our spiritual education. The church is here to uphold the truth. All the saved ones must come here to receive the proper spiritual education. Even people in the world know that without education a man is wild and unlearned. Once a person has received some education, his behavior will be changed.

We, the saved ones, should always remember that not only do we need God, but we also need to have a clear knowledge of the Bible. You young sisters who are fourteen or fifteen years old will one day be mothers and wives. The best equipping to prepare yourselves to be mothers and wives is the spiritual education.

I always consider that there must have been some reason that God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus. When Mary was found to be with child, she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. In Luke chapter one Mary had a psalm of praise to God. That whole psalm was a quotation from the Old Testament. This proves that although Mary had never gone to a seminary, she was very familiar with the Old Testament. No wonder God chose her to be the mother of Jesus. Hence, we must see that Christians need to receive two kinds of education. Not only do they need to receive the worldly education; they must also receive the spiritual education. God's education is a truth education. We must all learn the truth. (*CWWL*, 1985, vol. 4, "Key Points on the Home Meetings," ch. 6, p. 450)

## **“TRAIN THE YOUNG WOMEN...TO LOVE THEIR CHILDREN”** <sup>26</sup>

In a father's treatment of his children, the Bible emphasizes not provoking them to anger and nurturing them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. In a mother's treatment, however, the emphasis is on love. Mothers can never be successful if they do not love their children. If a family does not have a mother's love, it can never be a good family. Without a mother's love, a family is crippled. Therefore, the young sisters who are mothers must learn to love their children. (*CWWL, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3,” ch. 33, pp. 615-616)

### **Study Questions:**

1. What is God's ordination concerning child-bearing?
2. What is the best way for the young sisters to equip themselves to be good wives and mothers?
3. What is the Bible's emphasis concerning the mother's treatment of her children?

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 21.
2. *Life-study of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, msgs. 9 and 18.
3. *Life-study of Luke*, msg. 4.
4. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, “Messages for Building Up New Believers (2),” ch. 33.
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1932-1949*, vol. 3, “Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, vol. 3,” ch. 33.

**Patterns and Examples of Women in the Old Testament—Hannah**

**1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11**

- 1 Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim, from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite.
- 2 And he had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other was Peninnah. Now Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.
- 3 And this man went up from his city year by year to worship and to sacrifice to Jehovah of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of Jehovah, were there.
- 4 And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters.
- 5 But he would give a double portion to Hannah, for it was Hannah whom he loved; but Jehovah had shut up her womb.
- 6 And her rival provoked her bitterly to irritate her, because Jehovah had shut up her womb.
- 7 And so it happened year after year; when she went up to the house of Jehovah, the other provoked her this way; and she wept and would not eat.
- 8 And Elkanah her husband said to her, Hannah, why are you weeping, and why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?
- 9 Then after the eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah rose up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on his seat at the doorpost of the temple of Jehovah.
- 10 And she was bitter in soul and prayed to Jehovah and wept much.
- 11 And she made a vow and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your female servant and remember me and not forget Your female servant, but give to Your female servant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head.
- 12 And while she continued praying a long time before Jehovah, Eli watched her mouth.
- 13 And Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought that she was drunk.
- 14 And Eli said to her, How long will you be drunk? Put away your wine from you.
- 15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord. I am a woman oppressed in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before Jehovah.
- 16 Do not take your female servant for a worthless woman; for out of the greatness of my anxiety and provocation I have been speaking all this time.
- 17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant your request that you have requested from Him.
- 18 And she said, Let your servant find favor in your sight. And the woman went her way; and she ate, and her countenance was sad no more.

- 19 And they rose up early in the morning and worshipped before Jehovah; and they returned and came to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and Jehovah remembered her.
- 20 And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son; and she called his name Samuel, For, she said, I asked for him of Jehovah.
- 21 And the man Elkanah went up with all his house to offer the yearly sacrifice to Jehovah and his vow.
- 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, When the child is weaned, then I will bring him up, so that he may appear before Jehovah and stay there forever.
- 23 And Elkanah her husband said to her, Do what is good in your sight; stay until you have weaned him. Only, may Jehovah establish His word. So the woman stayed and nursed her son until she weaned him.
- 24 And as soon as she weaned him, she brought him up with her, along with three bulls and one ephah of flour and a skin of wine; and she brought him to the house of Jehovah in Shiloh, although the child was young.
- 25 And they slaughtered the bull and brought the child to Eli.
- 26 And she said, Oh, my lord, as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here by you, praying to Jehovah.
- 27 It was for this child that I prayed, and Jehovah has granted me my request that I requested from Him.
- 28 Therefore I, for my part, have lent him to Jehovah; all the days that he lives, he is lent to Jehovah. And he worshipped Jehovah there.
- 2:1 And Hannah prayed and said: / My heart exults in Jehovah; / My horn is exalted in Jehovah; / My mouth is enlarged against my enemies, / Because I rejoice in Your salvation.
- 2 There is none holy like Jehovah, / For there is none besides You; / Nor is there a rock like our God.
- 3 Talk no more so very proudly; / Do not let arrogance go forth from your mouth; / For Jehovah is a God of knowledge, / And actions are weighed by Him.
- 4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, / And those who stumbled are girded with strength.
- 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for food, / And those who were hungry are not so any longer. / She who was barren has borne seven, / And she who had many children languishes.
- 6 Jehovah kills and makes alive; / He brings down to Sheol and brings up.
- 7 Jehovah makes poor and makes rich; / He makes low and also lifts up.
- 8 He raises the poor from the dust, / From the ash heap He lifts the needy, / That He may seat them with princes / And cause them to inherit the throne of glory. / For the pillars of the earth are Jehovah's, / And He has set the world upon them.
- 9 He will keep the feet of His faithful ones, / But the wicked will be silenced in darkness; / For not by strength shall any man prevail.

