
The Spiritual Eden Longhouse



It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Eph. 4 : 11-12)

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Preface

The Spirit of God moved His holy apostle, Bro. Hong, to build the **Eden Longhouse** on Mount Moriah in order to display the **abundant testimony of the Body — the testimony of unity of the New Testament Church**. This project leads to the fulfillment of God's end-time will. It is also the key to the appearance of the fullness of Christ's body. The construction of the Eden Longhouse is the epochal masterpiece of God!

On May 15, 1995, God commissioned His holy apostles, Bro. Hong and Bro. Pi, to Mount Moriah to lay the foundation for the Eden Longhouse. On June 27, they accomplished this great work and returned to Holy Mount Zion triumphantly. During this 44-day mission, God completed a series of unusual, glorious, and symbolic works in the following places:

- **Mount Moriah:** Constructed the Eden Longhouse to display the unity of Christ's body, to bring about the revealing of the sons of God, and to lead all creation into the Eden Longhouse to enjoy the glorious liberty of God's children.
- **Bethel:** Enjoyed the warmth and sweetness of God's house.
- **Mount Carmel:** Dealt with Ahab who plundered God's inheritance.
- **Sapit Village:** Dedicated the new church premises, testifying that the New Testament Church will become a great tribe and enjoy great blessings.
- **Indonesia:** Reclaimed the lost land and proclaimed that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of my Lord and of His Christ.
- **Sapit Village:** On the return trip, the Lord's servant poured out his life like water. This greatly encouraged God's children, who later made repeated trips up to Sapit Village.

- **Hebron:** Execute God's power, terminate man's kingdoms and realize God's kingdom.
- Back to **Zion** in victory: The Yuen-shan Hotel in Taipei was on fire — the smoke of burning Babylon, the great harlot, rises up! (*See Rev. 19:3.*)

The Lord's servants' trip added yet another page to the glorious history of the New Testament Church. It also wrote out the **blueprint of the New Testament Church's ministration for the latter half of 1995.** This is comparable to what had happened in 1979, when the Lord's servant settled down on Mount Zion for 7 months and 21 days. During that time, Bro. Hong was moved to write out the blueprint of the end-time ministration for the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade and the New Testament Church. The epochal plans of God written within those 7 months and 21 days have now been fulfilled one by one before our eyes. We believe that the final goal of God written during those 44 days on Mount Moriah will also be fulfilled one by one in these last days.

On Mount Moriah, God, through His holy apostles, laid the foundation of the Eden Longhouse and erected the central pillar for the big church premises (Holy Temple). All the big and small beams, including the side pillars of the entire longhouse, had to be connected to this central pillar. Through the construction of the Eden Longhouse, God revealed to His servants the mystery (the truth) of **building the church and congregational coordination.** The Lord's servants then preached to the brothers and sisters the truth (the law) of the construction of life. For God not only wants to gain the tangible Eden Longhouse, but even more so, the spiritual Eden Longhouse.

From ancient times until now, mankind's hardest goal to achieve has been unity and coordination. No politician, sociologist or psychologist could help unite mankind. There has not been a single community, society or nation that could coordinate well. Disputes, strife and divisions are prominent throughout the world. And despite the world's hope for unity

and harmony, it could never be attained. Even the natives of Malaysia who build and dwell in longhouses fail to achieve unity. But we thank God, for the New Testament Church has succeeded!

The Bible says, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:11–16).

Through the construction of the Eden Longhouse and the revelation of the Lord’s servant, this truth has been vividly portrayed in our life. The harmonious coordination which man’s kingdoms have always dreamed of is now realized in the New Testament Church. We have attained the realm which they could not reach. **This is all because Jesus Christ, the Head, through His holy apostles, has equipped and established the saints into His body. The holy apostles unite the saints to Christ, the Head. Therefore, every member coordinates closely with one another, each in his work, helping and caring for one another, building itself in love and growing to the measure of the fullness of Christ.**

When the Lord’s servant preached on this law of building His house, brothers and sisters were suddenly enlightened. Just like what the Bible says, “The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Ps. 119:130). The messages of the Lord’s servant are full of light and revelation. They bring us the way and direction. These messages teach us how to learn lessons and how to coordinate with others. They

also teach us how to accept God's molding and how to proceed with the construction. This is truly the construction of the **spiritual Eden Longhouse**.

The brothers and sisters were exuberant when the Lord's holy apostles were sent to Mount Moriah. They not only humbly listened to the heavenly teachings every morning, but also seized every opportunity to discuss with the Lord's servants. Those youths who had just joined the ministerial body to serve God full time were especially earnest and had many questions about serving God. At first, only one or two went to discuss. But at the end, over a dozen of them went together to the prophet's house to have a family talk.

On May 24, the brothers and sisters sat on the floor in front of the Lord's servants, like a group of children gathering before their parents. Everybody was filled with the warmth of a family. This harmonious atmosphere gave everybody peace and joy in the spirit. The brothers and sisters voiced out their problems one after another, and the abundant provision of life from the Lord's servants satisfied them. The discussion lasted for three whole hours, yet the Lord's servant did not seem the least bit tired. He even said, "If you have questions, always ask."

When the Lord's servants were sent to Mount Moriah this time, they especially held a youth convention there, from May 28 to June 4. During the convention, the companions and co-workers realized that their own lives were tender and unable to cope up. So while the Lord's servants were still there, they grabbed this chance and called for a special co-worker ministration service starting on June 6. As a result, the companions from various consecrated lands rushed to Mount Moriah to attend this four-day meeting. They sat around the table and the atmosphere of the service was like that of Mount Carmel's co-workers' service which was held the previous year. Everyone openly told the Lord's servants about the problems they had been experiencing during their recent years' ministration, work, life, and coordination. They asked for help in various aspects of the truth,

and sure enough, the Lord's servants' words came pouring out. His words were full of heavenly revelation, the sap of life, and the power of the Holy Spirit. The companions were greatly edified and one by one, their problems were solved.

On June 21, after the Lord's servants assumed their ministry on Mount Moriah, they brought Isaac (the co-workers) — who had been offered up — to Bethel, Mount Carmel and Sapit Village. They dedicated the church premises to God in Sapit Village. The co-workers also went to Indonesia to reclaim that lost land and the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. They proclaimed that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The testimony of **offering Isaac — of inheriting great blessings and becoming a great nation** — was fully manifested there. The promise which God had for today's Abraham was gloriously fulfilled!

As a result, Satan became jealous and started to retaliate. The helicopter which was supposed to take the Lord's servants back to Kuching failed to show up, forcing the Lord's servants to trek down the steep and windy mountain. The Lord's servant, Bro. Hong, was on the verge of collapsing and almost lost his life. Nonetheless, he repeatedly exclaimed, "It's worthwhile! It's worthwhile!"

The Lord's servant imitated the slain Lamb, pouring out his life like water. This testimony of following the Lamb greatly encouraged and touched many. Later on, **those who imitated the Lord's servant in walking on the narrow path of the Cross to Sapit Village became a great company.** The troop that follows the footsteps of the Lamb became a turbulent flow of the Holy Spirit. This is what the devil Satan never expected. The slain Lamb is forever victorious! Hallelujah!

On June 24, the Lord's servant, Bro. Hong, brought the power of resurrection to Hebron. There, they ruled in God's name and proclaimed God's decree. Over the next four days, the Lord's servant served the House

of Jacob diligently and sacrificially. On the night of the 26th, about 80 brothers and sisters gathered together for a family talk with the Lord's servants. They discussed about their problems they encountered in shepherding, serving, and especially that on marriage, and asked questions. The Lord's servants answered them one by one, and much of the Truth was clarified. Brothers and sisters frankly spoke out their hearts (minds) in love. The exchange of love was exceptionally abundant, filling everyone with the warmth and sweetness of home.

During this trip to Mount Moriah, the Lord's holy apostles completed the mission entrusted by God and triumphantly returned to Mount Zion on June 27. On Aug. 9, they were sent out again to Eden Isle where they led the brothers and sisters of Oceania to celebrate a glorious and abundant Feast of Tabernacles (according to the lunar calendar). During the feast, the Lord's servants delivered glorious and powerful messages which brought life to all. Brothers and sisters were like fish being put back into water. They listened attentively and took notes diligently. The youths of Oceania were revived and became serious towards the Truth, their lives, and in maintaining a good testimony. They hoped to do everything in God's will, so they asked many questions and hoped that the Lord's servants would give them answers.

Seeing that the brothers and sisters were so earnest, the Lord's servants held two family talks for two consecutive nights in Eden Isle. These two family talks were sweet and enjoyable. The Lord's servant's words were like Solomon's words of wisdom — they were so full of life, truth and light. The youths were edified and the co-workers were enlightened. The lives of the Lord's servants were like that of Paul at his old age, full of the anointing of life. On this commissioned path, they poured out their lives to serve God's churches in Hebron, Eden Isle and on Mount Moriah.

The image of the Lamb was fully manifested through the Lord's servant, Bro. Hong, so that brothers and sisters all the more longed to follow and imitate the slain Lamb. When the mystery of the truth was revealed

through him, brothers and sisters all the more held fast to this law of life. As a result, the spiritual Eden Longhouse all the more took shape.

For the sake that more people may be edified and established in the Truth, the Holy Spirit led us to publish this book, *The Spiritual Eden Longhouse*. The book is divided into two sections: The first section, "Construction of Life," is a combination of various messages preached by the Lord's servant during his trip to Mount Moriah. The second section, "Fellowship in Love," consists of the discussions during the co-workers' ministration services on Mount Moriah, as well as the family talks held in Hebron, Eden Isle and on Mount Moriah.

May the Lord greatly bless and use this book and let the children of God and all creation be established in this spiritual Eden Longhouse! May this spiritual Eden Longhouse, the New Testament Church, abundantly and gloriously appear in this generation! May God gain complete glory in this spiritual Eden Longhouse and in Jesus Christ for generations to come, forever and ever. Amen!

Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade
October 1, 1995
Mount Zion

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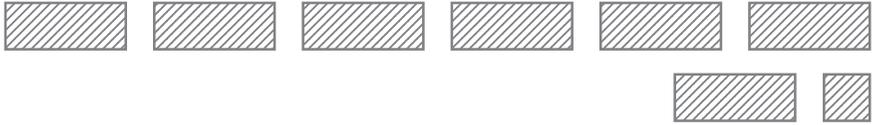
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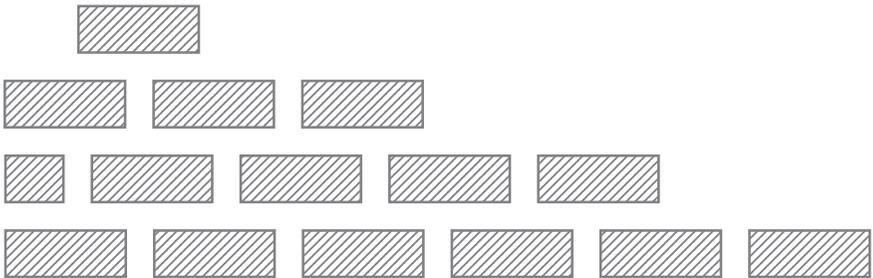
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Construction of Life



Imitate Abraham to Offer Isaac

(May 17, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)

Thank the Lord. Many companions of the Lamb have come to Mount Moriah. They are truly the sons of Abraham, the sons of faith who follow the footsteps of Abraham to testify for God's salvation. This trip to Mount Moriah has indeed been epochal, great and glorious. The Old Testament shows how God directed Abraham to Mount Moriah. The Bible says, "God tested Abraham" (Gen. 22:1). When God tested Abraham, He watched his every action. How happy God was when He saw Abraham bring his son Isaac to Mount Moriah! We can imagine how Abraham felt at the time, but we may not understand his true feelings. We only know that Abraham was the father of faith who walked on the path of faith. He believed that since God could cause Sarah, who was barren, to give birth to a child, He could also raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham begot Isaac by faith, and he also offered up Isaac by faith. Therefore, his journey to Mount Moriah was a journey of faith.

By faith, Abraham offered up Isaac without hesitation. This offering was made possible by God's grace. In fact, Isaac himself was a sign of God's grace. Abraham knew that he could not have begotten Isaac if it had not been for the grace of God. He could only have Ishmael who brought endless troubles. Abraham had nothing to boast about. He knew that everything he had was given by God. "Since Isaac is given by God, if God wants him back, I shall return Isaac to Him." Therefore, he was willing to obey God. He trusted that God would not be wrong, so he readily did according to God's leading. Unexpectedly, God returned Isaac to him. Because of his faith, God counted him as having offered Isaac. From here, we see the grace of God.

God gave Abraham a very difficult test. God especially emphasized this: “Your only son Isaac whom you love.” Just saying *Isaac* should have been enough. Why did He have to be so descriptive? It only made it more painful for Abraham. Our God knows how to strike a person where it hurts most. He knows what you love most and what you are most reluctant to give up. He emphasized *whom you love* to see whether Abraham was selfish and whether Abraham loved Isaac more than Him. Thanks be to God; Abraham passed the test. He did not complain about God’s calling or leading. The Bible says, “So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him” (Gen. 22:3). This action was brave, resolute, and without hesitation. His footsteps were full of glory and hope. This is what you and I must learn from. If you want to follow the footsteps of Abraham, you should rise early in the morning, split the wood, saddle the donkey, and take along the two servants. Abraham did everything God told him to do; not one thing was missed. This was Abraham’s attitude when he offered Isaac. It is worthy of our imitation. To accomplish God’s will, let us offer up all that God has given us without reservation, not withholding even what is most precious and dear to us.

Isaac was from God, and of God. He was not of the flesh. Isaac was for God — he was the seed who would become a great nation and inherit great blessings. Isaac was the key vessel to fulfill God’s promise. But God still wanted Abraham to offer him up. Through this, God is telling us that on the way of following God, He wants us to fully imitate Abraham — **to put aside not only the things of the flesh and of the world, but also things that are “spiritual” and from God when He wants us to.** We may have acquired various spiritual virtues and gifts from God. But if He wants to take them away from us, we should also say, “Amen.” God often tests His chosen vessels by stripping them of their spiritual gifts. We often think that we have done enough: “I have forsaken the world and decided to serve God with all my heart. I pursue various

spiritual gifts to glorify God.” But sometimes it seems that God is not cooperating. He will strip you until you are good for nothing — you cannot deliver sermons; you cannot pray or lead hymns well — you have become worthless. So what would you do? Others are progressing, while you seem to be lagging behind. While others are increasingly revealed with all kinds of spiritual gifts, you are stripped until you have nothing left. Can you stand it? Will you not contend with God?

Sis. Kong, the maidservant of God, had the spirit of Abraham. She was the great prophetess raised up by God in this last generation to bring about the end-time revival. But God allowed her to have tongue cancer and she couldn’t speak. What a deprivation! But Sis. Kong did not complain. Since she couldn’t speak, she wrote. When she could no longer write with her right hand, she wrote with her left hand. In the end, her writing became illegible, like the scribbling of a child. She was greatly deprived by God, yet she remained faithful. She had *the spirit of offering Isaac*. When you willingly offer up everything, whether it is earthly or spiritual, good-looking or bad-looking, God will gain full glory.