- 10 Those who strive with Jehovah will be shattered; / Against them He will thunder in heaven. / Jehovah will judge the ends of the earth; / And He will give strength to His king / And exalt the horn of His anointed.
- 11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child ministered to Jehovah before Eli the priest.

## Message Four

### Patterns and Examples of Women in the Old Testament —Hannah

Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 1:1–2:11

- I. First and 2 Samuel unveil to us, from the beginning, that God's accomplishment of His economy needs man's coordination and cooperation; the first illustration is Hannah, the mother of Samuel:**
- A. The birth of Samuel involved Hannah's cooperation with God; her case shows us the kind of persons God expects to have today:
    1. The old priesthood had become stale and waning, and God wanted to have another beginning; for Samuel's birth, God initiated things behind the scenes.
    2. On the one hand, He shut up Hannah's womb; on the other hand, He prepared a provoker—1 Sam. 1:5-7.
    3. This forced Hannah to pray that the Lord would give her a male child; in her prayer she made a vow and said, “O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me and not forget Your maidservant, but give to Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head”—v. 11.
    4. This prayer was initiated not by Hannah but by God; God chose Hannah because she was willing to cooperate with Him; God answered her prayer and opened her womb, and Hannah conceived and bore a son—v. 20.
    5. Then according to her vow, she offered her son to God, placing him in the custody of Eli.
    6. From this we see that Hannah, Samuel's mother, was one who cooperated very much with God.
  - B. We need to be impressed with the fact that the fulfillment of God's economy requires our cooperation; to cooperate with God means to be bound together with God; we may use a three-legged race as an illustration.
  - C. Today many continents and countries are open to the Lord's recovery; there is the need for some to make a vow like Hannah; we hope that many of the young people will make such a vow:
    1. You need to say, “Lord, I am Yours. I just lend myself to You.”
    2. God will take your heart and accomplish something to fulfill what you vow to Him.
- II. In the midst of the chaos of the degraded Israel, Elkanah and Hannah remained in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose:**
- A. The line of life is a line to bring forth Christ for the enjoyment of God's people that on earth God may have His kingdom, which is the Body of Christ, the very organism of the Triune God.
  - B. God's salvation is mainly for our benefit, whereas God's purpose is related to the fulfilling of God's desire:
    1. We need to ask ourselves whether we are here for our profit or for God's purpose.
    2. Today on this earth everyone is concerned for his own profit.

- C. Under God's sovereign dealing, Hannah was suppressed in her soul with a burden in her spirit to pour out before Jehovah; this was God's move; because of God's moving in her, Hannah could not have peace until she prayed for a son.
- D. God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life; as long as He can gain such a person, He has a way on earth:
  1. We hope that at least some of us will be today's Hannahs and say, "Lord, if You have anything on Your heart to accomplish for Your purpose, I am here. I am remaining in the line of life for the carrying out of Your economy."
  2. "If you do this, I have the full assurance that you will be the ones whom God will move. He will come to you and motivate you. God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age"—*Life-study of 1 Samuel*, p. 11.

**III. The origin of Samuel was especially his God-seeking mother with her prayer (vv. 9- 18); her prayer was an echo of the heart's desire of God; her prayer was a human cooperation with the divine move for the carrying out of God's eternal economy:**

- A. We should no longer pray old prayers in a formal way; instead, we need to pray something that is an echo of what is on God's heart; this means that what we say in our prayer is exactly what God wants to speak; such a prayer is the speaking out of God's heart.
- B. Hannah's prayer was like this; God wanted a Samuel, yet He needed Hannah's cooperation to pray to Him, saying, "Lord, I need a son."
- C. After such a prayer as Hannah prayed, it was easy for God to do something, because man's cooperation had become a base on which He could move.
- D. God's move in response to Hannah's prayer was in keeping with the principle that God needs man's cooperation with His move in His economy; this is the principle of incarnation.
- E. God's move with His answer to Hannah's prayer was to produce a Nazarite who was absolute for the fulfilling of His desire; a Nazarite is one who is consecrated to God absolutely:
  1. We need to be impressed with Samuel's origin, with his source; because he came out of such a strong source, he could not be an ordinary, worldly person.
  2. Rather, he was the one who replaced the waning priesthood and brought forth David, who brought forth Christ.
- F. The sisters especially should aspire to be like Hannah, praying to bring forth some like Samuel, who will terminate the confused age so that Christ the King may come with His kingdom:
  1. In order for us to pray to meet God's need today, we need Christ as the embodiment of God and the reality of the offerings—vv. 4-5.
  2. We also need the fulfillment of the Tent of Meeting, which is the church as God's dwelling place; Hannah did not pray her prevailing prayer in her home—vv. 9-11.
  3. We need God's embodiment and His full salvation in the church life; then we can pray prevailing prayers for God's goal, to bring in the kingdom.