When Abraham offered Isaac, he did it for real. Some people want to imitate Abraham, but it is all for show. Before they give Isaac to God, they say, “O Lord, when I offer up Isaac, show that You are Jehovah-jireh! If not, I will be upset with You!” When Abraham offered Isaac, he had no example to follow. Nevertheless, he offered Isaac unconditionally. But we often use Abraham’s example to bargain with God. When we imitate Abraham to offer Isaac, we don’t have Abraham’s spirit — the spirit of offering and being prepared for God to take it away. Although we hold the knife, we hope that God would stop us in time. Offering Isaac in this way is only for show! But Abraham did not do it for show. When he offered up Isaac, he did not expect God to return Isaac to him. We should imitate Abraham to have such an offering — **an offering without any preplanned conditions.**

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Thank God. He is leading us onto the way of offering Isaac. We offer up not only what is earthly, but also what is spiritual. **We do not have our own spiritual ambitions. Only the will of God is our criterion.** However He may lead, we will follow, because obedience to Him is our highest ministration. **We have come to Mount Moriah to follow Abraham's footsteps of faith. Our God will be glorified when we imitate Abraham to offer up our beloved Isaac. According to His promise, God shall let us receive great blessings and become a great nation.**

We will lay the foundation of the Eden Longhouse today. Representatives of all tribes from around the world are here. This shows that the New Testament Church is acting as one body. The Church of Hong Kong is few in number, but three of them have already booked tickets to come join in the construction. One of them, a recent university graduate, will return to Hong Kong to find a job only after the longhouse is completed. Another brother, who only gets two weeks off work every year, will spend his entire two-week holiday on Mount Moriah to take part in the longhouse construction. The last one, a student, will spend his entire summer vacation on Mount Moriah. Those who cannot come have offered up their money, prayers and concern. See how enthusiastic the children of God are! The building of the Eden Longhouse is from God. The Spirit of God has been working in the hearts of the saints, moving them to support the movement of the Throne and to have a share in the sacred work of constructing the longhouse. The building of the longhouse is an epochal project. I hope that we will lay the foundation and build the longhouse with the feeling of Abraham when he offered up Isaac. When the physical longhouse appears, may the spiritual longhouse also appear! Then our God will gain full glory in the New Testament Church forever and ever! Amen!

Vanish into the Body

(May 17, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the evening service on Mount Moriah)

Thank the Lord. We have finally laid the foundation of the Eden Longhouse on Mount Moriah! This is a great movement of God that concerns the accomplishment of His end-time will. Once the foundation is laid and the Longhouse is constructed, the testimony of unity will fully appear. The value of the New Testament Church lies in her testimony of unity. The church is the body of Christ. It is a united body. The denominations have lost the testimony of unity, so they fail to manifest the power of the church. Thus God raised up His maidservant Sis. Kong in the last days to first restore the foundation of the church, which is the full gospel of Blood, Water, and Holy Spirit. The foundation of the denominations is destroyed because they are not built upon the foundation of this complete truth. That is why God cannot show His power and accomplish His will through the denominations.

In order to accomplish His eternal plan, God showed Sis. Kong what He wanted to do on the three April 18 (or 4.18) in 1963. On the first 4.18, God revealed Sis. Kong's ministry and introduced her to this generation. She was the spiritual leader, the Prophet of All Nations whom God raised up in the last days. God entrusted her with His end-time will. On the second 4.18, God sent Sis. Kong to Hong Kong and Kowloon to preach the complete truth of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit. So, the second 4.18 is the day when the foundation of the New Testament Church was restored. From that day on, the church could be rebuilt upon this foundation. On the third 4.18, God sent Sis. Kong to Southeast Asia to preach the complete truth and to rebuild the New Testament Church. Southeast Asia is so blessed, especially Singapore and West Malaysia. Those were the first places where Sis. Kong assumed her ministry. Southeast Asia is very important to God

because His end-time will has a direct relation to this place. Many vessels used by God come from there. This is indeed the pride and glory of Southeast Asia, particularly East and West Malaysia.

God has chosen Mount Zion in Taiwan as well as many consecrated lands in Malaysia. Now He has also chosen Mount Moriah where He builds the Eden Longhouse. The construction of the Eden Longhouse is extraordinary, for it testifies for the realm of Eden. It also fully manifests the unity of the church. Through this testimony, God's destined will for the New Testament Church shall be accomplished. So the testimony we display on Mount Moriah is extraordinary and epochal. It is the first and may also be the last of its kind. The value of this testimony lies in *unity* — a body. The denominations are desolate because they are not united, but are only scattered individuals.

God's purpose in raising up Sis. Kong was to establish the New Testament Church and bring about the testimony of unity. Let every one of us see the testimony that God wants to gain in the New Testament Church. Let us recognize that the focal point and climax of the church testimony is unity. If we cannot display this testimony of unity, then we are in the New Testament Church in vain. So, **every member has to merge himself into the congregation. Only then will he be able to coordinate with other members to become a body.** Brothers and sisters, this truth sounds easy to understand, but the actual coordinating is not that easy. Every one of us has his own personality and character. To coordinate well, we need God's mercy. Brothers and sisters often come to me with the same problem, that is, the problem of coordinating. When a person is all by himself, it is easy for him to serve God diligently. He may be willing to suffer and to offer up money and effort — even his own life. But when it comes to coordinating with others, he will have a lot of problems and opinions. Actually, there is nothing wrong with giving input or suggestions. But some people expect their opinions to be carried out. If their suggestions are not carried out, they will become hostile and say, "OK, you do it. I will stand by

and watch. I'll take over only after you fail. While you are here, I will stay away. But when I'm here, you stay away. When my hands are working on it, put your hands away. When your hands are working on it, I will put away mine." **Such bad coordination is a sign of immaturity. A spiritually mature person will not put others in a difficult position.** Even if his feeling is good and according to God's will, he would rather wait than to force others to accept it before they are ready. Everyone needs to learn this lesson. **The more thoroughly a person is molded in God's hand, the more humble he will be. He won't dare to be subjective. He may contribute opinions as suggestions, but he would not dare to decide things on his own.** The better a person learns his life lessons, the more harmoniously will he coordinate with others. But the more carnal a person is, the harder it will be for him to coordinate with others.

Recently God sent Bro. Alfred to Tahiti where He revealed his ministry as a shepherd. Southeast Asia has something to boast of! We are very comforted that God revealed such a vessel among you. God is also very pleased. In Tahiti, we have a store called Araka where we have a consecrated enterprise. Brothers and sisters who served there experienced problems of coordination. One brother acted like a general manager and everyone had to follow his orders. Unknowingly, he made himself the boss, and others his employees. He was such a big boss that nobody could do anything to him. It was so bad that brothers and sisters were bitter and dared not go to Araka. When Bro. Alfred went there, brothers and sisters brought all their problems before him and sought his help. Bro. Alfred was very careful in handling this matter because he was new in Tahiti and did not know the condition of brothers and sisters. How did he help them? He testified to them about what he had seen, heard and learned in Southeast Asia. He also related to them how he had learned from failures when he served together with Sis. Sheu and the companions. They listened with increasing interest. Wonderfully, after fellowship, they all changed. This "big boss" brother also changed. He wrote us a letter which made us feel both thankful and amused. He wrote that Araka doesn't have a tiger anymore and put his name in

parentheses behind the word “tiger.” This tiger changed into a lamb, and everyone was no longer afraid to go to Araka. There is no longer a “big boss” nor are there any more employees. Everyone is the boss and everyone is an employee. Now they coordinate harmoniously. Everyone serves happily and diligently. In addition, they take Bro. Alfred’s advice by beginning each day with prayers. As a result, God blesses Araka. The business prospers day after day. Customers increase and old customers return. Thank the Lord. If everyone is willing to learn the lessons of life, mutual coordination will improve and God’s grace will abound.

Today, God wants to construct the Eden Longhouse on Mount Moriah to fully display the testimony of unity. So, we must pray diligently, asking the Lord to help us merge into the congregation **and vanish into the body**. We need to discuss everything carefully. You may discuss your feelings, or give suggestions, but you must have this attitude: **I’ll give my suggestions only as a reference, not as a final decision**. If everyone has this attitude, there shouldn’t be any problems. The worst thing a person can do is make a decision as soon as he opens his mouth. No one can coordinate with such a person. I believe there are a lot of things to be discussed for the construction of the longhouse. **Discussion and fellowship is like blood circulation in a body. What a body fears most is bad blood circulation, because once there are blockages, troubles will follow.**

We are here working together to construct the Eden Longhouse and to develop Mount Moriah. We want to let people see unity and harmony in our midst. I believe that everyone is willing to learn lesson, and will learn them well. I hope that we can all mind the heart of Jesus Christ. In order to display the testimony of unity, we will coordinate with all members harmoniously and allow the abundance of the Head, Jesus Christ, to circulate among us. With such harmonious coordination, the longhouse will carry the genuine testimony of unity. The longhouse that we are building is actually a twelve-unit structure. Though we are many, we are still one body. Every member is closely joined to each other, just as every unit of the

longhouse is linked to become one single structure. The mystery, glory and attraction of the body lie in its unity. **I hope that through the construction of the Eden Longhouse, the spiritual longhouse in us will also be built.** Not only will the tangible longhouse appear, but the longhouse within us will also appear. That will be the *Eden* Longhouse, not the Iban Longhouse. May God let us learn to coordinate harmoniously during the construction. Let us learn to accept one another's feelings so that Mount Moriah will have no "tigers" like Araka. May there only be lambs so that the Lord will be glorified among us.

Honorable Vessels Useful to the Lord

(May 18, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)

Thank the Lord. We finally laid the foundation of the Eden Longhouse and erected the pillars yesterday. While erecting the pillars, I thought of many spiritual lessons. To erect a pillar is not a simple task. It requires the coordination of many people. How is a pillar erected? Is it by simply placing it in a vertical position? No. To erect a pillar correctly, there is a standard to follow. Yesterday, we saw an instrument next to the excavator. That instrument was the key standard. Before a pillar could be erected correctly, it has to be checked by this instrument. Every pillar not only has to stand upright, but also face the right direction. This is because it does not stand alone, but has many pillars connected to it. Every pillar has to face the direction preplanned by the master builder. Otherwise, it cannot be used no matter how vertically it is erected. **How then does the master builder determine the direction of each pillar? By using his measuring instruments.**

The Bible says, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20–21). What is an **honorable vessel**? It is a vessel who **cleanses himself from dishonor, who is sanctified (holy), and useful to the Lord**. Also, an honorable vessel is not always big. A small vessel can be an honorable vessel. How is honor determined? The honor of a vessel is determined by its usefulness to the Lord. The house of God is in need of many vessels, but every one of them must be useful to the Lord. Vessels who are not useful to the Lord are all dishonorable no matter how many there are or how big they may be. What kind of vessel is

useful to the Lord? It is a vessel that the Lord can use however and whenever He likes.

An honorable vessel useful to the Lord does not have his own rights. The Lord is his master. When the Lord wants him to come, he will come; when the Lord wants him to go, he will go. In the house of God, those who speak from the pulpit, lead hymns and lead services are not always honorable vessels. When we were in Taipei, a sister said to me, “You put me in the typing room and want me to start serving God with typing, but how long before I can serve on the pulpit?” She thought that only those who served on the pulpit were honorable vessels. This is incorrect.

Lately, many youths in Tahiti have expressed their desire to serve the Lord full time. They are going to graduate this year, so they came to discuss with me. They wanted to know whether they should continue with their studies because they had good grades in school and their parents and teachers hoped that they would further their studies. However, one of them didn't want to. She felt that if she were to go on, it would take her at least two more years. She was concerned about what would become of her should the Lord come within these two years. Actually, if the Lord came, she would also be caught up as long as she studied for the Lord. When the Lord comes, it does not matter what one is doing. When He comes, some people will be sleeping in bed! One will be taken and the other left. Isn't that so? If you are sleeping for the Lord, you will still be caught up even when you are sleeping. Nevertheless, that sister was very precious. She said she couldn't wait for another two years. The Eden Longhouse would be completed and the Lord might come to receive the New Testament Church. She was in a dilemma so she went to discuss with Bro. Alfred again. He asked her, “Would you study if Grandpa Hong wanted you to study for two more years?” She said she would. She was so earnest to serve the Lord, but at the same time also very submissive. She dared not have her own way. If the Lord wanted her to put down, she

would. If the Lord wanted her to take up, she would, too. She didn't have her own rights and choices because she had surrendered all of them to God. Such is an honorable vessel useful to the Lord.

Today, the Lord wants every one of us to be honorable vessels who will always allow Him to be Lord and King over us. We will love whatever the Lord loves; we will choose whatever He chooses, and we will reject whatever He dislikes. The Lord's word and His criterion are the standard by which we should live and work. Some people are often careless. To them, a little off the standard is okay. Brothers and sisters, a little off is *not* okay because we are a body in coordination. One slight mistake of a member will affect the whole body. If you are a pillar and you are a little off, others will not be able to coordinate with you. And if coordination fails, the whole construction will not appear. So we must **put aside all the individual ways and let God freely arrange us according to His will. Only then will we be honorable vessels useful to the Lord.**

What are dishonorable things? When we think of dishonorable things, we think of filthy things. Actually, **dishonorable things are things that are from our old self and done by our old self.** The Scriptures state that vessels have to be *sanctified*. **Sanctified means holy.** How does one become holy? **God is holy, and total consecration to God means to become holy.** All those who are not for God or according to God are unholy. **An honorable vessel will always have God as the standard.** But how? By having the vessel set up by God as the standard.

Paul said to the church in Corinth, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Eve was deceived by the serpent into eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Paul described this as minds being corrupted. He went on to say, "For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different

gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it” (2 Cor. 11:4). He added, “For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge. But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things” (2 Cor. 11:5–6). What he meant to say was this: **The gospel (the Jesus) which I, Paul, preached is the standard gospel. For I, Paul, was sent by God and appointed by God to care for the church. The standard for everything is with Paul. Therefore, to acknowledge what Paul preaches is to acknowledge God.**

Many people in the church have neglected this point. They fail to meet the standard God has set. As a result, they toil and labor in vain. The Bible says, “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain” (Ps. 127:1). What is meant by “the LORD builds the house”? Is the LORD doing the work Himself? No, God is doing the work through us, and we are doing it according to His standard. That’s how the LORD builds the house. If we are not doing things according to God, all our labor will be futile.

While Martha was serving the Lord, she was busy outwardly but restless within. She was laborious, but the Lord Jesus did not praise her. Instead, He admonished and felt sorry for her, and praised her sister, Mary. Why? What was the problem? Martha was busy outside the Lord’s will. Actually, the Lord wanted Martha and Mary to sit quietly before Him to understand His will. But Martha neglected this essential point. Brothers and sisters, it is good to be zealous for the Lord, but your zeal must be in God’s will. Otherwise, it will be of no use to the Lord.

While constructing the longhouse, we will have many lessons to learn. Every one of us has to learn them humbly and acknowledge what God acknowledges. Then, all our servings will be acceptable to God and the testimony of unity will appear. I repeat: There are all kinds of vessels in God’s house. Let us strive to become honorable vessels. The honor of a

vessel does not depend on its size, but on its usefulness to its master. An honorable vessel does not have his own rights and choices, but is directed by God as He likes.

We often say that Ezekiel was an honorable vessel. How was he honorable? He could be used by God any way He wanted. Ezekiel was a priest but God suddenly called him to become a prophet. The servings of a priest and a prophet were entirely different, but he willingly let God change his function. This was a very big test. Likewise today, all who desire to serve the Lord will face such a trial. We must be prepared to let Him dispatch us at any time. Otherwise, we will have a hard time submitting to God when He changes our position of serving. Thank the Lord. Ezekiel is our good example. He would obey and go wherever God sent him. Perhaps there are many among us who would prefer to be a priest who could go to the sanctuary daily to come face to face with God. But we may not want to be a prophet who brings God's words to stubborn and rebellious people. Would you accept such a change in your ministration? If you could be like Ezekiel who said "Amen" to God while being sent to the rebellious people, then you will be an honorable vessel useful to Him.