**IV. Hannah's ministry was to bring in the King:**

- A. Hannah wept, fasted, prayed, and cried unto the Lord for a son who would be absolutely given to the Lord for His service—1 Sam. 1:10-11, 26-28.
- B. This son was the one that brought in the King—1 Sam. 16:13; 1 Chron. 11:3b; cf. Matt. 1:1.
- C. If these are the last days and God's eyes are on those who can be the means of bringing in the King, let us ask ourselves, "What is our ministry"? Have we any part in this special ministry, this Hannah ministry?
- D. Those who want to be Hannahs must prepare themselves for persecution, scorn, weeping, and fasting; this ministry costs; a price has to be paid because all such ministry comes through testing and suffering; it has to be wrought into us—1 Sam. 1:6-7.
- E. It is not a matter of how many we can save but of God getting His company of overcomers; God wants to get a people who will be able to pray and bring in His kingdom.
- F. Hannah's prayer was the means for the birth of Samuel; our prayers should result in the bringing forth of overcomers—Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 20-21; 12:5; 14:3-5.
- G. The son in 1 Samuel 1 is the man-child in Revelation 12, the one who brings in the King and the kingdom—12:5-10.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### A CONCLUDING WORD TO THE LIFE-STUDY OF 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

First and 2 Samuel unveil to us, from the beginning, that God's accomplishment of His economy needs man's coordination and cooperation. The first illustration is Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She was seeking God and spontaneously coordinated and cooperated with God. This afforded God the way to replace the waning priesthood under Eli with a new priesthood raised up by God through her son Samuel.

Samuel, the issue of his mother Hannah's coordination and cooperation with God, became a faithful Nazarite according to his mother's desire for God and rendered to God the way to end the corrupted age of the judges and to bring in (1) the age of kingship to replace the governing ministry of the old priesthood and (2) the prophethood to replace the God-speaking ministry of the old priesthood. (*Life-study of 1 Samuel*, msg. 38, p. 247)

### THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

The central thought of 1 and 2 Samuel is that the fulfillment of God's economy needs man's cooperation, as illustrated by the history of Samuel's mother Hannah, Samuel, and David, in the positive sense, and by the history of Eli and Saul, in the negative sense. Such a cooperation is related to the personal enjoyment of the good land, which typifies the all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ. Hence, 1 and 2 Samuel are a continuation of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, giving us the details concerning the enjoyment of the God-given good land. The good land enjoyed by the cooperators with God became the kingdom of God, in which they reigned as kings. This is a type of the New Testament believers' enjoyment of Christ, which issues in their reign in the eternal life (Rom. 5:21).

We need to be impressed with the fact that the fulfillment of God's economy requires our cooperation. To cooperate with God means to be bound together with God. We may use a three-legged race as an illustration. The runners in such a race must run in pairs, with each partner having one leg bound to one of his partner's legs. In order for the partners to run, they must cooperate with each other and not move independently. This is a picture of the proper Christian life. To be a Christian is to be bound together with Christ and to have one living with Him by one life.

The birth of Samuel involved Hannah's cooperation with God. The old priesthood had become stale and waning, and God wanted to have another beginning. For Samuel's birth, God initiated things behind the scenes. On the one hand, He shut up Hannah's womb; on the other hand, He prepared a provoker (1 Sam. 1:5-7). This forced Hannah to pray that the Lord would give her a male child. In her prayer she made a vow and said, "O Jehovah of hosts, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me and not forget Your maidservant, but give to Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to Jehovah for all the days of his life, and no razor will come upon his head" (v. 11). This prayer was initiated not by Hannah but by God. God chose Hannah because she was willing to cooperate with Him. God answered her prayer and opened her womb, and Hannah conceived and bore a son (v. 20). Then according to her vow, she offered her son to God, placing him in the custody of Eli. From this we see that Hannah, Samuel's mother, was one who cooperated very

much with God. Her case shows us the kind of persons God expects to have today....

Today many continents and countries are open to the Lord's recovery. There is the need for some to make a vow like Hannah. I hope that many of the young people will make such a vow. You need to say, "Lord, I am Yours. I just lend myself to You." God will take your heart and accomplish something to fulfill what you vow to Him. (*Life-study of 1 Samuel*, msg. 1, pp. 5-7)

### **His God-worshipping Parents**

Humanly speaking, Samuel's origin was his God-worshipping parents (vv. 1-8).

#### ***Remaining in the Line of Life Ordained by God for His Eternal Purpose***

In the midst of the chaos of the degraded Israel, Elkanah and Hannah remained in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose. The line of life is a line to bring forth Christ for the enjoyment of God's people that on earth God may have His kingdom, which is the Body of Christ, the very organism of the Triune God.

Elkanah and Hannah remained in this line of life not merely for God's eternal salvation but for His eternal purpose. God's salvation is mainly for our benefit, whereas God's purpose is related to the fulfilling of God's desire. We need to ask ourselves whether we are here for our profit or for God's purpose. Today on this earth everyone is concerned for his own profit. Even the majority of Christians do not care for God's purpose. I can testify of Brother Watchman Nee that he was a man altogether for God's purpose. I would like to follow his pattern. In the Lord's recovery, we are for God's purpose, remaining in the line of life ordained by God for His eternal purpose, which is to gain the Body, the organism of the Triune God, that He may have a full expression in a corporate way.

#### ***In Cooperation with the Move of God on Earth for the Accomplishment of God's Economy***

This couple was in cooperation with the move of God on earth for the accomplishment of God's economy. Elkanah and Hannah were not the only ones moving; they were moved by the moving One, by the unique, divine Mover, who was moving secretly behind the scene. Under God's sovereign dealing, Hannah was suppressed in her soul with a burden in her spirit to pour out before Jehovah. This was God's move. Because of God's moving in her, Hannah could not have peace until she prayed for a son. God, the sovereign One, kept moving her and motivating her so that she had to pray, even though Eli, the one taking care of the service in God's house, did not understand her. In her prayer Hannah cooperated with the move of God.

God could motivate Hannah as a person who was one with Him in the line of life. As long as He can gain such a person, He has a way on earth. I hope that at least some of us will be today's Hannahs and say, "Lord, if You have anything on Your heart to accomplish for Your purpose, I am here. I am remaining in the line of life for the carrying out of Your economy." If you do this, I have the full assurance that you will be the ones whom God will move. He will come to you and motivate you. God needs many Hannahs, persons who can bring forth some Samuels to turn the age.

#### **Especially His God-seeking Mother with Her Prayer**

The origin of Samuel was especially his God-seeking mother with her prayer (vv. 9-18). Her prayer was an echo of the heart's desire of God. Her prayer was a human cooperation with the divine move for the carrying out of God's eternal economy.

We should no longer pray old prayers in a formal way. Instead, we need to pray something that is an echo of what is on God's heart. This means that what we say in our prayer is exactly what God wants to speak. Such a prayer is the speaking out of God's heart. Hannah's prayer was like this. God wanted a Samuel, yet He needed Hannah's cooperation to pray to Him, saying, "Lord, I need a son." This prayer was very human, yet it was a cooperation with the divine move for God's economy.

**The Moving God with His  
Answer to the Prayer of  
Samuel's Mother**

***According to God's Desire and  
Intention for His Move among  
His Elect***

In a very particular way, the origin of Samuel was the moving God with His answer to the prayer of Samuel's mother (vv. 19-20). After such a prayer as Hannah prayed, it was easy for God to do something, because man's cooperation had become a base on which He could move. The moving God answered the prayer of Samuel's mother according to His desire and intention for His move among His elect.

***In Keeping with the  
Principle That God Needs  
Man's Cooperation***

God's move in response to Hannah's prayer was in keeping with the principle that God needs man's cooperation with His move in His economy. This is the principle of incarnation.

***To Produce a Nazarite Who Was  
Absolute for the Fulfilling of His  
Desire***

God's move with His answer to Hannah's prayer was to produce a Nazarite who was absolute for the fulfilling of His desire. A Nazarite is one who is consecrated to God absolutely. A Nazarite could never cut his hair or drink wine. In the Bible, long hair signifies the headship, the authority. A Nazarite's keeping his hair long was a sign that just as a female takes her husband as her head, he takes God as the Head, considering God his Husband. Thus, a Nazarite is one who submits himself to God, taking God as the Head, the authority. This is why Hannah prayed that if the Lord would give her a boy, no razor would come upon his head (v. 11). In the Bible, to drink wine is to enjoy the worldly pleasures. A Nazarite not only submits to God as the authority but also has no interest in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Even before he was born, Samuel was consecrated by his mother to be such a person. This is a great thing, for it was Samuel who brought in a new age.

The New Testament age was brought in by another Nazarite—John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus was a Nazarite, as were Peter and Paul. Actually, everyone who remains in the line of life is a Nazarite. If we would be today's Nazarites, we must take God as our Head and Husband, submitting to Him, and have no interest in worldly pleasures.

We need to be impressed with Samuel's origin, with his source. Because he came out of such a strong source, he could not be an ordinary, worldly person. Rather, he was the one who replaced the waning priesthood and brought forth David, who brought forth Christ.

### ***Supported by His Mother***

First Samuel 2:19 indicates that Samuel was supported by his mother. In the Lord's recovery today, we also need support, and we thank the Lord for the many mothers in the church life. (*Life-study of 1 Samuel*, msg. 2, pp. 9-14)

### **THE APPLICATION OF THE CASE OF SAMUEL TO OUR PRESENT SITUATION**

Our present situation and God's need today are the same in principle as the situation and the need at the time of Samuel. Some today need to pray according to God's need, as Hannah did. God needs some like Samuel, who was a Nazarite, a priest, a prophet, and the last judge. Samuel was the last judge because God used him to terminate the confused situation among God's people, who were without a king or a kingdom. God needs such ones who are qualified to terminate the negative situation and bring in the king and the kingdom. The fulfillment of the kingdom is the coming kingdom, which will be brought in by the Lord Jesus, but there is a need today for some like Samuel to cooperate by bringing in that kingdom. In a sense, Christ our King is not here yet, and we are still in a confused situation, just as in the age of the judges. We should aspire to be the last judge. The sisters especially should aspire to be like Hannah, praying to bring forth some like Samuel, who will terminate the confused age so that Christ the King may come with His kingdom.

We need to realize how greatly the Divine Trinity is needed for this to be accomplished. In order for Hannah to pray such a prevailing prayer and receive a definite reply, she needed the tabernacle and the offerings, which typify Christ the Son as the embodiment of God and the reality of all the offerings. Similarly, in order for us to pray to meet God's need today, we need Christ as the embodiment of God and the reality of the offerings. We also need the fulfillment of the Tent of Meeting, which is the church as God's dwelling place. Hannah did not pray her prevailing prayer in her home. We need God's embodiment and His full salvation in the church life. Then we can pray prevailing prayers for God's goal, to bring in the kingdom. This is the experience of the Divine Trinity. (*CWWL*, 1983, vol. 3, "The Divine Trinity as Revealed in the Holy Word," ch. 10, pp. 292-293)

### **THE HANNAH MINISTRY**

Hannah wept, fasted, prayed, and cried unto the Lord for a son who would be absolutely given to the Lord for His service. This son was the one who brought in the King. Hannah had nothing to be proud of. However, Peninnah, had much to boast of. She could point to all her children and say, "I have this and that, all this and all that, etc." I want to say a word to you out of my heart. If you are still in the realm of the judges, you can be blessed and have results, but God's eyes are not on you. If these were not the last days, we would hope that Peninnah might have many more children. But if I am right, these are the last days and God's eyes are on those who can be the means of bringing in the King. Let us ask ourselves, "What is our ministry? Have we any part in this special ministry, this Hannah ministry?" Some have no other thought but revival. They think that the principle of the judges will continue to the end. But

there is the more important ministry of bringing in the King.