Thank the Lord for choosing us in Southeast Asia to become His honorable vessels. May there be no grumbling or complaining among us. While we were building the Victory Hall on Mount Zion, we didn't see honorable, but rather, dishonorable vessels. The work site was a battlefield. Before I even reached there, I could hear squabbling. Everyone had an ugly look on his face: Some were like lions and some were like tigers. If they were in New Jerusalem, the lions, tigers and bears would be living in peace. Unfortunately, they weren't. At that time, I was in anguish. I dared not go to the construction site without praying beforehand. We hope that such conditions will not appear on Mount Moriah. May every one of us learn diligently so that the inner Eden Longhouse will be built before the tangible longhouse appears. Only then will the Eden Longhouse live up to its name. Those who come to Mount Moriah will be able to enjoy the

commanded blessings.

We have already laid the foundation, and now we will begin with the upward construction. We hope that honorable vessels will be revealed one by one so that this construction may satisfy God's heart.

Be Built into the Body

(May 19, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)

Through many circumstances, God shows how pleased He is with us in building the Eden Longhouse on Mount Moriah. **We build it to display the testimony of unity, testifying that the New Testament Church is the body of Christ. The church is a body, not a group of individuals. She is united, not separated.** What God wants is the testimony of unity. For this reason, God raised up His maidservant Sis. Kong to rebuild the New Testament Church — that is, to establish Christ's body. The denominations are forsaken by God because they are divided. What makes the New Testament Church commendable is her unity. There are twelve tribes in Israel, but they are united as one race. The lifestyle in a longhouse can fully portray the united testimony of the New Testament Church. Therefore, we have to ponder carefully over this matter in order to understand the work of God in our midst.

The first time I was sent to Singapore to hold a convention, I met some western preachers who came to the church. They claimed to have received the Spirit baptism and that they were also “the church.” But our co-workers told them frankly, “You may have received the Spirit baptism, but you are, at the most, mere building materials that have not been built up into a house.” The co-workers quoted 1 Peter 2 and told them, “After you have received the full truth, you came before the Lord as living stones. However, you have yet to be built into the spiritual house.”

These preachers were shocked and said, “What? We are only building materials?” The co-workers answered, “That's right — the Bible makes this point clear. Can you call a pile of building materials a house?” The co-workers were absolutely right. The materials may be of very high quality,

but if they are not fit together into a structure, they will always be materials and no one will be able to live in them.

We are all building materials to be constructed together. Without being constructed into a house, God cannot find rest among us. But how can we be constructed? We need to take a closer look at this matter.

Building materials cannot become a house without being constructed together. Similarly, living stones will not become a spiritual house (the church), unless they are built up. How then can the spiritual house be constructed? First and foremost, we need to know who is entrusted to build the church. The Bible says that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Therefore, the apostles and prophets are entrusted to build the church.

Now we can talk about the process of construction. Before building a house, the builders need to prepare the building materials. To the materials, to be processed is something dreadful. The chain saw will come right at you, not caring about your pain, struggles, or what you think. Nevertheless, preparing the building materials is the first and most basic stage of construction. The wood has to be cut by the builders into their proper lengths before they can be used. Similarly, we have to receive the complete truth before we can be built into the body. We need to learn the lessons of coordination daily — these lessons exceed any lessons we may learn individually.

To be built into the body, we are required to learn to surrender our rights, be absolutely obedient, and deny our own preferences, choices and ways. For example, when these trimmed pillars are to be erected, they **must fully accept the arrangement of the master builder.** The pillars not only have to be upright, but they must also stand in the position arranged by the builder. They must face the right direction and be in line with the central pillar. You shouldn't complain and say, "Why do

you place me in such an obscure corner? Why can't I be like that person who gets to stand in the front to be seen by everyone else? That's so unfair!" No. You have to follow the master builder's arrangement without asking any questions. If he wants you to turn left, you turn left. If he wants you to turn right, you turn right. You can't say, "I don't feel like turning left. Why do I have to turn to the left? Why don't you turn the central pillar to the right instead?" Brothers and sisters, you must listen to the master builder, not vice versa.

You might say, "Why do you turn me here and there? I quit!" Well, if you quit, you won't be built into the body. While learning lessons, these things will often happen. Not only will some refuse to follow instructions, they'll even change the plans of the builder. How then can they be built? How can the spiritual house appear? How can the Lord be satisfied? And how can the Lord find rest?

Mount Zion has this problem. Some people do not follow the master builder's blueprint. Instead, they go by their own standards. The master builder would say one thing, but he would do another, thinking that the master builder could be wrong. The master builder says, "I am making this decision according to the anointing (the Holy Spirit) within me."

But he says, "There is something wrong with the anointing of the master builder." Instead of trusting in the master builder's anointing, he trusts in his own "anointing" because the anointing of the master builder contradicts what he thinks. This is something frightening — it is the beginning of apostasy. When we serve in the New Testament Church, we always have to remember that **surrendering one's own rights and being completely obedient are the most important factors in building up the body.**

The first step of the construction is: **all the materials are to be trimmed and molded according to the blueprint of the master builder.** Secondly, **all the materials will coordinate with one another**

under the leading of the master builder. This is an even deeper lesson. While learning to coordinate, you may find your sworn enemy standing right beside you and you may start complaining, “Why in the world was I put next to him?” Brothers and sisters, building the body not only requires coordination from one side, but from all directions. Your neighbors may not have the same tastes and personality as you, but you still need to coordinate with them and be built up together. We must learn such lessons in the body.

No building material in any construction stands alone. The building materials of the spiritual house are of no exception. **All building materials must be attached to the neighboring parts. Sometimes you’ll be on top, and sometimes you’ll be at the bottom. You need to accept the molding of these circumstances before you can display the testimony of unity.** We must take heed of the leading of the Holy Spirit as we build the body. We must know how to learn this lesson. Every one of us must be ready to surrender his rights at all times so the master builder can mold and arrange us according to the will of God. No matter where He wants to put us, we must say, “Amen.” No matter whom He wants us to coordinate with, we must also “Amen.”

I feel that some of the co-workers in Malaysia do well in this aspect. I am not saying that they are perfect, but they are generally much better than the co-workers in other places. In some places, there are co-workers who are too old to be transferred. But the co-workers in Malaysia are younger so they can be easily re-arranged. If you are too old to be relocated, that will be the end of you. None of us should say, “I’m old. Don’t move me!” Caleb was old, yet he could be mobilized by Joshua according to God’s arrangement. We can grow old, but our spirit must not age. Our spirit of learning lessons must remain young and strong, so that God can rearrange and use us at any time, and as He pleases. In this way, the testimony of the body will appear in its fullness.

It seems easier for us to learn lessons by ourselves than to learn them with others. It is good to learn lessons, but it is even more important to learn lessons in the body. It is not right if we can only live with God but not with our companions. We are lying if we say that we can get along with God while we have problems getting along with our companions. If we can really get along with God, we would surely get along with our companions. All those who cannot get along with their companions have not learned their lessons well.

All of us must learn the lesson of coordination daily. We must never expect to graduate. We must learn until the Lord comes. May the Lord teach us how to learn this lesson so that we, the building materials, can be built into the body and become part of the spiritual house.

Let us often ask ourselves, “Am I building material piling up in the storeroom or am I building material being built into the longhouse? Are there any signs of me being molded by God?” Brothers and sisters, you can now see the many different kinds of materials used for the longhouse: some are round, some square, some long, some short, some thick, some thin... When these materials are sent to the construction site, the builder will start molding them — sawing, drilling, carving — then he will join them together and the house will begin to take shape. The entire process shows how God is going to work on us. He wants to mold us according to His will. He will cut off whatever has to be cut off and He will drill whatever has to be drilled. If we are willing to accept God’s molding, the longhouse will be built soon. If we are unwilling, the longhouse will still be built, but we will have no share in the glory of the spiritual house.

Look at all these wooden materials that have been built into the Eden Longhouse. They are all very obedient. Unfortunately, we, the living stones, are not that obedient — we have too many of our own opinions and ways. Sometimes, when the hammer is about to strike us, we scream and run away. Brothers and sisters, remember that when God wants to mold and

arrange us through the master builder, we must be as obedient as this piece of wood. Let the excavator lift us up when it wants. Let the hammer nail us through. Let the master builder put us in whatever position he likes. Let him choose who he wants us to coordinate with. If we accept the builder's arrangement in this way, a *house* will appear.

Let us learn the lesson of coordination through the construction of the Eden Longhouse. **Let us learn to unite and work with other members, and to accept and help one another. While learning this lesson, let no one have his own preferences, but only follow the blueprint of the builder. Then, God's work will be done.**

Today God has set up various spiritual ministers in the New Testament Church: **the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. They are for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.** Brothers and sisters, when we are being built together in this body, every one of us has his own lessons to learn. Everyone has to accept the equipping of the spiritual ministers. And everyone has to stand in his own position to fulfill his function in the body. In this way, the spiritual house — the spiritual Eden Longhouse — will appear.

Today we are not only building the physical longhouse but also the spiritual longhouse. The physical longhouse is only a symbol. What God really wants to build is us, the spiritual Eden Longhouse — the House of God. He has been showing His pleasure in the construction of the longhouse through many circumstances. Also, through the outward construction, God teaches us how to build up our inner lives. Therefore, let us be thankful. Let us offer ourselves and surrender our rights with godly fear. Let us accept the moldings and arrangements of God. Allow the builder to build us in the body as he likes. Then we shall be built into the spiritual house — a habitation of God in the Spirit. And God shall be satisfied.

To Be Killed All Day Long

(May 21, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)

Brothers and sisters, God loves us so much that He gave us His Son. Will He not also give us all things with Him? (*See Rom 8:32.*) *All things* include every event that happens around us. So we need to pay attention to *all things*. Since all things and matters around us are given by God, we should value them and learn to benefit from them. For it is written: “All things work together for good to those who love God.” **Those who know how to learn lessons will recognize God in all things and will obtain His gifts.** But those who do not know how to learn will have no feeling about anything that happens around them, and will see no meaning in these events. We must seriously face everything that happens around us and recognize that they are all arranged by God. They all have spiritual significance and are meant to work for our good. If we learn attentively, we will coordinate better with others.

Let's say God sends you to work with a sister you don't like. You should know immediately that she is sent by God. If you dislike her, do you dislike God also? I believe that no one would dare say, “God, I don't like You!” If your spirit is bright, you will know that she is sent by God and you will see the Lord come when she comes. Rejecting her is rejecting the Lord. If you look at her in this way, you will find her adorable. **May we find grace daily in all circumstances. Never struggle with the environment. Those who struggle with the environment will never learn their lessons well.**

Once during service, a brother was arranged to sit beside a brother who took raw garlic everyday for a lung ailment. This sick brother had a strong garlic breath — even his sweat smelled like garlic. The brother who

was arranged to sit beside him found it unbearable. He wanted to tell that brother not to eat garlic before service, but at the same time didn't want to interfere in others' freedom. He thought about changing his seat, but he couldn't. His mind was so filled with garlic that he couldn't concentrate on the sermon. He was so restless and frustrated that he couldn't feel the slightest presence of God.

One day as he was reading the Bible, he came across the verse that said, "All things work together for good to those who love God." Finally, this verse dawned on him and he understood: "Garlic could actually work for my good. If this matter could work for my good, then it means that I love God. But if this matter does not work for my good, it proves that I do not love God. However, this matter only makes me feel frustrated. How then can it work for my good? This shows that I don't even love God."

After having been enlightened, this brother pondered: "For my good, God predestined before the creation of the world for this brother to be born, allowed him to contract a lung ailment which required him to eat raw garlic, and arranged for him to be seated next to me. All these were done by God with much careful planning. Yet I was ungrateful and frustrated. I have truly fallen short of God." He repented before the Lord, saying, "Lord, forgive me! This was arranged by You to work for my good. I want to be someone who loves You. Let me benefit from this matter." Once his attitude changed, he felt relieved and overcame the smell of the garlic.

Brothers and sisters, this is a very practical lesson. We are often tried by circumstances. It is easier for us to meet the Lord in prayers than in our surroundings. We usually see only men and things in our surroundings. And what we see may not always be as lovable as the Lord. If we can't see God in the circumstances, we will not learn our lessons. If we meet God through all things and matters, we will be like the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who was **will-**
ing to be killed all day long for God's will.

“For Your sake, we are killed all day long” (Rom. 8:36). What does this mean? Are we going to be killed in the morning, at noon, and in the evening? How could that be? How many lives do we have? **Being killed means getting rid of your soulish life. To be killed all day long is to put your soulish life to death all day long.** Oftentimes, when we don’t learn our lessons well, it is because we don’t know that God is in the circumstances. Instead of being killed all day long, we kill all day long. We kill so much that everyone is afraid of us.

On Mount Zion and on other consecrated lands, there are some brothers and sisters who are very mean. Their words and attitude kill others. One glare is enough to scare others to death! No wonder everyone avoids them. They are not lambs that are being killed, but they are the ones killing. Brothers and sisters, if you refuse to be killed, you will surely be a killer. For the sake of the Lord, we would rather be killed and put ourselves to death. May we learn to be killed all day in our surroundings (circumstances) so that the image of the Lamb will become more and more obvious in us. Then, the drawing power of the Lamb will be manifested through us. The Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain for the sins of the world. May we be the companions of the Lamb who follow the footsteps of the Lamb. Let us imitate Him to be killed all day long, so that God’s will shall be done.

Be a Person Who Speaks and Listens to Truthful Words

*(May 23, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong
during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)*

Yesterday I received a fax which informed us that a portion of the foundation of the Eden Longhouse was not cemented properly. It was not up to standard and could affect the safety of the building. After I read this fax, I was very upset. Since this brother was there and saw that the work was not done correctly, why didn't he say anything? Why did he wait until now to tell us by fax? Wouldn't it have been better if he had told us right then and there? Now it's too late to make any changes.

We are all members of God's household serving God together here. If we have any suggestions to improve this construction, we should feel free to speak the truth. We must do what Paul said: **"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying"** (Rom. 9:1).

I find that it is difficult for us to speak the truth. Bro. Pi mentioned earlier that to love one another we must speak the truth. **Only those who speak the truth are those who truly love others.** Brothers and sisters must speak the truth to one another without covering up anything. Only then are we truthful. If we do not speak the truth to one another, it shows that we do not love one another. When you see a brother or sister doing something that displeases the Lord, or something that will end up bad, you should say something. If you don't say anything just because you're afraid others will get upset with you, then you don't truly love the Lord or your brothers.

There was also such a brother on Mount Zion. Whenever he saw oth-

ers doing something the wrong way, he wouldn't say a word. He knew how to do it the right way, but he just stood by and watched them continue on. He was so "tolerant." He did not have any bad intentions, but this was his personality. Later, when the problem arose and no one knew what to do, I said to him, "Brother so-and-so, this is turning into a disaster. Is there any way to solve it?"

"Yes," he said, "I knew all along that this would happen."

When I heard this, I was very upset. "Since you knew it, how could you just stand there and do nothing about it? If I didn't ask you, you would have never said anything. If you love the Lord and live for Him, why didn't you speak up when you knew it was being done incorrectly?"

He said, "I'm too shy!" He meant: "If I open my mouth, people will say, 'Hey, you think you know everything. You think you are the smartest one around. So we don't know anything? You must be the only one who knows how to do everything right...'" He was afraid to hear such remarks. Such old self and false humility must be broken by God. Otherwise you can never be greatly used by God!

We must speak the truth in the Lord. The more we speak the truth, the more we can display love. But we must make sure that **we speak the truth in love and not in the flesh.**

There is a brother in the West who speaks the truth, but he does not speak the truth in Christ. He always lives in his carnal self and speaks according to his own standard. Paul said, "I tell the truth in Christ." **The truth must be spoken both in Christ and for Christ.**

Sometimes we find excuses for not speaking the truth: "It is useless for me to speak up. So-and-so is very stubborn. It is useless for me to tell him anything." Whether the other party will listen or not, you still must speak

up. If you speak up, you have done your part. Whether the other party listens or not is not your responsibility. But if you don't speak, then you have not done your part, and you are not truthful before the Lord.