Hannah's way was not an easy way, and it was made even more difficult because of Peninnah's comparisons and tauntings. Those who want to be Hannahs must prepare themselves for persecution, scorn, weeping, and fasting. This ministry costs. A price has to be paid because all such ministry comes through testing and suffering; it has to be wrought into us. Others can eat and drink and look at their children, but here was one who fasted and wept. It is not a matter of how many we can save but a matter of God getting His company of overcomers. God wants to get a people who will be able to pray and bring in the kingdom.

Hannah's prayer was the means for the birth of Samuel. Our prayers should result in the bringing forth of overcomers. What have we done in this respect? Some who have worked much and have many children will say, "It seems that you are not doing anything. In the past you could lead revival meetings and do this and that. What are you doing now?" Even Eli, God's priest, did not understand Hannah. He said, "What are you doing? You are drunk."

From the birth of Samuel we see a line of prophets who could also be priests to bring in the King. Hannah bore a son—a prophet. God had done quite much with Hannah; He led her through all sorts of difficulties. As a result, He was able to find one who could put eating and drinking and all else aside. She came to the point where she could not go on without a son; she came to a point where she had to have a son. The son in 1 Samuel 1 is the man-child of Revelation 12, the one who brings in the King and the kingdom. (CWWN, vol. 46, ch. 172, pp. 1179-1180)

### **Study Questions:**

1. In what way did Hannah coordinate and cooperate with God for the accomplishment of His economy? How does her case show us the kind of persons God expects to have today?
2. What is the "line of life"? How can we, like Hannah, remain in the line of life for the carrying out of God's economy?
3. How can the sisters as today's Hannahs pray prevailing prayers to meet God's need and bring in God's kingdom?

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *Life-study of 1 Samuel*, msgs. 2 and 38.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1983, vol. 3, "The Divine Trinity as Revealed in the Holy Word," ch. 10.
3. *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 46, ch. 172.

**The Service of the Sisters - The Prayer of the Sisters**

**Acts 12:11-12**

- 11 And Peter came to himself and said, Now I know truly that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me out of Herod's hand and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.
- 12 And when he became aware of this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where there was a considerable number assembled together and praying.

**Ephesians 6:18**

- 18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,

## Message Five

### The Service of the Sisters - The Prayer of the Sisters

Scripture Reading: Acts 12:11-12; Eph.6:18

- I. In the church life the sisters should take the lead in the matter of prayer:**
- A. In Acts 12:12 we see that in the house of Mary a considerable number were assembled together praying.
  - B. This indicates that the prayer concerning Peter was offered mainly in the home of a sister.
  - C. From this we see that in the church life the sisters should take the lead in the matter of prayer.
  - D. According to the basic principle in the Word, the activities should be carried out by the brothers, and for the most part the sisters should do the supporting work behind the scene; the main supporting work is to pray.
  - E. This was exactly the situation in Peter's case; after he was released, he went to Mary's house, where many of the saints were still praying—vv. 11-12.
- II. We should not allow circumstances related to time or place affect our prayer; as we learn to exercise our spirit and to pray in spirit, circumstances related to time or place should not hinder us from releasing our spirit in prayer:**
- A. If we allow circumstances of time and place to affect our prayers, we will encounter many situations in which our spirit is closed.
  - B. Our exercise should not change simply because we are by ourselves or because we are with other brothers and sisters; our exercise in the prayer meeting should be the same as our exercise in our morning time with the Lord.
  - C. Some brothers and sisters come to the prayer meeting determined not to pray:
    1. A sister may feel exhausted from her busy day and be willing to let others pray, while she only says Amen; another sister may feel that it is not her place to pray.
    2. When many brothers and sisters do not open their mouths, the entire meeting is heavy and dead; we must turn this around.
  - D. From this time forward, we must learn to pray at every time in spirit (Eph. 6:18), regardless of the situation.
  - E. It is difficult to have an open spirit when we do not have a spirit that is strong, living, full, and uplifted; if we desire to have a strong, living, full, and uplifted spirit, we must spend time in prayer.
- III. We need to learn to restrict ourselves and turn to our spirit in prayer:**
- A. Many times our distracting thoughts are a frustration to our prayers; they cause us to turn away from our spirit so that we cannot pray:
    1. If we are undisciplined and loose before God, we will be unable to be calm; we will have wandering and distracting thoughts.
    2. By the Lord's grace, if we learn to control ourselves, our thoughts will come under control; when we stop to pray, we will immediately be calm, and it will be easy for us to turn to our spirit.
  - B. "Please allow me to say that I have seen many brothers and sisters—sisters more

so than brothers—who are very loose in their speaking; this does not mean that they use unclean words, but they are undisciplined in their speech” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1958*, vol. 1, “How to Enjoy God and Practice the Enjoyment of God,” ch. 19, p. 552):

1. Since they are undisciplined and loose in their speaking, their thoughts fly all over the world; after speaking in this way, they may need to wait until the next day before they are able to pray since they are unable to be calm and turn to their spirit.
2. Even if they wake up early in the morning, they may still have all kinds of thoughts racing through their mind, and therefore, they still cannot pray.
3. Everyone who is plentiful in words cannot pray; when a person speaks continuously, his entire being is led astray; he has no way to stop his being, and he cannot pray.
4. Therefore, a person who learns to pray must learn to control his speaking; he must learn to restrict his being, not only in one thing but in everything.