Only the love in Christ is truthful. It is like parental love, one that will pay up any price. When parents see their children go astray, they will be concerned. Parental love is real love. If parents don't care for the well-being of their children, they have neglected their duty and have lost their parental love. When we see something that does not conform to God's will, we must speak the truth in the Lord. Only then are we loving each other and loving the Lord. Therefore, to serve well and to be edified by each other in God's house, we need to speak the truth in Christ. All those who refuse to speak the truth are not truthful before the Lord. In other words, they are insincere and dishonest. I repeat: If we have something to say, we must speak sincerely in the love of Christ so as to exhort, remind and help each other. Do not be over-considerate. Only then will we make real progress.

We must also learn to listen to truthful words. When others speak the truth to us, we must listen. The brother from the West I mentioned earlier speaks frank words to others, but seldom accepts others' frank words. Our pride and stubbornness often stop others from speaking the truth to us. Before people open their mouths, we will say, "I know." Since you already know it, what else can others say? Sometimes, people just begin to say a few words, and you interrupt, saying, "I know. You don't have to tell me." This kind of attitude will not bring us grace. May the Lord help us to be someone who **speaks the truth and listens to the truth.** When we **live honestly before God in this way, we will love each other** and we will serve well.

This is our first time building such a huge longhouse. Even the Malaysian government has never built such a large one before. Actually, we never even built a small longhouse before so the project is new to us, and

it's not going to be easy. For this reason, the entire construction from the foundation to the roof needs the concern of all saints. Everyone needs to speak the truth to perfect one another. If you find that a certain part of the construction needs changes or improvements, you must offer your suggestions truthfully. If you do not speak up, you are not being faithful to the Lord. Even if what you say is not accepted, you have done your part, and the Lord will remember you. If you have any related skills and knowledge, you must offer them. Don't let just one person be the one carrying all the burdens, nor let a handful of people overwork their brains. Only with the contribution from the whole congregation can the longhouse be built beautifully. Then this longhouse will be filled with God's glory.

Say “Amen” to God

(June 3, 1995 — Message of the Lord’s servant Bro. Hong during the youth convention on Mount Moriah)

No one can ever oppose the will of God. Although man often tries to, he will never succeed. It is not easy to obey God’s will, but it is easy to oppose it. We often regret after opposing God’s will, knowing that His will can never be opposed. So the more we oppose, the more miserable we will be. The more we oppose, the more God will chastise us. And the more we oppose, the more we’ll lose God’s presence. At the end, we cannot but completely surrender. All of us are like old Jacob who wrestled with God. Oftentimes, God seems to be on the verge of losing to us. But only after He touches our hips do we surrender to Him. These are all because of God’s mercy on us.

God created all things and rules over them according to His own will. Our life and breath and the number of our days are all in His hands. Even the boundaries of our dwellings are determined by Him. No one has ever escaped His destined will. **A spiritually enlightened person recognizes God’s sovereign power and will not dare oppose it.** However, men, being flesh and blood, have many weaknesses. They fail to understand that all things are raised by God to work together for good to those who love Him. As a result, there are many “whys,” and they even blame God for being unfair.

I have met such a person before. He kept complaining how God was so unfair and that there were so many injustices in the world. Throughout his life, he would constantly ask, “Why?” He would say, “People who do good are always down on their luck while those who do evil prosper.” The more he spoke, the angrier he became. He always looked at the circumstances so he argued with God, not knowing God’s will in all things. He

did not know the **sovereign power of God**. He failed to submit to God's sovereignty and benefit from all things.

Many people tend to defend Esau when they read the story of Jacob and Esau in the Bible. In the Bible, God said, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." But these people say, "Esau was honest and diligent. Jacob was crafty, cunning and crooked. Why did God love Jacob and hate Esau?" They just couldn't understand. They didn't realize that this was arranged by God and that He had His will in it. God worked in this way to manifest His manifold wisdom and the richness of His salvation.

A person who fails to recognize God's sovereignty will be miserable. He will have many "whys" and fight against the circumstances. In the end, he will suffer loss.

We often encounter trials and things we cannot understand. As we try to understand them, we ask, "Why is it like this? Why do these things always happen? When will this be over?..." We then fail to submit to God and start to oppose Him. The more we oppose Him, the more miserable we become.

Brothers and sisters, God wants us to learn our lessons and to benefit from all things. He wants us to be obedient, enlightened children who understand His will. He hopes that we can recognize His sovereign power and submit under His hand, that His work may be manifested on us. Therefore, we must **see the significance of all things around us**. We must also **acknowledge God's absolute sovereignty over us**. Don't oppose His sovereignty but let Him mold us as He pleases.

Some women blame God for making them female. The more they are reminded that they are women, the angrier they get. They think that men are in control of women and that women are always the losers, so they think it unfortunate to be a woman.

Brothers and sisters, failure to recognize God's control over His creation brings unrest. God made men and women according to His own will so that He might gain glory through them. This is God's purpose when He created mankind. Both men and women are made to glorify God. If God made you a man, you should glorify God as a man. If He made you a woman, you should glorify Him as a woman. Each has his or her own status and position. If you keep to your God-given position, you will have rest.

Today, God wants us, His chosen race, to recognize His sovereignty and to be thankful. God not only controls every one of us but also all things. He directs all things to work for His will and to accomplish His plan, so that He may gain glory in all things. We should come out of our narrow "self" and enter into God's vastness. Then we will enjoy His rest by faith and our "whys" will disappear and change into "thank the Lord." Mankind is without peace and joy because they keep on opposing God by fighting against the circumstances He has arranged. Today, God wants to rule over all things through the New Testament Church. He wants us to be the first to understand His will, recognize His sovereignty, and submit to His rule. We will be His obedient children who enjoy the riches of His salvation. And because of our recognition and obedience, we will lead all things to come under God's rule and to enjoy peace.

The honorable New Testament Church has appeared in these last days. Her existence plays a vital role in the fate of this last generation and of all things. The New Testament Church is not a religious organization, but a group of God's obedient children who manifest His glory and power. We are here to exalt God's sovereignty and His ruling power, and to proclaim that He is King of kings and Lord of lords. We let His sovereignty be manifested first on us, the redeemed children. If we recognize God's entrustment and stand in our place of redemption, His name will be exalted and His power will be manifested by us. The enemies will become our footstools and be trampled by us. Then all things will be subdued under

our feet. We are the first to find God's mercy, enjoy His salvation and understand His end-time will. **Let us be obedient children. Let us not oppose God's will, disobey His arrangement in the circumstances, or compare with others. Rather, let God's work be accomplished through us.**

Trying to be equal with others is a common bad habit of man. For example, Peter often competed with John and found it hard to submit to God's arrangement. The Lord Jesus said to him, "You should not mind other's business. What is that to you? You follow Me." Brothers and sisters, each of us should follow the Lord according to His predestination. Fix your eyes on Him and not on others. Then, you will not compete with others. If others are prosperous, let them be. If others have many admirers, so be it. What will become of them is between them and God. Just be faithful to what the Lord has measured out for you. If the Lord wants you to be lowly until He comes, just say "Amen." The most important point of the Bible passage we read today is: **Say "Amen" to God in everything.**

You may protest saying, "So many things are unfair! How can I say 'Amen?'" Why can't you say "Amen"? Is God unfair? Is He really that cruel to you? No. God is not being cruel to you. In fact, He is being gracious to you. All His arrangements are good. Sometimes God may let us experience the rigor of His love. The experience of Jacob is the best example. The rigor of God's love molded and edified him. So the difficult circumstances we consider painful and unfortunate are actually the loving hand of God. They are to train us so that we may grow and mature. May we be people who **recognize God's sovereignty and say "Amen" to God in all things.** Let us no longer oppose God's will and argue with Him. May our mouths say "Amen" more often and let God gain more glory on us.

Faithful to the Lord in Secret

(June 3, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the evening youth convention on Mount Moriah)

In the beginning of June, God led us up to the mountains to bring wood. This month is indeed extraordinary! In the past, I did not know about nibong trees. When I visited the native houses at the Kuching Cultural Village, I saw that the walls and floors of many houses were made of nibong wood. It looks like Taiwan's betel palm, which is straight and strong. The companions asked, "Shall we use this material for Eden Longhouse?" I told them that since it was good and inexpensive, why not? But I did not know about the "original state" of nibong. Just now, when I saw it on the video, I was shocked to find so many thorns on it! And each thorn was about two to three inches long!

At first I thought, "Why did we have to pick such a thorny tree as building material? Removing so many thorns is very time consuming." But later I realized that a great building should use all kinds of materials, even something as thorny as nibong.

Actually, we are often as thorny as nibong. But if we let builders work on us, God will still be able to make good use of us. After our thorns are removed, we will become useful. If the thorns are not removed, we will be good for nothing, except for pricking others. Brothers and sisters, God uses all kinds of materials to build His house. No matter how bad and strange our natural self is, or how prickly our personalities may be, as long as we are willing to hand ourselves over to the Lord and let Him perfect and mold us through the spiritual ministers, we will become very good building materials.

After seeing the nibong, I realized that our natural self is frightening.

Yet I am comforted when I think of the salvation of the Lord. Therefore, none of us should become discouraged. **As long as we accept the molding of the Lord, anyone can be used by Him.**

No flesh and blood is justified before God. We are the chiefs of sinners. There is nothing good in our nature. We thank God for having lifted us from the ash heap in His mercies. After He has molded us, He makes us useful in His house. How thankful we are. May we hand ourselves over to the Lord's gracious hands and let Him mold us according to His will. As long as we are willing to accept His molding, He will use us no matter how useless, bad and strange we are. The salvation of God is powerful enough to renew and transform us.

Old Jacob was notorious for being crooked and crafty. But after being molded by God in various ways, and having gone through Peniel, he was transformed into Israel — the prince of God who represented God to reign on earth. What a great transformation! Therefore, it doesn't depend on the capabilities of the vessels, but on their willingness to be molded by the Lord.

I repeat: According to our nature, none of us is good; none of us is useful to the Lord. Each of us has his own personality, shortcomings, weaknesses, and problems. If all these are not removed by the molding hands of the Lord, none of us will be useful to the Lord. As long as we hand ourselves over to Him, even someone as bad, crafty, and crooked as Jacob can be turned into Israel. This reveals God's purpose in election. Since God has chosen us, He will finish His work on us. Therefore, we are full of gratitude.

The Holy Spirit rebuilt the New Testament Church 30 years ago. Since then, many people have come and gone. Which ones left? Most of those who left were intelligent and capable. Many of us who have stayed are uncomely and unskilled in speaking; our speech is always unpleasant and

harsh. Those who have left often scoff at us, calling us simple-minded. They said Bro. Pi could, at the most, shepherd some junior high school students. If Bro. Pi, who was a colonel in the military, almost a general, could only shepherd some junior high students, then we would not qualify for anything. They said very bluntly, “As for the other co-workers, they can only shepherd some old men and women, and the illiterate.”

Some of those who left the New Testament Church were professors, deans of the faculties in universities, managers of newspaper companies, and even chancellors of universities! They were all very intelligent and capable, highly educated and holding high positions. Yet God could not use them. Instead, God uses us who are simple-minded. Therefore, it all depends on whether or not we are willing to be molded by the Lord.

God does not mind if you are foolish, hot-tempered, or unruly. He is really concerned if you refuse to deny yourself, be broken, and molded by Him. As long as you deny yourself and accept God’s breaking, it doesn’t matter if you are foolish, ineloquent, or incompetent. God can still use you. Wisdom, eloquence, and ability are given by God. Do you lack wisdom? God is the source of wisdom, and He will give it to you. Do you lack eloquence? God made man’s mouth. He can give you eloquence. God can also give you ability. We must give ourselves to the Lord and let Him carve and mold us according to His will so that we may become vessels useful to Him.

God gives His church various spiritual ministers to perfect us. If we accept the perfection of these spiritual ministers, we will become vessels for honor, useful in the house of God. A vessel is not judged by its size but by its usefulness. Even if you are a small part of the body, you are useful and indispensable. For example, if you lose the finger nails, which are very small parts of the body, you will not be able to work with your fingers. Therefore, don’t consider yourself a small part of the body. Every part has its own function. The body needs you. Since God has led you to the New Testa-

ment Church to become a member of the body, you have a role to play. God knows how to mold and use you. As long as you let the Lord work on you according to His will, you will have a beautiful serving in the church, and God will be glorified.

May every one of us treasure the functions God gives us and commend ourselves to Him to learn our lessons. Not only do the co-workers and consecrated companions have to learn lessons, but also all brothers and sisters. We have to learn from the smallest things, in the most secret places, and in the most difficult circumstances. Then we will be remembered by the Lord. Brothers and sisters, we must live truthfully before the Lord. We should not do anything for show. We must do everything for God to see and let Him examine us. The lily in the valley won't say, "Oh! Someone is looking; let me bloom nicely. Okay, now nobody is looking, so I'll just bloom a little bit." The lily in the valley will always bloom for God. She will bloom faithfully, with or without anyone watching. She blooms only for God to see.

Each of us needs to learn to live faithfully before God. People often look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. He sees people in secret. If you only work neatly before men but sloppily behind them, God will not be pleased.

While I was in high school, we had a Japanese teacher who was quite a character. Every time we had a dormitory clean-up, he would come to check. How did he check? He did not check places where everyone could see but places where people would overlook — like the edges of the table. Before we knew him, we only did a sloppy job. Later, we learned not only places that could be seen, but also the hidden areas. Brothers and sisters, a sincere learner will learn not only in front of others, but also in secret places. When people cannot see you, the Lord is watching.

Why was David chosen by God? Because he was a faithful vessel who

learned lessons in secret. He was a vessel who could withstand being despised and ignored. The story about him shepherding faithfully in the wilderness as a child is the best example. May the Lord be gracious to every one of us. Let us learn lessons willingly, especially the lessons that must be learned when we are alone. Let us be faithful to God in secret. Let our serving be accepted and remembered by Him.

The New Testament Church is blessed by God, not because we are better than others, but because of His mercy. He gave us a simple heart to willingly accept His molding. In recent years, God has been able to work among us. The co-workers of the New Testament Church do not have their own choice, especially the co-workers here in Southeast Asia. They have learned this lesson well, and have pleased God. Very often you are asked to move from one consecrated land to another. Sometimes, you move several times in one year. The co-workers here are very obedient. For the sake of the Lord, you have given up your own rights. Your submission has brought in today's revival and the churches of Southeast Asia have become examples to the entire New Testament Church. What you have done here is an encouragement to all the churches. They are responding enthusiastically to your ministration here.

The Eden Longhouse is indeed the congregational construction for all the New Testament Churches. All the tribes around the world are having a share in the work. It is being built with the love, heart, blood, and tears of the saints — the manifestation of the love of the saints for the Lord. When we dedicate this Longhouse to the Lord, He will be very satisfied. May the Lord help us complete this good work according to His choice on the New Testament Church.

See God in the Circumstances

(June 7, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning Prayer Service on Mount Moriah)

Degenerate man does not like people telling him what to do, and cannot stand others telling him what he's doing wrong. He wants to be free to do whatever he wants without others interfering. This condition is most prevalent among teenagers. They are unhappy when you show love and concern for them. They think they are grown up and know how to take care of themselves so they don't want their parents to worry about them anymore. They will say, "Leave me alone! If you keep protecting me like that, I'll never grow up." Some kids even teach their parents what to do. My own kids and other children also said the same thing to me. This shows that degenerate man is born with a rebellious nature which worsens with age.