#### **IV. We need to learn to behold God before we pray:**

- A. We must first touch God before we can pray; this means that our spirit must touch the Spirit of God—John 4:24:
  1. When we want to pray, we must free ourselves from all affairs, stop our mental activities, and turn our entire being from outward things to our spirit.
  2. We must learn to exercise our spirit to touch God’s Spirit; then we will learn to behold God.
- B. By reading the word we are aided to turn to our spirit:
  1. If we cannot turn to our spirit or be calm, we can start by reading the Word.
  2. We can then use the words of the Bible to calm our thoughts in order to turn to our spirit; we can turn any words that touch us into prayer; this is an easy way to turn to our spirit.
  3. Then we will behold God, we will see God; our spirit will contact God, and we will be able to offer genuine prayers.

#### **V. The brothers and the sisters should coordinate together to pray; if only the brothers pray in a meeting and the sisters do not respond, our meetings will be like a paralyzed body, which is neither beautiful nor living:**

- A. After a few brothers pray, a few sisters should join in, and after a few sisters pray, a few more brothers should join in with more prayers:
  1. If the brothers’ prayers are too quick, the sisters may not be able to keep up; this requires the brothers to be willing to pause and wait so that more sisters can join in to pray.
  2. Furthermore, when there is a pause in the middle of a strong atmosphere of prayer, the sisters should realize that the brothers want them to join in.
  3. At such a time, the more experienced sisters need to pray immediately; if the experienced sisters do not pray, the young, meek, and timid sisters will be less likely to follow.
  4. Then when a sister joins in to fill the time created by the pause, the brothers need to realize that other sisters may follow; thus, there is no need for the brothers to rush to pray again; they should leave time for more sisters to pray.
- B. We hope that the brothers and sisters will begin to pray in coordination in a strong way; typically, more sisters than brothers attend the meetings, so they should be

allowed to function more; this will fill the meeting with enjoyment:

1. If the sisters have more opportunities to pray, they will be more released.
2. The brothers have a responsibility to give the sisters more opportunities to pray, and the sisters have a responsibility to offer prayers at the right time.
3. This coordination will allow the functions of the brothers and the sisters to be carried out in a proper way.

## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### THE SISTERS TAKING THE LEAD TO PRAY

Second, in [Acts] 12:12 we see that in the house of Mary a considerable number were assembled together praying. This indicates that the prayer concerning Peter was offered mainly in the home of a sister. From this we see that in the church life the sisters should take the lead in the matter of prayer. According to the basic principle in the Word, the activities should be carried out by the brothers, and for the most part the sisters should do the supporting work behind the scene. The main supporting work is to pray. This was exactly the situation in Peter's case. After he was released, he went to Mary's house, where many of the saints were still praying. (*Life-study of Acts*, msg. 34, pp. 293-294)

### NOT LETTING CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED TO TIME OR PLACE AFFECT OUR PRAYER

We should not allow circumstances related to time or place affect our prayer. As we learn to exercise our spirit and to pray in spirit, circumstances related to time or place should not hinder us from releasing our spirit in prayer. In the past, we have allowed circumstances of time and place to influence our concepts and our willingness to pray. Although many brothers and sisters realize the need to fellowship with God by praying in spirit, they do not see that they allow their fellowship and prayer to be affected by considerations related to time or place. Our exercise should not change simply because we are by ourselves or because we are with other brothers and sisters. Our exercise in the prayer meeting should be the same as our exercise in our morning time with the Lord. If we allow circumstances of time and place to affect our prayers, we will encounter many situations in which our spirit is closed.

For example, when we attend a message meeting, we often have a concept that only the brother who is giving the message and the brothers who are leading the Scripture reading and singing need to pray, because we are there only to listen to a message. Thus, from the very beginning, our spirit is closed and our mind does not consider the matter of prayer. Sometimes we even behave in this way in the prayer meeting. Some brothers and sisters come to the prayer meeting determined not to pray. One brother may feel ashamed to pray because he did something in the flesh. Another brother may feel he should not pray because he is a new believer, who has little experience of praying and who is not familiar with the Bible. A sister may feel exhausted from her busy day and be willing to let others pray, while she only says Amen. Another sister may feel that it is not her place to pray. When many brothers and sisters do not open their mouths, the entire meeting is heavy and dead.

We must turn this around. From this time forward, we must learn to pray at every time in spirit (Eph. 6:18), regardless of the situation. As long as there is an opportunity, we should pray; we should seize every opportunity to pray. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1961-1962*, vol. 2, "The Priesthood and God's Building," ch. 4, pp. 42-43)

### Praying

In order to be open in our spirit, we must spend time in prayer. If we desire to be open, we must exercise our spirit more. The exercise and use of our spirit mainly involve prayer. If we are short of prayer, we will have a deflated spirit. It is difficult to have an open spirit when we do not have a spirit that is strong, living, full, and uplifted. If we

desire to have a strong, living, full, and uplifted spirit, we must spend time in prayer.