The rebelliousness of teenagers is the most difficult to deal with. Youths of this age must be extra careful. It doesn't mean that those who aren't teenagers can ignore this matter. **It is the nature and weakness of man to dislike being told what to do.** Every one of us must learn to deal with this weakness. **Do not allow this degenerate nature to take root and grow in us, but rather uproot it.** The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." This is an extremely painful lesson. It makes a natural man feel awkward, hurt, and embarrassed. But the Lord Jesus said, "Whoever desires to save his life will lose it." We cannot save this natural life, but we would rather let it suffer and die. If a person learns this lesson seriously, his life will grow quickly and the grace of God will abound in him. Those who always defend themselves when others try to correct them will not learn lessons. If they keep avoiding others' truthful words and protect their soulish life, they will not grow spiritually and will not be able to follow the Lord well.

God has arranged all people and things in our environment to work for our good. Let us bravely face all the circumstances that God allows to come our way, and let us willingly accept the trials He gives us. It is unwise to struggle against the circumstances because circumstances are the hand of God. God is in the environments. We know that God is in heaven, that His words are in the Bible, and that His Spirit dwells in us. But just knowing this is not enough. We must also know that **our God is in our surroundings. Only when we recognize that God is in the environment can we really learn lessons, realize the truth with our lives, and let God be manifested in our flesh.**

If you do not recognize that God is in the environment, you will never learn lessons, and you will not enjoy God's presence in the surroundings. Proverbs 1:20–21 says, "Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech" (NIV). This wisdom refers to the Lord Jesus. *Wisdom calls aloud in the street, in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets, and in the gateways of the city* means that God is calling out and talking in our environments. But oftentimes, we cannot hear His voice. All we hear are human voices. No wonder we cannot accept the circumstances arranged by God.

We will be revived if we hear God's voice in the circumstances. The Bible says that those who hear the voice of the Son of God will live. (See John 5:25.) This is not a theory, but a reality. Have you had this kind of experience? Every one of us should have such a life experience, not only once or twice, but at all times and in all places. May the Lord circumcise our ears so we can hear *the voice of the Son of God* in the environments. Then our lives will grow speedily.

God loves us. He speaks to us through the surroundings: through fellow members of the body, and through the people and events around us. Never think that the people, things, and events around you are coinciden-

tal. The Bible says, "All things work together for good." *All things* means everything. Everything that happens around you is included in *all things*.

This is the truth, that all things work together for good to those who love God. God is the God of all things. Suppose a child begins to cry during service. Would you think that it was part of the *all things arranged by God to work together for good to those who love Him*? How would you react? Would you remain calm, or would you be annoyed? To be annoyed is our natural response. But our first response should be: This is arranged by God to work for my good. We should have this response to everything. If we do, we'll be blessed. Consider this: How many things have we experienced in a day from morning till evening? How many things has God arranged to work for our good? It would be wonderful if we could benefit from half of the incidents arranged for us in one day. We would surely become completely different people! I hope that we will learn from this point of view.

Brothers and sisters, God is indeed in the circumstances. He truly causes all things to work together for our good. This is the love of God. But just knowing this theory is not enough. We must learn this lesson practically. Circumstances will reveal how mature our lives are. I repeat: Recognizing that all things work together for our good is the practical way to gain grace. Let this truth be realized in our lives. Let us be people who can accept corrections. The more we are willing to be corrected and broken by others, the faster we will grow. Then the stature of the fullness of Christ will soon appear.

If you do not see God in the surroundings, you will always be easily hurt. You will be upset at the glare of others, even before you are reprimanded. You will have a lot of feelings: "Why are you looking at me like that? I didn't do anything to you... You probably woke up on the wrong side of the bed. Who do you think you are? You don't want to talk to me? I don't want to talk to you either." The more you think about it, the angrier

you become. A person who lives in the flesh is so fragile. But one who learns his lessons and meets God in the circumstances will be strong. He will not stumble at blunt words. Instead, his life will be more abundant, just like an evergreen tree. The Bible says that the righteous will flourish and bear fruit in old age — how glorious!

May the Lord be gracious to us. May every one of us have the desire to learn lessons and find grace through the surroundings so that our spiritual lives may grow. I hope that we will have a new start and learn well. When we see each other, let's encourage one another by sharing testimonies of the grace we find, instead of chitchatting. If we write down our precious experiences of how we see God through our surroundings, these writings could be considered another exciting *A Living Testimony to the Truth*. Such real-life experiences will edify others.

Sojourning in the Promised Land

(June 8, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude — innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.** For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

(Heb. 11:8–16)

The verses above say that God is not ashamed to be called the God of these people. Instead, He is proud of them. Brothers and sisters, we are testifying that we are God's children and His witnesses. But will our God also testify for us saying, "I am not ashamed to be called your God. I am proud of you, the New Testament Church"? Sometimes we feel that we have shamed God by calling ourselves God's children because we are

unable to satisfy and glorify Him. We are God's children but we are not like Him — our life, work and ministration still cannot testify to His glory, so we cannot draw people to us. Brothers and sisters, we all feel the same. If we cannot glorify God, exalt His name, and satisfy Him, then our work and ministration have no meaning or value. This is something every child of God needs to consider.

Concerning the witnesses of faith, Hebrews 11 says that God was not ashamed to be called their God. He was proud of them and they were proud of God. What was this group of people like? What was so special about their life, work, and ministration that made God feel so proud of them? The special trait of this group of people is that they were **sojourners in the Promised Land. They had the spirit of sojourning.**

God raised up His maidservant Sis. Kong in the end-time to rebuild the New Testament Church. He separated us from the denominations and brought us back to the New Testament Church to testify for Him together in the glorious vision. In our midst, God wants to regain the testimony that has been lost in the denominations. People will then see that the God of Abraham is now the God of the New Testament Church. And God will not be ashamed to be called the God of the New Testament Church.

Brothers and sisters, the beautiful land of Canaan was the Promised Land inherited by Abraham. Before that, Abraham was wandering in the foreign land, Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur was their temporary dwelling place. Everything — from what they dwelt in, used, and ate, were all simple. But after Abraham entered the Promised Land, by right, he should have settled down, built houses and lived there comfortably. Since the Promised Land was a permanent place to live, he would have made plans and begun to take root. But Abraham did not do that. He sojourned in the land of promise. **Such spirit of sojourning is what the New Testament Church needs to have.**

Sometimes it also dawns on us and we ask ourselves: “Are we staying here forever? Will we be living here when the Lord comes? Will we be living here during the Great Tribulation?” We are often reminded that we have no permanent abode on earth.

Although Abraham was in the Promised Land, he lived in the spirit of a sojourner. He confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on earth. This was one of the reasons God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham. It is important to have the spirit of a sojourner because we are the citizens of heaven. **Whenever we lose this spirit of sojourning, we will lose the characteristics and glory of heavenly citizens. We will also lose our heavenly citizenship and the strength to go on. Consequently, we will lose the power of attraction.** Brothers and sisters, **it is the spirit of sojourning in the Promised Land and the life of wandering on earth** that draws people to us. We, this group of **sojourners, are not rooted on earth.** Instead, we are waiting for that city which has foundations.

If we are filled with the spirit of sojourning and live in the realm of a sojourner, we will live, work, and serve like heavenly citizens. The pattern and characteristics of heavenly citizens will then be manifested through us. From us, people will see the glory of the kingdom of heaven. May the Lord restore these special characteristics in us. Don't think that the days of wandering are over, and that since we have returned to Zion and are living in the Promised Land, we should make permanent plans for the future. If we have such thoughts in us, we have unknowingly become deeply rooted on earth and our tents have become concrete buildings. The people of Zion have currently fallen into this condition because they are no longer sojourning. Their livelihood and all they have are based on *long-term* plans. Their city which has foundations is the earthly Zion, not the heavenly Zion. This is something terrible. No wonder some people suggested transferring and relocating the people of Zion.

I feel that the companions in Southeast Asia have adapted well to a mobile life. There are a lot of consecrated lands here, but not many consecrated people. So these companions are constantly being transferred and moved. It is less likely for them to take root on earth since they are moving all the time. It is even difficult for them to own some furniture. But if we relocate the people of Zion, it will be hard for them to move. A single family alone may need two trucks for the move. They may say, "Hey, it's not easy to move! I can't move! Forget about moving!" No wonder they no longer have the power to attract others, and no wonder they do not dwell in harmony.

When Abraham and Lot left Ur of the Chaldeans, they had nothing. Since there was nothing to fight for, they did not fight. Later on, God blessed them. But when their possessions increased, their herdsmen began to quarrel with each other and could no longer dwell in harmony. Don't you think this is ironic? This shows that trouble begins **when degenerated men take root on earth**. Therefore, **we need to imitate Abraham to sojourn in the Promised Land and desire a better homeland**. I hope every brother and sister can see that there is a better homeland ahead. That is Mount Zion in heaven, the holy city New Jerusalem. **May this better homeland draw us all the days of our lives** and make us lead a sojourn life on earth.

A person who has the spirit of sojourning regards everything as temporary. He is content with food and clothing. He is not concerned about living a comfortable and easy life. If God restores this spirit among us, that wonderful and great drawing power will reappear in our midst again.

Who has the greatest drawing power? The Lord Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). This power is so great that it draws all peoples to Him. This is the **drawing power of the Lord Jesus**. How is this drawing power produced? **Through being lifted up from the earth! It means being off the ground and not**

touching it; it means not taking root in the ground. When the attraction of the world had no power over Him, the drawing power was produced.

Do we want our livelihood, work and ministration in the consecrated land to draw people to us? Imitate our Lord Jesus who was lifted up from the earth: “I am willing to be lifted up from the earth for the will of God. I have no foothold on earth. There is no place on earth for me to take root to the ground. If there is, it is the cross. **The cross is my only position on earth.**” From afar you would see that Jesus’ feet did not touch the ground. He only touched the ground through the cross. Such a Man had the power to draw all peoples to Him. This is the drawing power of the cross, and the drawing power of the crucified Christ — this is the greatest drawing power in the universe.

Do we want to draw all nations to us? If we do, then let’s **imitate the crucified Christ to have no position on the earth. Our only position is on the cross.** If so, the drawing power will radiate from us.

As a sojourner in the Promised Land, Abraham had no foothold on earth. The spirit of Abraham — the spirit of a sojourner — is the spirit of the cross. The spirit of Mount Carmel’s thirty mighty men — the spirit of having no present, no future, no education, and no career — is also the spirit of the cross. How fascinating! How touching! God is glorified! Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called the God of the thirty mighty men.

May God restore the spirit of sojourning among us and let not the tent and the altar disappear from our daily life. **The more obvious the tent and the altar, the stronger the heavenly drawing power will be. If they are not obvious, it proves that we have taken root in the ground.** When the tents are replaced by houses with foundations, there will be no more drawing power. When Abraham sojourned in the Promised Land of Canaan, he had tents and the altar. When he moved to Egypt, the tents and

the altar disappeared. But when he returned from Egypt, he had the tents and the altar again. The tents and the altar were the sign of Abraham's testimony. So, as God's children, especially those who live on the consecrated lands, we must always examine ourselves to see whether or not we are rooted on earth. If any small root has begun to grow, you must cut it off immediately! Don't let it continue to grow!

Before Sis. Kong was called by God, she led a very sophisticated life. But after she was called, her life was simple. She gave up all her luxurious possessions and kept only two dresses — one to wear for preaching, while the other was at the wash. When I went to Hong Kong for the first time, brothers and sisters took me to see a bathroom with a bathtub. They said, "Sis. Kong puts a piece of plywood on top of that bathtub and sleeps there at night." How could anyone be so poor? That is what any person would think. But Sis. Kong did not feel sorry for herself nor was she sad. Instead, she felt glorious. She said, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." Let us imitate Sis. Kong, to live in the spirit of a sojourner. Let us not belie the Lord's calling, but rather let Him be glorified and satisfied in our midst. May we draw more people to God and to the things of heaven.

Hymn 176 is a very good hymn. It is a hymn of the witnesses of faith and of sojourners. It is full of heavenly breath and drawing power. Let's sing this hymn often in the spirit as we follow the footsteps of Abraham. Let's be sojourners on earth and in the Promised Land so that God will not be ashamed to be called our God.

Accept the Rigor of God's Love

(June 9, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)

It rained heavily yesterday, and the river rose. The steel bars of the dike we were constructing at Zion's foothill were covered by the flood. Now, the people of Zion have to wait for the rain to stop and the flood to recede before they can clean the steel bars and make the form work for the cementing. We believe there is God's good pleasure in everything. Everything the Lord does is the best, so we must say "Amen" to all of His works. May the Lord be glorified in all things. Through all these hardships, may our spirit become more alert and steadfast, and our faith more established. Let us continue to pray. May God control the weather so that we may soon complete the dike which would protect Mount Zion from the surging flash flood.

This morning I strongly feel that God loves us and He will discipline those He loves. He will not let us do as we wish because we are His own, not illegitimate, children. Therefore, we are willing to accept His discipline and molding through all kinds of circumstances. However, sometimes we fail to understand His love. We feel that God's discipline is too harsh and unbearable. Especially when we see others having an easy and prosperous life, we may think to ourselves, "I am the only one who is so pitiful. I'm full of hardships and setbacks. My sufferings and battles are endless." We tend to think ourselves unfortunate and ask God why all these things happen to us. Sometimes we even get angry and want to say good-bye to God. But God will never allow His beloved ones to become discouraged. When circumstances become trying, His loving call will come upon us once again. As soon as you hear it, your whole heart will be softened, causing you to obediently offer yourself anew in tears.

The New Testament Church was built 30 years ago, but many have left the church since. I wonder how these people could leave so peacefully. Some even felt that they were full of God's presence. I was really puzzled. How could they possibly leave the New Testament Church and still enjoy the presence of God? We were never able to succeed in leaving. Whenever we tried to leave, God would bind us with a fence of love. He would stretch out His hands and immediately discipline us so that we could not do as we wish. This is a sign of God's love toward us. When we touch His love, we will be at peace in all the afflictions that He measures out to us.

I remember that in 1969, when we were about to hold a co-workers' meeting at Sitiawan, West Malaysia, a local riot was at its worst. But invitations to the meeting had already been sent out and brothers and sisters had begun arriving. What could we do? At such a critical moment, many people tried to leave the country. Some co-workers were more fortunate. One of them had just been married and returned to Hong Kong. Another one returned to Taiwan because of family matters. When we went to send them off at the airport, we were overwhelmed with unspeakable feelings. I desperately wanted to leave too, but I could not. Not only could I not leave, I had to head toward the most dangerous area of the riots. Everyone was fleeing West Malaysia for Singapore, but we were heading into West Malaysia from Singapore. People looked at us as if we were crazy, wondering why we were going to Kuala Lumpur. On our way, we did not see a single car, except for some police cars at the checkpoints.

When we arrived at Sitiawan, the elders had a meeting and discussed whether they had to apply for a permit or not. Someone said, "We had better apply, because if the authorities see us gathering together, they might wipe us out with machine guns." Someone else said, "But what if we are not granted a permit?" Whether or not we should apply was a difficult decision to make. Everyone looked to me to decide, so I was put in a difficult position. Later, by faith and by the grace of God, we decided to hold the service without a permit. If the Malay soldiers saw us and wanted to

shoot us down, we were prepared for it. But even with such a determination, we were still nervous.

Whenever I recall this encounter of mine, I would feel that it was easy for some other co-workers to walk on the way of the New Testament Church. But not for me. My way was always so full of battles and afflictions. I could not understand why I had such a hard life.

But I thank God, for the Holy Spirit later taught me that this was the **love of God**. This is **how God molds and trains His vessels**. Without such trials and training, God's vessels will not be mature and take form, and their ministry will not be revealed. **Without going through crushing and hard trials, no one will be able to handle the divine mission.** Anyone who has a greater entrustment from God will receive greater molding. When God wants to acquire some strong vessels, He will specially measure out many afflictions for them. They will abound in trials. As Paul said, "I labored more than the other apostles." Another example is Moses. God used many circumstances and spent much time molding him. Moses lived for 120 years, but God trained him for two-thirds of his lifetime. God did not call and use Moses until he was eighty years old.

Vessels chosen by God must accept God's equipping. **While being equipped, you will not have your own freedom or will.** You will not be allowed to do what others are allowed to do. If you were to compare yourselves to others, you would probably keep asking, "Why?" Full of bitterness, you would not be able to go on living, not even for a day. At that moment, you should realize that this is God's discipline of love — this is God's special equipping and strict training. This will prevent you from giving in to your flesh or doing whatever you want. This will also help you undertake your mission. On the path of following the Lord, if you simply do as you like, you should know that danger is awaiting you. Your days of sorrows are just ahead!

The Lord Jesus said to Peter, “When you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish” (John 21:18). Peter might have said, “No! I’m not willing!” But the Lord had already predestined it. There was nothing Peter could do, whether he liked it or not. The Lord seems to be strict and cruel toward the vessels He loves and calls. The vessels might ask, “Lord, why do you ill-treat me?” But the Lord will reply, “Because I have chosen you. I consider you worthy to suffer all these hardships with Me.” **God has been merciful to us. He has chosen us to walk on the way of experiencing the rigor of His love.** Is the Lord being too cruel to you? No, you should thank God, for **He has exalted you and considers you worthy to suffer the rigor of His love.** He lets you go through what others do not encounter. This is to specially train you to become special vessels who can carry out extraordinary missions.

The mission God gave Moses was great and unusual, so Moses needed special training. Today, God has also entrusted us with an unusual and difficult task: To bring all nations back to Eden; to free all creation from the bondage of corruption and redeem them to enjoy rest; to crush the evil kingdoms of man; and to turn the kingdoms of this world into the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Therefore, He will not be lenient on us nor allow us go our own way. But looking back on all the hardships we went through, we will thank God, saying, “O Lord, fortunately You did not let us have our own way and walk a smooth path. We are blessed to be walking on this difficult way. Otherwise, we would not have seen so many glorious works nor experience extra grace from You.”

Paul said, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” Therefore, by the grace of God, we are willing to offer ourselves again and again. Today, we also experience the same thing in all trials and afflictions. We want to express our heart’s desire: “O Lord, to accomplish the special mission You have entrusted us, we are willing to accept the rigor of Your love. May You

not let us do as we wish. Let us always see Your hand stop us from going down the wrong path. We would rather accept the rigor of Your love and suffer together with You on earth, that we may share the glory together with You in heaven.”

How the Whole Building is Joined Together

*(June 18, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong
during the Sunday service on Mount Moriah)*

On May 17, we laid the foundation of the longhouse. Today, we are going to erect the center pillar. This piece is very important because every part of the building is connected to it. Whether or not the whole structure will be strong and well-connected depends on this center pillar. This is a spiritual mystery. Ephesians 2:21–22 says, **“In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”** This “whom” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole building has to be joined together in Him to become a holy temple. Ephesians 4:16 says, **“From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”** Today, God wants us to experience this portion of the Bible with our lives. He wants us to understand this part of the truth through the center pillar we will erect today. This understanding will help us coordinate in the future.

We need to learn to coordinate well, but how? Do I coordinate with you, or you with me? We say that we have to be in the same mind, but who is going to be in the same mind with whom? Are you going to have my mind, or am I going to have yours? We have so many people, and each one has a mind of his own. Who are we going to be like-minded with? This is confusing.

People always want others to agree with them and support them, but

they don't like to yield to others. This is the problem with our coordination. We often fail to coordinate well with others and instead blame others for it. We complain that they are bad-tempered and hard to get along with. Today God wants us to know how we should coordinate in the church. What is the standard of coordination? This truth is clearly mentioned in the Bible.

Ephesians 4:15 says, **“But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ.”** **The whole body must be connected to Christ, the Head. This is the standard of coordination. This is also the key to a good coordination.** Today, God wants us to live out this truth. Every member must be connected, not to just anyone, to him, to you or to me — but to Christ, the Head. The center pillar we are going to erect today is very important. Every beam must be connected to it. If the beams are not connected to the center pillar, they will lose their functions and be useless.

When the New Testament Church was just rebuilt in Taiwan, there were preachers returning from various denominations. It was good that they returned, but when they tried to co-work together it was a disaster! Everyone was an expert in his own field and each tried to impress Sis. Kong with his own accomplishments. Some said, “Hey! When I was in the denomination, I was not afraid of anyone, not even those bishops sent from overseas.” He meant that he was not afraid of anyone; he was so conceited. There were so many of these “great” and “capable” people. So, the services were full of strife and disputes. As soon as someone went up to speak on the pulpit, another person would go up and snatch away the microphone. There was absolutely no coordination. That was the condition of the New Testament Church in her early days.

Today, God wants us to learn the most important lesson, which is **co-ordination**. We often find it hard to understand the Bible, but God teaches us through the environment. Through raising this center pillar, we now

understand what is meant by “in whom the whole building, being joined together.” Thank the Lord. After the center pillar is erected, all the beams will be fitted together according to this pillar, which is the standard.

The meeting place of the longhouse has three levels. The beams for the first level have already been connected to the center pillar. Following that, the beams of the second and third levels will also be connected to it. Whether or not this premise will be completed successfully — whether it will fit together well, and whether it will be solid and strong — all depend on the center pillar, and on how well each beam is connected to it. **There is a principle for us to follow when we coordinate. That is to always focus on the center. Without a center as the standard, it would be very hard for all the parts to coordinate well.**

The denominations also know that Christians must be in the same mind and should not be divided. However, they cannot be united and fail to display the testimony of unity. Why? Because they don't know whom to be in the same mind with. How can the Presbyterians be in the same mind with the Baptists? There are tens of thousands of denominations. Who should be like-minded with whom? The Christian Assembly always talks about the building of Christ's body. They say that we must not be divided because the body of Christ is one. But how can we be one? Can the Presbyterians comply with the Christian Assembly to be one? No! Can the Christian Assembly comply with the Presbyterians to be one? Impossible! Without a center, or standard, there won't be any true coordination or testimony of the body.

What is most precious about the New Testament Church is that God has raised up apostles among us. They are chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. God lays the foundation of the church through the apostles. God's words are preached by the apostles to equip the saints for the work of ministry so that they may grow up in all things into Him who is the head (*see* Eph. 4:15).

“Exalt Christ the Head!” has become the anthem of the Christian world. But how is Christ exalted? When the Israelites were bitten by serpents in the wilderness, they died. Then the LORD told Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up. When all those bitten by the serpents looked at the bronze serpent, they lived. This bronze serpent symbolizes the crucified Lord Jesus. But **who lifted up this serpent?** Moses did. **God asked Moses to lift up the bronze serpent. Moses of the Old Testament era represents the apostles of the New Testament era.** Therefore, **Jesus Christ is exalted by the apostles.** The testimony of Jesus Christ contains the complete truth of *Blood, Water and Holy Spirit*. **This Christ is preached through the apostles by revelation.**

The denominations have many evangelists like Billy Graham, who held a convention this month in Canada. Some 800 denominations invited him. The convention took a year to prepare and cost millions of dollars. His sermon was translated into 20 languages at the same time. But what kind of gospel is he preaching? He doesn't even preach Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues. What he preaches is a perverted gospel because it is different from Paul's. He is a fox among the ruins! He shall be cursed by God! Such a preacher cannot exalt Christ. Only God's maidservant Sis. Kong could exalt Christ because she was an apostle appointed by God. She preached the complete testimony of Jesus Christ — Blood, Water, and Holy Spirit. The head of the church, Jesus Christ, was exalted by her. Since then, God has wanted all His children to receive the complete gospel preached by Sis. Kong. Then they can be connected to the Head — Christ — and be built upon the foundation of Christ, the Rock.

We thank God. The New Testament Church has the **standard, direction, and center of coordination because there are apostles** in the New Testament Church. **The New Testament Church submits to the leading of the apostles and abides by their teachings. Therefore, the New Testament Church can coordinate well and attain unity.** Now, this testimony of unity is becoming more concrete in the New Testament

Church. Through the construction of the Eden Longhouse, God wants us to abundantly display the unity of Christ's body — the New Testament Church rebuilt by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets. Everyone is growing up quickly in this body. Whenever the leading of the Holy Spirit is preached by the apostles on Mount Zion, the word would quickly spread throughout the world through today's advanced means of communication. Thus, all the churches can immediately follow up. A new hymn sung on Mount Zion in the morning would be sung in the whole world by the afternoon. All the offshoots of Zion and the churches do the same, and it is evident that we have become one in the truth. I believe that God will channel more things to work for our good so that the gospel of the kingdom of heaven will be preached even faster, and so that the churches can catch up even more quickly.

We said that modern technology would be channeled by God to help the New Testament Church preach the gospel. These words have now been fulfilled. We ask the Lord to not only give us advanced equipment, but also skilled people in this field. We must earnestly ask the Lord to channel the world's best media to work for our good, like what happened on Mount Tabor. We didn't spend a single penny to publicize Mount Tabor, yet through the fire on our neighbor's land, Mount Tabor was made known in all of Polynesia. May the Lord likewise let the gospel be preached and let Mount Zion be known by all nations and kingdoms. If God thinks it is time, He will raise up circumstances to work for us. Perhaps Mount Moriah will be made known in the whole world shortly. If God wants to do it this way, He will. Nothing is impossible to God. What we need to do is abide by the will of God and learn our lessons to display the testimony of unity.

Thank the Lord for letting us have a share in the revival. God wants us to display the testimony of unity so that this generation may see His salvation through us. His salvation is so abundant, glorious, and honorable. How do we display the testimony of unity and a harmonious coordination? Through being connected to Christ, the Head. And how can we be con-

nected to Christ? **Through the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers — that is to say, through the perfection of the spiritual ministers, we are connected to Christ. From Christ, the whole body is joined and knit together, and when each part is working properly, causes the growth of the body.**

May every one of us learn to coordinate well. We must not be self-centered. We must let the Lord be our center. We should not have a mind of our own, but the mind of the Lord. If every one of us can put aside his own opinions and feelings, and submit to the Lord (submit to the spiritual ministers), we will be able to coordinate well. Although the lessons of coordination are hard to learn, God will help us. Sometimes we don't want to learn, but He will raise up circumstances to force us to learn. This is because He loves us. All we have to do is to display the testimony of unity and let the name of God be glorified. He will draw all nations to Him through us. Unprecedented revival will come in an instant. It all depends on how well we learn.

Let me say it again: if we humble ourselves and learn diligently, the testimony of harmonious coordination will appear. Then visitors will come to Mount Moriah. We must have a construction plan for a parking lot. I don't know when these words will be fulfilled, but one day, when you see many visitors' cars coming here, you will be reminded of my words on June 18, 1995. At that time, your mouths will be filled with shouts of "Hallelujah!" I believe that the day for visitors to come here is near. That day shall come. Also, with the development of the seaport at Bintulu, I believe Bintulu will one day be bustling with people. Visitors from all places will come. At the airports or on the streets, they will hear that there is a Mount Moriah with the world's biggest longhouse. Many will come here to see it. At that time, it will be very easy for us to testify and preach to them.

On Mount Zion, we are short of people to preach the gospel. There are many tourists in all corners of Zion, from the fishpond, to the temple,

and even beneath the trees. In the past, we used to spend the whole day preaching the gospel on the streets, inviting people to come to the church. We could hardly convince anyone to come, and sometimes, we were even scolded. But now people come to Mount Zion by themselves, and wait for us to preach to them. It will be the same for Mount Moriah in the future.

Thank and praise the Lord. Mount Zion is exalted, and so will be her offshoots. God shall bless the offshoots of Zion as He blesses Zion. Only then can we say that Mount Zion is shooting forth her branches. Mount Moriah is a very big branch. As it flourishes, it may one day out-grow Bethel, Hebron, and Mount Carmel. May the Lord help us to speedily complete the Eden Longhouse. Very soon, we shall see a global convention held here.

After the service, we are going to erect the center pillar. After it is erected, the standard will be revealed. Every piece of building material and beam will be aligned with it, by which all parts will be fitted together. The testimony of the body of Christ will then appear. The more abundant the testimony of the body is, the more God will draw all nations to return. Hallelujah!

Hold Fast to the Principles in the Spirit of Discussing

*(June 20, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong
during the morning prayer service on Mount Moriah)*

I have been very worried since the center pillar was raised two days ago. The center pillar is long and thin, and the ring attached to it at the top is heavy. Had the pillar fallen, someone would have been crushed, because people were always around it. It would have been even worse if the pillar fell towards the brothers who were pulling the rope on top of the roof. They would have had nowhere to run. It was extremely dangerous and the whole scene made everyone tense.

All the beams were connected to the center pillar like an umbrella. The project was extremely dangerous. Every scene was frightening, and every task difficult. However, God protected us. At 7:21 P.M., the work was completed, and we shouted for joy. When the brothers (Miau-sing, Yu-seng, Wek-kiong, and Peter) came down safely, we were finally at ease, and we loudly shouted, "Hallelujah!"

Thanks be to the Lord. We never thought that we could work so fast. In just one afternoon, thirteen beams were put in place. Indeed, the gracious hand of God helped us. Through this construction, God wants us to understand the mystery of the truth. Our speed was so quick because we coordinated well in every work, whether it was carrying the logs, operating the excavator, or connecting the beams. Every member did his own part, so the work was done smoothly. This tells us that if we can coordinate well, the work of God will be done quickly. The enlightenment we gained through this construction will help us learn many lessons in the future. If we do the Lord's work with all our might and in one accord, we will have no time to

quarrel and strive with each other. The whole project was done in one mind and with good coordination. Those who carried the logs would put the beams near the excavator while the operator lowered the bucket. Then someone would tie the beam onto the bucket and secure it. The excavator operator would then lift up the bucket with the beam and two brothers would take hold of one end of the beam from above, while two other brothers took hold of the other end of the beam from the bottom. Then, the brothers would connect the beams to the pillars. Finally, Bro. Wu would climb up to untie the rope. This is how each of the sixteen beams were secured. The more the brothers connected the beams, the more experienced and harmonious they became, and the more efficiently they worked. All these carry spiritual mysteries.

The more dangerous a situation is, the more love brothers and sisters will have, and the more concern they will show for each other. This is the pride of the churches in Southeast Asia. When I see this scene, I am full of thanksgiving and consolation. This is why I like to go to the construction site. The brothers and sisters are so united and harmonious, everyone working faithfully in his own position. This is a very beautiful testimony. May we keep this spiritual virtue all the time and be of one mind in all things.

Some people work and please God. Others do the same work but hurt God's heart. Brothers and sisters, God does not care if you have done the job or how much you have done. What He looks to see is what kind of spirit you have when doing the work. Do you learn lessons from your work? Does the Lord Jesus increase in you? This is what God wants to see. This is also the value of our labor. **All our work will pass away, but the spirit in which we do the work will remain.** If we work in the spirit of submission, faith, and peace, then it will have eternal value. Otherwise, our work has no spiritual value.

The beams for the first level of the roof have been connected. Next, we'll do the second and third. The work will become more and more diffi-

cult and dangerous. So we must pray earnestly, asking the Lord to help us complete it smoothly.

The lawn in front of the longhouse needs to be cleared out. This is where we will have our praising services. The altar also has yet to be built. Behind the longhouse, we plan to dig a big lake with a paved road around it. Some co-workers suggested making a small island in the middle of the lake and building a gazebo and planting some coconut trees on the island. They also suggested having some native canoes in the water so brothers and sisters could row in the lake by the swaying coconut trees. This would make you feel as though you were in Eden Isle. The lake would add to the beauty of Mount Moriah. It would also solve some of our water supply and irrigation problems here. We hope to complete all of these projects by the end of the year. May God's gracious hand help us to construct everything according to the Lord's desire.