Our spirit is an organ to contact God, and the most crucial way to contact God is to pray. An audible prayer is prayer, and a silent prayer is also prayer. Even looking to God for a brief moment is also prayer. As long as we pray in these ways, our spirit will touch God. If we pray more, our spirit will touch God more, and our spirit will be strong, living, fresh, full, and released. With such a spirit, opening our spirit will be something that is quite spontaneous.

Our mingled spirit is a praying spirit (Rom. 8:16, 26), and the Spirit of God is even called “the Spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zech. 12:10). Such a Spirit causes us to pray. If we want our spirit to be strong, we must pray; if we want the Spirit of God to increase in us, we must pray. By prayer our spirit is exercised, and by prayer our spirit is opened. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1961-1962*, vol. 2, “The Priesthood and God’s Building,” ch. 5, p. 56)

### **LEARNING TO RESTRICT OURSELVES AND TO TURN TO OUR SPIRIT IN PRAYER**

Some brothers and sisters may be clear concerning praying in the Holy Spirit, but they might not know how to enter the Spirit. Every person who learns to pray encounters this problem. We often have distracting thoughts when we kneel down to pray. When we try to reject one thought, another comes. While we are dealing with the second thought, another one invades our mind. The thoughts come like a swarm of bees. They buzz around in our mind and prevent us from praying. If we are unable to control our thoughts, we may become angry and declare that we will not pray any more. In this situation we have failed. Many times our distracting thoughts are a frustration to our prayers. They cause us to turn away from our spirit so that we cannot pray.

Our thoughts distract us because we are loose persons before the Lord. An undisciplined and loose person has distracting thoughts. If we are undisciplined and loose before God, we will be unable to be calm. We will have wandering and distracting thoughts if we are loose before the Lord. The looser we are before the Lord, the more distracting our thoughts will be. By the Lord’s grace, if we learn to control ourselves, our thoughts will come under control. When we stop to pray, we will immediately be calm, and it will be easy for us to turn to our spirit.

Please allow me to say that I have seen many brothers and sisters—sisters more so than brothers—who are very loose in their speaking. This does not mean that they use unclean words, but they are undisciplined in their speech. When they converse with others, they do not seem to be able to stop speaking. Since they are undisciplined and loose in their speaking, their thoughts fly all over the world. After speaking in this way, they may need to wait until the next day before they are able to pray since they are unable to be calm and turn to their spirit. Even if they wake up early in the morning, they may still have all kinds of thoughts racing through their mind, and therefore, they still cannot pray. Everyone who is plentiful in words cannot pray. When a person speaks continuously, his entire being is led astray. His entire being is captured by thoughts that wander all over the world. He has no way to stop his being, and he cannot pray. Therefore, a person who learns to pray must learn to control his speaking. He must learn to restrict his being, not only in one thing but in everything.

Many saints have learned some lessons in the matter of restricting themselves. Some are able to stop themselves in the midst of their temper and turn to God to confess and

pray. Such prayer and confession are altogether a matter in their spirit. Such a person can easily pray in his spirit. This does not mean that a person who readily loses his temper can easily pray in his spirit. Rather, a person who can control himself even while he is losing his temper tends to find it easy to turn to his spirit to pray.

There are, of course, many brothers and sisters who cannot control themselves once they lose their temper. Even when others try to stop them, they are unable to control themselves once they lose their temper. They do not know what it means to be under control. They can be compared to a car that has no brakes; they are unable to stop themselves. It is not easy for such a person to turn to his spirit and pray. He may need to wait for a week before he can pray again. His entire being has been expended through his temper.

This illustration should help us to see that if we want to learn to pray, we must learn to control ourselves before God. If we control ourselves in ordinary things, it will be easy for us to control our thoughts when we pray. Our thoughts will be submissive, and it will be easy for us to stop, be calm, and turn to our spirit. We will easily be disentangled from our thoughts in order to turn to our spirit. A person who wants to learn to pray in spirit must learn to control himself at all times.

We often classify people as either extroverts or introverts. It is difficult for those who are extroverted to learn to pray. They seem to be able to do everything, but it is difficult for them to be calm in order to pray. It is, therefore, difficult for them to absorb and enjoy God, not to mention the fact that they have many unanswered prayers. This is a great loss. It is profitable for a person to devote some time every day to calm his thoughts and turn his entire being to God in order to contact Him. However, such a person must be one who restricts himself. If we want to learn to pray in the Holy Spirit, we must learn the lesson of restricting ourselves in our daily life, controlling ourselves in everything. If we can control ourselves in this way, it will be easy for us to stop our activities and pray.

### **LEARNING TO BEHOLD GOD BEFORE WE PRAY**

If we are able to restrict ourselves and turn to the Spirit in this way, we should not immediately open our mouths to pray. In chapter 5 we considered ten points we should pay attention to when we pray. After being calm we should behold God. This means that in order to pray, we must first touch God. We must first touch God before we can pray. This means that our spirit must touch the Spirit of God. When we are busy with many outward things, there is no way for us to touch God. When we want to pray, we must free ourselves from all affairs, stop our mental activities, and turn our entire being from outward things to our spirit. We must learn to exercise our spirit to touch God's Spirit. Then we will learn to behold God. Because God is Spirit and dwells in our spirit, it is not difficult to touch Him. When our entire being is occupied, and we live in our mind, God seems to disappear. However, He has not disappeared; rather, we have turned our backs on Him. We are not beholding Him. But as soon as we are free from our thoughts and turn from the outward things to our spirit, we touch God immediately. This is to behold God, and this is to touch His presence in our spirit. As soon as we touch God in our spirit, we feel solid within; we feel that we have the anointing and the moving of the Holy Spirit. At this point we can open our mouths to pray.