To complete all these works, we need God's help. We should learn to respect each other and deny ourselves. Then, we will not have conflicts. We can offer our knowledge, but **we should never insist on our own opinions. Not insisting means leaving room for discussion. If we insist, we will never be able to discuss with others.**

Why was the Victory Hall construction site on Mount Zion always like a battlefield? Because the companions there always insisted on their own ideas. Not insisting does not mean giving up Biblical principles; it means having a spirit of discussing (the spirit of fellowship in humbleness). It is right to stick to your principles, but how? You must do so in the **spirit of discussing**.

Discussions are always based on the principles of the Bible. After Sis. Kong preached the truth on Holy Spirit baptism, she encountered many battles. The false co-workers wanted her to repent, and the genuine co-workers did, too. So what did Sis. Kong do? She held fast to the principles

of the truth. Yet, she had a spirit of discussing, a spirit of humility. She did not say, “What’s wrong with what I preach? Tell me! If you don’t believe, fine!” Such a spirit is not a humble spirit nor is it a spirit of discussing. Sis. Kong prostrated before God and said, “Lord, this is the truth You entrusted me to preach. But the co-workers feel that I am wrong. Lord, I bring this matter before You. If what I preach is wrong, tell me, and I will put it down.” She prostrated before God and did not argue with the co-workers who misunderstood her. She entrusted this matter to God, and waited before Him, at the same time giving the co-workers time to understand. Instead of despising or condemning them, she patiently explained to them the gospel she received from the Lord.

We must learn to be more like Sis. Kong, especially those who are here working together. **We must coordinate in the spirit of discussing. The principles of the truth must be held fast to, but the way you discuss must not be sharp and harsh.** After having some fellowship with the co-workers, I feel that we must take more heed in learning this lesson. Sometimes, we unknowingly hurt others’ feelings by the way we say things. When a brother offers his opinion about something, another brother who could not agree with him would subjectively reply, saying, “That’s not right. Nobody would do it that way!” Saying things in this way tramples others’ feelings, and shows no respect for others. It is a spirit of disdain and contempt, and is even a form of accusation. How you say things makes a big difference in everything you do. If you say the right things, you will not hurt others; if you say the wrong things, you will kill others. Therefore, we must be careful when we speak. As the Bible says, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt”** (Col. 4:6).

In all things we must have a gentle spirit, not only in words, but also in attitude. Sometimes, one careless word or expression will hurt others. Therefore, we must, in our daily life and in all things, **pay attention to other people’s feelings. Try not to let others feel bad or uncomfortable in any way. Always bring peace to others.** This is what the Lord

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you” (John 14:27). Let us imitate the Lord, to bring peace to men and leave peace with them. Do not make people feel uneasy. When you are not around, everybody is at peace and rest. But once you come, their peace leaves them. This should never happen. As we coordinate and serve together, every one of us must learn this lesson. Don’t just seek for your own comfort and happiness. While you are happy, others may be hurt. If this happens, we must examine ourselves. Let us diligently learn to do things that bring peace. **Let us always bring peace to others.**

The Bible says, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9). In almost all of Paul’s epistles, he would bring God’s grace and peace to others through his greetings. This was not a formality to him. Paul’s greetings flowed from his life — to bring the Lord’s peace to those he cared for. When he wrote letters to the church of Corinth, he hoped that the saints in Corinth would find peace. He hoped that everyone he met might find the peace of God. This was the spirit of Paul, the apostle. Today, we are willing to imitate Paul to learn to **bring peace to others**. Let others see God’s peace, grace, and blessings on us. Only such a testimony can display the fullness of the church.

No one can say that he has graduated from learning lessons. We must learn this lesson of coordination until we grow old and until the Lord comes. We will find that the more we learn, the more we will have to learn. The more you learn, the more you will long for a better ministration. A person who enters into the holy of holies will feel that God is perfect and holy, and that man is full of impurities and corruption. The more one comes before the light of God, the more he will see his own infirmities. That’s why the lessons of life never end. Every one of us must have the attitude of learning daily and learning deeper. Then, our coordination will improve and many of our conflicts will disappear.

Pray Not for Fewer Afflictions, but for More Grace

*(June 25, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong
during the evening convention in Hebron)*

The New Testament Church grows up amid afflictions. We are not afraid of afflictions or battles. The greater the afflictions and battles, the faster we will grow. But if our lives are easy, we will degenerate and stray from God. So, out of His love, God allows afflictions to come upon us because He knows what His people need. He does not remove afflictions from us, but adds to us grace while we are in afflictions. Paul said that a thorn in the flesh was given to him, and concerning this thing he pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from him, but the Lord did not remove it. Instead, God said to him, “**My grace is sufficient for you**” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Brothers and sisters, this is the **secret to finding grace. It is also how God bestows grace and blessings on His children, for God gives us grace through afflictions.** We often fail to understand these spiritual mysteries and instead, we ask God to remove afflictions from us. But He never does according to what we ask for. When the trial is severe and our prayers seem futile, our faith begins to waver. We may even doubt God, murmur against Him and blame Him because we fail to recognize the way to finding grace. God does not remove afflictions from us, but gives us grace to help us through them. Therefore, whenever we encounter overwhelming difficulties, we must know that this is the time God's abundant grace will come upon us.

Do not pray for fewer afflictions, but for more grace. This is the secret. And if we know this secret, we will be good at finding grace, and

God's grace will abound on us.

We can learn such beautiful lessons from Paul. Paul pleaded with the Lord three times to remove the thorn in his flesh, but the Lord didn't remove it. Paul didn't pray for the fourth time. If the Lord does not remove the thorn, there is no point struggling. The more we struggle, the more it will hurt us. If we encounter lengthy trials, do not be dismayed. We should ask the Lord for more grace and ask Him to enlighten us to understand His gracious hand. When God puts us in certain environments, it is to work for our good and He will make us overcome the trials. Only such vessels will have an abundant life.

God gives some brothers and sisters heavy burdens and endless trials. Their troubles last for years and decades, maybe even a lifetime. Because of these trials, some of them become weak in faith, but others find immense grace. The latter, through afflictions and trials, are still devoted and zealous to God. There is a sister in East Malaysia who has a disabled child. This sister is very precious and strong in faith. I never see her worry, nor have I ever heard her complain. She is always busy with the Lord's work, always mindful of the matters of God. She puts the Lord's work first before her family. When she has to choose between the house of God and her own family, she always chooses the house of God. Her faith touches me. It is very precious for this sister to remain steadfast and to be so earnest and zealous towards the Lord despite being tried for decades.

She sent her two sons to Mount Zion where they are now. Every time I come here from Mount Zion, she never asks me how her children are doing. It's not that she is not concerned about them, rather she has offered them to the Lord. They are on Mount Zion with the Lord's servant. To her, nothing could be more reassuring. Every time she sees her sons in the video, she is grateful and proud. But I always feel that I have fallen short of her for not taking good care of her children. Thank God that in the New Testament Church there are always some vessels who offer up to God thor-

oughly, fearing no difficulty ahead of them. God is truly delighted with them.

Long-term afflictions and troubles can be devastating. **The degenerate human nature is most afraid of hardship and trouble.** We may be able to withstand trouble for one day, but not everyday. And when we can't take it anymore, we tend to blame the circumstances and even God.

A sister, whose spiritual condition used to be pretty good, lost her patience and stopped attending services after going through some great trials. Even the sight of brothers and sisters would upset her. Brothers and sisters, **as we tread on this path, we must be prepared to endure all kinds of hardships.** Paul said, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22, *NIV*). If we are afraid of battles, hardships or troubles, one day we will fall prey to the enemies and be overwhelmed by the circumstances. **If you are not afraid of troubles or hardships, and can face the challenge of any circumstance, God's grace will be added to you. Greater troubles will bring you greater grace.** Let us be enlightened about this truth.

Another sister wrote me and said that she found it impossible to continue living here, and thought of going back to Zion. I told her, "I know that you have been deeply tried. I feel that what you need now is not to go back to Zion but to gain more grace from God."

Brothers and sisters, I repeat: As we encounter afflictions, we must pray for more grace. We should not ask God to remove the afflictions. Let us follow the example of Paul who did not ask the Lord to remove his thorn after asking three times. If the Lord still doesn't remove the environment, then it is clear that He has His good pleasure in it and that it is under His wonderful arrangement. If we can look at it this way, the grace of God will be manifested on us immediately, and we will be able to overcome the torment of any suffering. This is the secret to finding grace.

As we learn to serve in the house of God, we will not do well if we are afraid of troubles. For example, for constructing the longhouse on Mount Moriah, we had to bring back some nibong trees. After bringing them back, we had to split them and remove the soft cores that could be used as compost. But some people were afraid of trouble and simply threw the cores away. **This nature of fearing trouble will prevent you from being faithful to God; you will easily waste God's inheritance and despise His grace. God will not entrust more to you because you find everything so troublesome.**

Brothers and sisters, any setback can easily devastate those who are afraid of difficulties. They will not find God's grace, and God's blessing will be far from them. A person who finds grace fears no hardship. He will regard the afflictions God measures out to him as His loving hand, and consider afflictions and humiliations as his pride. A person who doesn't know how to find grace will complain, saying, "Why am I so unfortunate? I always have problems others don't have. Those who are careless and who are not as devoted are always so successful. Any business makes them rich; they prosper in everything they do. They buy new cars and big houses. But me? Here I am, as devoted as ever, yet nothing works out for me. The Lord never listens to my prayers." Brothers and sisters, when you experience troubles that others don't go through, it doesn't mean that the Lord doesn't love you or that He doesn't listen to your prayers. Instead it means that the Lord specially esteems you. He wants to mold and refine you through afflictions. He wants you to become stronger and make your life more abundant. May the Lord enlighten us and give us the spirit to suffer.

Recently, as soon as the rebars for the dike of Mount Zion were tied, the flood came. Everyone was worried, and the spiritual condition of each person was revealed. If you are afraid of difficulties, you will have much to complain about. You will not sing or praise God. But we thank God, for the people of Zion have found much grace. Under such circum-

stances, they said, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD!” They said this because they feared no troubles or hardships. But those who are afraid of difficulties can only say, “The LORD gave.” To them, the LORD can only give. If the LORD takes away, they can no longer praise the name of the LORD.

After the dike was flooded, there was a lot of filth stuck in the steel frame. All the sand, stones, grass and twigs had to be removed. But there were so many steel bars. How could they all possibly be cleaned out? It was so troublesome! But God was gracious to the people of Zion and the churches in Taiwan. They didn’t fear difficulties, so God cared for them. He gave them good weather, wisdom, and the spirit to suffer. So with one accord, they completed the dike in only five days! Moreover, God revealed the sign of His delight in heaven — a rainbow encircling the sun for four consecutive days! When we heard this, it was like music from heaven. All these testimonies of fearing no hardships are the pride and glory of the New Testament Church, all the more showing that Zion is unshakable.

When we went to the King’s Pavilion today to testify for the King of kings, Jesus Christ, God also showed us His pleasure with another rainbow encircling the sun. Our faith is strengthened when we see that the God who keeps covenant and mercy is always with us. When afflictions come upon us, we know that God will again be gracious to us. In afflictions, we shall experience more of His grace. May the Lord continue to protect us. Though the battle is not yet over, and there are still more days of suffering to come, everything is under God’s control. By faith, we will accept all that God measures out to us so that all things will work for our good.

Don't Kill Yourself or Others, but Be Killed

*(June 26, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong
during the convention in Hebron)*

Over time, we come to know that the Lord really loves us. His love is always with us, guiding us along this path. If we meet this loving God, we will walk steadily on this path without slipping. The love of God is great and beyond measure.

Natural man cannot comprehend God's love. Instead, sometimes we think that He is mistreating us. Actually, He loves us so much that His loving hands will never leave us. He arranges all environments to make us understand and enjoy His love. For His love will make us hold fast His will under any circumstances. We are under His special care. If we understand His love and rest peaceably under His arrangement, we will certainly be conquerors, and more than conquerors.

Oftentimes, we fail to overcome difficulties. In fact, we don't have many records of overcoming. We fail more often than we win. This shows that we are not overcomers. How we hope to be overcomers in all circumstances! But we often fail to do what we wish. So we often say to ourselves in grief, "Why am I so weak? Why can't I overcome?" We need to ask God for enlightenment. We need to know the secret to victory.

Revelation 5:1–5 says, "And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?' And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept

much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.' ”

This portion of the Bible tells us that there is a scroll with seven seals; the mysteries of the universe are written inside. However, no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open it. If this mystery was not revealed, men would have no aim and direction in life. This is something pitiful. No wonder John the apostle wept bitterly. When John was weeping, one of the elders told him that there was One who could open the scroll. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. He has prevailed. He has overcome.

How did He overcome? The Bible says, “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation...’ saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing’ ” (Rev. 5:6–9, 12). **Why was the Lamb worthy to open the scroll and to loose the seven seals? Because He had been slain.**

In verse 6 it says, “... **as though it had been slain.**” The original text says, “He was just slain.” The wound of a newly slaughtered lamb is fresh and obvious. It is different from that of a lamb slain a long time ago. Such

a wound would be aged and scarred. The secret to victory is revealed through this freshly slain Lamb.

The victory of the Lamb is different from common victories. The Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has **prevailed through being killed**. To man, a victor is one who kills, and losers are those who are killed. However, the victory of the Lamb is very mysterious. **The Lion of the tribe of Judah was a victor because He was slain. Only such a victor can reveal the mystery of the universe.** So if we want to become victors, we must imitate Jesus to be slain — freshly slain.

The Bible verses we read today say, “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:36–37). It is difficult to be a conqueror. It is even more difficult to be more than a conqueror. How can one become a conqueror? It is by being killed all day long. It is not by killing others or yourself. Committing suicide cannot make you an overcomer, much less killing others. The only way to become an overcomer is to be killed. Therefore, we must imitate the Lord and be killed all day long.

When something happens, we normally kill others or ourselves. Either we harm others or we give up on ourselves. All these are signs of being a loser. If we can imitate the Lord to be killed when something happens, we shall surely be victorious. God allows many circumstances to come upon us, to put us in a position of being killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. **We are born to be killed, and our only future is to be killed.** This is our fate and path. No one would want to have this fate, nor walk on this path. But those who do choose to walk on this path and to have this fate will reveal the mysteries of the universe.

When Mount Zion was plundered and the people of Zion were forced

to wander at the riverbed, we would be in anguish at the thought of the evil KMT who did this to us. Some Gentiles said, "You are all too tolerant. If I were you, I would have fought back a long time ago. Either they die or I die. I'd either kill them, or myself." However, what God wants us to do is to be killed. You may ask, "How am I going to live on like this? What is the purpose of living then?" Brothers and sisters, if you imitate the Lord Jesus' footsteps, you will be slain all day long.

How do we imitate the Lord Jesus? **The Lord knew why He was being slain. He was slain for the will of God, and to accomplish the salvation of the cross.** The Scriptures say, "For Your sake, we are killed all day long" (Rom. 8:36). **If we know that we are being killed for God, we will be willing to be killed.** Man is usually unwilling to be killed; he always wants to kill others. If he fails to kill others, he would rather kill himself. This is because he only sees men and affairs around him. He does not see God and His will behind all things and circumstances. So he is not willing to be killed. Even when he is killed, he is killed unwillingly. As he is being killed, he says to himself: "This guy has been relying on me for his livelihood, and now he is turning against me? He has gone too far!" The more he thinks about it, the more irritated and upset he becomes. He will think of all means to retaliate.

Brothers and sisters, **if all you see is God and His hand, and if you realize that God has His will in all things, then you will be willing to be killed like the Lord Jesus. To be killed is the secret to finding grace. It is also the way to victory.** If you can understand this, then you will be willing to be killed. Your anger will subside, and all your complaining will stop. Your anger will turn into singing, and your grumbling into praise. Indeed, God wants us to be conquerors who, for the sake of God, are willing to be killed all day long. Only then will we reveal to mankind the mystery of the universe and bring blessings to them.