### **BEING AIDED TO TURN TO OUR SPIRIT BY READING THE WORD**

Some may say that it is difficult to turn to their spirit and behold God in this way.

New believers may find it difficult to practice praying in this way. If a person cannot turn to his spirit or be calm, he can start by reading the Word. He can then use the words of the Bible to calm his thoughts in order to turn to his spirit. He can turn any words that touch him into prayer. This is an easy way to turn to our spirit.

Some saints are able to turn directly to their spirit without any help. Whenever they want to pray, they only need to close their eyes, and they can stop their entire being. Sometimes they do not even need to close their eyes; they can turn to their spirit even while others are talking beside them. They are not bothered by distractions. One brother said that he had learned to pray even while others were fighting in front of him. He could calmly pray to touch the Lord, sense His presence, and be brought into the Holy Spirit, no matter how loudly they shouted. Such a person is very experienced in his spirit; his spirit is very strong. He is able to control himself and is not bothered by anything. When he wants to pray, he can turn his entire being to his spirit.

However, many brothers and sisters have not learned to pray in this way. They cannot even be calm when they are alone, not to mention being calm when others argue and fight in their presence. This shows that they are not restricted before God and that they are immature in the Lord. We should never think that a person is mature simply because they have been a Christian for many years. Maturity does not depend on the number of years one has been a Christian, and it does not depend on the amount of teaching a person knows. Rather, maturity is related to our ability to be calm and turn to our spirit when we pray. If we can do this, we are somewhat mature. If we cannot, we are still quite young and cannot restrict ourselves. For this reason, we must continue to exercise until we can stop ourselves and turn to our spirit when we are ready to pray.

We may not find it easy when we begin to practice, and we may need to use the Bible. If so, we can read through the Bible slowly, allowing God's Word to touch our inward being. We can then turn the words of the Bible into prayer. In this way, it will be easy for us to be calm and turn to our spirit. Then we will behold God, we will see God; our spirit will contact God, and we will be able to offer genuine prayers. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1958*, vol. 1, "How to Enjoy God and Practice the Enjoyment of God," ch. 19, pp. 551-555)

## **COORDINATION IN THE MEETINGS**

### **The Coordination of Persons**

The first aspect of coordination in the meetings is the coordination of persons. For example, after a few brothers pray, it is better for a few sisters to follow. The brothers and the sisters should coordinate together to pray. If only the brothers pray in a meeting and the sisters do not respond, our meetings will be like a paralyzed body, which is neither beautiful nor living. We are not saying that the brothers and sisters should take turns in a set order; we are simply emphasizing that a coordination of persons is needed. In the meetings the brothers and the sisters need to coordinate with one another in a living way. After a few brothers pray, a few sisters should join in, and after a few sisters pray, a few more brothers should join in with more prayers. If the brothers' prayers are too quick, the sisters may not be able to keep up. This requires the brothers to be willing to pause and wait so that more sisters can join in to pray. Furthermore, when there is a pause in the middle of a strong atmosphere of prayer, the sisters should realize that the brothers want them to join in. At such a time, the more experienced sisters need to pray immediately. If the experienced sisters do not pray, the young, meek, and timid sisters will be less likely to follow. Then when a sister joins in to fill the time created by the

pause, the brothers need to realize that other sisters may follow. Thus, there is no need for the brothers to rush to pray again; they should leave time for more sisters to pray. The brothers also need to learn not to ignore others when they receive an inspiration.....

Later, Jacob met Esau, his brother. In 33:13-14, Jacob said to Esau, “My lord knows that the children are frail and that the nursing flocks and herds are a concern to me; and if they overdrive them for one day, all the flock will die. Let my lord please pass on before his servant, and I will lead on slowly according to the pace of the cattle which are before me and according to the pace of the children.” His young children and his nursing flocks and herds could not walk too fast, so Jacob accommodated them. Likewise, in the meetings we need to accommodate the sisters. Sometimes, as soon as the sisters begin to pray, the brothers take control of the direction of the prayer. If the sisters have more opportunities to pray, they will be more released.

I hope that the brothers and sisters will begin to pray in coordination in a strong way. Typically, more sisters than brothers attend the meetings, so they should be allowed to function more. This will fill the meeting with enjoyment. The brothers have a responsibility to give the sisters more opportunities to pray, and the sisters have a responsibility to offer prayers at the right time. This coordination will allow the functions of the brothers and the sisters to be carried out in a proper way. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1961-1962*, vol. 2, “The Priesthood and God’s Building,” ch. 24, pp. 233-234)

### **Study Questions:**

1. From Acts 12:12, how can we see that in the church life the sisters should take the lead in the matter of prayer?
2. How can we practice to restrict ourselves, especially our thinking and our speaking, such that we can easily turn to our spirit and pray?
3. How should the brothers and sisters learn to coordinate in prayer such that the meetings become beautiful and living?

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *Life-study of Acts*, msg. 34.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1961-1962*, vol. 2, “The Priesthood and God’s Building,” chs. 4, 5 and 24.
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1958*, vol. 1, “How to Enjoy God and Practice the Enjoyment of God,” ch. 19.