In order to fulfill God's will, we want to imitate the Lord Jesus and

sacrifice ourselves. The Lord Jesus would not be killed if He didn't have to accomplish the will of God. Other than for God's will, He had no reason to be killed. God predestined that the One who was without sin would die for sinners. Therefore, He had to endure the cross. The Lord Jesus suffered because of God's will, not because anything men had against Him. Through the Jews and Roman soldiers, God sent Him to the cross. All these were completely arranged by God. Jesus could look beyond the Roman soldiers and see God who controlled all things. So He was willing to suffer the cross and gave up His Spirit.

On the cross He prayed to God, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). This is a testimony of being more than conquerors. May the Lord be gracious to us that we may imitate Him. For the sake of the Lord and His will, let's be killed all day long and be those who are more than conquerors. Be conquerors in any situation. Never kill others or yourself. **Always be a conqueror who is killed all day long.**

The testimonies of the youths given during the convention on Mount Moriah have been published in the *Spiritual Flow*. When we read them, we are full of thanksgivings. Every one of them is learning the lessons of life. In the process of learning lessons, they often killed others or themselves, and were rarely killed. But eventually, they learned to be killed. How wonderful! **Once we are willing to be killed, we are relieved of our stress and burdens. Once the old self dies, we are completely freed and surpass all things.**

We often complain because we do not understand God and His hand. As a result, we are always asking, "Lord, why?" Before we ask "why," let us remember the verses we read today — Romans 8:36, "For Your sake, we are killed all day long." Then you will calm down and become more than a conqueror.

Following the Lord is something practical. The path of the cross must

be a personal life experience. The first volume of the New Testament Church Hymnal comes from the life experiences of the saints of the past. For example, stanza one of Hymn 255, *Let the Tie Closer Be*, says, "If the path I'm treading leads me to suffering, if the way You choose leads me to hardships..." Hymns like this come from the crushing of the soulish life. Brothers and sisters, the hardships we encounter are predestined by God. If we understand that the environments are arranged by God, our faith will be fortified.

The hymn goes on: "Sufficient grace I know, will on me bestow. Let the tie with Thee, Lord, closer, sweeter be." After we acknowledge the destined path of suffering and of being killed, we will experience sufficient grace from God to become conquerors. "I don't mind that worldly blessings decrease, as long as Thou increase. Earthly things once precious, I count them as dung. If Thou take them all away, I won't mind also." How can you not mind when the blessings of this world are taken away from you? If you understand the predestination of God, you will not mind. You will endure all kinds of ruthless deprivation. Our whole life should be for God and for His will. If we can understand this point and accept it, we will not mind Him taking anything away from us.

Many people are full of bitterness and constant complaining because they mind their earthly blessings too much. Our Lord Jesus was born in a manger and was brought up in a poor family in Nazareth. Later, He passed through Galilee and came to Gethsemane. Finally, He died on the cross. Our Lord Jesus was clear that His path was predestined by God the Father, so He did not mind all these sufferings. Neither did He have more earthly blessings than any man on earth. He only lived for thirty-three and a half years, but His life was the most meaningful of all. Indeed, He was a Man of all men. He was the model for all man.

Why was the life of Jesus so valuable? It certainly did not depend on how long He lived or how wealthy He was. Rather, it was because He lived

for God. Therefore, His brief thirty-three and a half years were far more meaningful than the life of any long-lived man. A 300-year long life would still be meaningless if it was not for God. But a life of thirty-three and a half years would be enough if it is lived for God. Let me repeat: the value of one's life depends on how much he lives for God. If we acknowledge this, our life will be most surpassing — it will be full of courage, enlightenment and joy. We will always be living in the realm of *Psalms*, singing and praising God everyday. Otherwise our lives will be miserable!

Some people are unhappy their whole life because they never get married. But some who are married are still bitter saying, “Of all the people on earth, why did I marry him?” When you are single, you are dissatisfied and want to get married. But after you get married, you are still full of sorrows and want a divorce. No matter what, you are never happy or satisfied. Why? Because you have not acknowledged God and His predestination. If we don't understand why we live, we will always fight with the circumstances. You should know what you are living for. It is not for marriage, school, or career, but for God and His will. As long as you can accomplish God's will and glorify Him, your life will have value. Then, you will not have any complaints or grievances.

By God's grace we know why we live. For the sake of God, we are willing to be killed all day long. Then we can be like what the Bible says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37). May God gain more glory through us.

Poured Out Like Water

(June 28, 1995 — Message of the Lord's servant Bro. Hong during the morning prayer service at the Victory Hall on Mount Zion)

Hallelujah! The Lord has finally brought us back peacefully. During the past six weeks, God led us through our journey step by step in South-east Asia. As I look back, I feel that our trip was the beautiful arrangement of God.

In May 1979, God brought us up to Mount Zion and let us dwell here for seven months and twenty-one days. What God led us to do within that period became the blueprint of our ministration for 1980 and for the years to follow. Likewise, in May 1995, when God sent us to Mount Moriah to build the Eden Longhouse, He also made us write down the **blueprint of our future ministration for the second half of 1995**. This blueprint was made for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan and for accomplishing His end-time goal.

The works of God on Mount Moriah have been quickly reported to you through modern means of communication. You know how God led us to lay the foundation for the longhouse; how we wonderfully found the fourteen pillars; how we erected the center pillar; how we connected the large and small beams; how we had the Morning Prayer Service for the first time in the meeting place of the longhouse; how we planned the Eden realm construction for Mount Moriah, and how we displayed the testimony of unity, harmonious coordination and mutual care among the members of the body. You've also heard about us leaving Mount Moriah on June 21 and our following journey to Bethel, Mount Carmel, and Sapit Village. You have, furthermore, learned about our proclamation on Indonesian soil, our tedious and perilous return from Sapit Village, and many other testimonies. What the Lord did during the last few days was most

amazing. We are very thankful to Him!

On June 23, we went to Sapit Village by helicopter. We entered the church premise which was built out of the blood, sweat, and love of the brothers and sisters. We learned from the testimony of Bro. Jacob that every piece of wood was hand-carried up to Sapit Village with much difficulty. Much wood was needed to build the church premises, and every piece had to be carried for three to four hours. How much time do you think they spent carrying wood?

The pulpit at the Church of Kampung Sapit is unique. All the sides were made of rattan and even its joints were woven out of small pieces of rattan. All these handicraft skills will also be used on Mount Moriah so that the pulpit of Mount Moriah will be like the one on Sapit Village. The floor mats were woven out of rattan. Wow! The whole church premise was practically covered with long strips of rattan. Even the ceiling and the walls were woven out of bamboo. All the treated bamboo looked beautiful.

After the temple dedication at Sapit Village, we walked to Indonesia. This was a new and living leading of the Holy Spirit, something beyond our expectation. When we stepped on Indonesian soil, we met six Indonesians on their way home. After Bro. Ittai introduced us to them, they came forward to shake hands with us. Meeting the Indonesians as soon as we crossed the Indonesian border is a sign that God wants us to preach to the Indonesians. He wants us to gain the Indonesians and bring them back to God. We felt that we did not meet them by coincidence, but by God's arrangement. Through us, God shall gain the Indonesians.

As soon as we stepped onto Indonesian soil, we were filled with a divine feeling. Every step we took was extraordinary. This was an epochal step and a history-making moment. We thank God for leading us to Indonesia and for letting us step foot on the land of this so-called big nation.

God wanted us to proclaim on that land: “God shall reclaim this land and make this nation a kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.”

After we accomplished this epochal work, we were joyous in the spirit. But Satan was angry and prevented the helicopter from coming to pick us up. We waited from 1:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. I said, “If we go on waiting, we will not be able to get down the mountain (Sapit Village) in time to go to Hebron tomorrow (June 24). No matter what, we must reach Mount Carmel by today.” So we started to walk down the mountain, hoping to reach the foothill before dark.

We rushed on, but it was a difficult path. I had never experienced such a journey in my life. I had the same feeling I had on May 10, 1986, when I was so badly beaten by the KMT (the national party in Taiwan) police that I couldn’t walk. This time, I was not injured, but I felt that my whole body was about to collapse. I can only describe my condition with this Bible verse: **“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it has melted within Me”** (Ps. 22:14). My whole body was drenched with sweat which poured out like water. Sweat didn’t just drip from my towel — it flowed.

The brothers soon became worried that I would collapse. So they asked me to take a rest after some time. But we had to rush; we couldn’t rest for long. Every time I rested, I would drink water. At that time, water never tasted sweeter. I drank gulp after gulp. After drinking, I continued to walk. But as soon as I began to walk, my sweat began to pour out again. The more water I drank, the more I sweat. I was poured out like water, and all my bones were as if they were out of joint.

I used to be good at trekking mountain trails. During a typhoon about thirty years ago, I had to trudge through mudslides and flooded rivers to reach Bro. Chu who was ill on Mount Zion. I started from Land No. 2, passed through Hsiaolin, crossed the suspension bridge, and arrived at

Chu-huo. From Chu-huo, I went around the mountain, came to Shuanglian-ku, and met Bro. Chu at the place where we now have the temple. It was a long journey, but I made it in four hours with no problem. I was a little tired but recovered after a ten-minute break.

But coming down from Sapit this time was completely different. I was so worn out that I could not move my feet at all. It was especially bad at the last part of the journey. I was no longer walking then. Ittai and James, one on each side of me, dragged me forward. I didn't even have strength to hold on to their shoulders. So while the two of them supported me from the sides, someone else pushed me from the back, and another pulled me from the front. With the help of the brothers, I "walked" uphill for another half hour before seeing the car that came to pick us up. The brothers quickly opened the door and had me sit down, but I hadn't the strength to do so immediately. I could only lean against the car seat and close my eyes. My face was so pale that Bro. Pi was shocked when he saw me.

It seemed as though Satan played a trick on us by preventing the helicopter from coming. But in my spirit, I knew that it was allowed by God: He wants us to go on this difficult journey. **God wants to make us partakers of the cross of Christ, to have a share in His crucifixion. He also wants us to fill up in our flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. He wants us to walk on the way of the Lamb, and to follow His footsteps. Wherever the Lamb goes, we shall follow.** That night, we were tired, yet calm inside. We knew that since God had allowed it, His grace would be sufficient for us. Before the time comes, the devil Satan can do nothing to us, and before the entrusted work of God is completed, nothing will happen to us.

After we returned to Mount Carmel, I could not eat. I lay down after drinking some water and kept pondering over this matter. All that time, brothers and sisters were keeping vigil for me. Such unity in our midst is truly the pride and glory of the New Testament Church. When the broth-

ers and sisters learned about what had happened, they immediately headed toward Sapit Village to join us in our affliction. Some sisters, who couldn't go, went to the altar and prayed for our safe return. After our return, they continued to take turns keeping vigil. Bro. Pi and I had muscle cramps in the middle of the night. Even when we made the slightest gasps of discomfort, they would hear us, and James would come attend to us immediately. The brothers and sisters were most worried that my blood pressure would rise due to fatigue. But we thank the Lord, for He protected us throughout the night.

The next morning (June 24), I was unable to attend the Morning Prayer Service. All of a sudden, I had the same stroke-like symptoms as I had on Nov. 10 the previous year. I knew that my blood pressure had gone up. I thought to myself: "Is it time for the Lord to take me?" But at the same time, I felt that I had not finished the work He entrusted me, nor had I completed the course He wanted me to run. So, I lay down and entrusted myself to God. After about two hours, the symptoms went away and my head felt relieved. I knew the Lord wanted me to go on, so we boarded the plane and went to Hebron.

When we got into Bro. Sia's car at the airport in Kuala Lumpur, Sis. Odile phoned Bro. Sia and asked, "How are they doing? Are they in wheelchairs?" I thought to myself: "Why did she ask in that way?" I didn't know that brothers and sisters were informed that we had cramps throughout the night. They thought that we probably couldn't walk. I said, "It's not that serious!" Bro. Pi added, "We strutted out of the airport!" Sis. Odile heard us over the phone and asked, "Who was speaking?" When she learned that it was me, she was very happy and shouted, "Hallelujah!"

Brothers and sisters, the churches are so closely united with us. This is the bond and story of life. The brothers and sisters revived when they knew that we were safe and when they heard our loud voices. It was just like when Apostle Paul heard that the churches stood fast in the Lord. He

said, “For now we live.” The bond between the apostles and the churches is so close and solid. This is the pride and glory of the New Testament Church! Such testimony of unity is most delighted by God.

After all these hardships and dangers, we finally reached Hebron, where we had a convention for two days. We proclaimed that Jesus Christ had been made Lord and Christ; He is the King and Savior — the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We concluded our 44-day trip with this proclamation. Our footsteps and encounters tell us the kind of testimony God wants us to display; the kind of salvation He wants us to manifest; and the extent to which God wants to save us. He wants us to be built into the body of Christ to testify for His rich salvation, to advance with Him in trampling the enemies, and to reveal the fullness of God’s house to this generation. God also wants to adorn us to become the bride of Christ, the wife of the Lamb, to follow the Lamb on this way of the cross. He wants us to imitate the crucified Christ in pouring out our lives, and to let the will of God be accomplished through us. Ultimately, we will be caught up to meet the Lord. We will enter God’s kingdom, reign with Him, and manifest the glory of His kingdom.

Our 44-day journey this time was really glorious, noble, and abundant! From now on, God wants us to learn diligently and to serve Him according to what He led us to dramatize during these one and a half months.

While we were away, we heard about how the brothers and sisters of Mount Zion labored day and night for the dike and other projects. This has comforted and touched us. This shows that we are the household of God. When something happens in God’s house, everyone cares. The reality of home has fully appeared on Zion. For this, we are very thankful.

All the tribes of Jacob, both in the East and in the West, have been revived by God. Many people from the denominations have also come to seek the truth. This is true revival. It is the truth-restoring revival, the

revival of the era of Sis. Kong. The revival during Sis. Kong's era is not the same as the spiritual movements of the Pentecostal groups. The revival brought about by Sis. Kong was the great revival of the 20th century — the revival of restoring the complete truth of Blood, Water and Holy Spirit.

Some brothers and sisters of the denominations have recently come to the New Testament Church to seek the truth. Among the brothers and sisters who came to send us off at the airport were newcomers. They lost their way in denominations where they no longer had grass to graze on. They could not find the truth, so they came to the New Testament Church. This is the work of God. He lets the denominations become more and more desolate, while the truth of the New Testament Church shines brighter. The denominational brothers and sisters are attracted to this truth. All these are to fulfill the prophecy of Sis. Kong: "The truth shall be preached from the East to the West and to the ends of the earth. The end-time great revival shall come." This prophecy shall be abundantly fulfilled through us. We give all glory to God!



Fellowship in Love



The Law of Life

(May 24, 1995 — Fellowship between the brothers and sisters of Mount Moriah and the Lord's servants)

1. There is often friction among the companions when working together. At such moments, should we face the reality courageously? Or should we avoid it temporarily by staying away from the companion? If I try to avoid it, it seems as though I am not learning the lesson. But if I continue to coordinate with him, the conflict will get more serious, and we will end up with bad feelings. What should we do?

Bro. Hong:

When lessons come our way, should we face the reality, or should we avoid it? We must face the reality. **But we shouldn't face the reality with conflicts. We should face the reality by learning our lessons.** There will be frictions, but we shouldn't be intimidated. No one can learn to coordinate well right from the start. Failures and pain are inevitable. We often blame others for bad coordination and want them to learn lessons. But learning lessons is something between you and God. You may ask, "What if the other party never learns his lessons? Won't he take advantage of me for life? If he always refuses to learn and I have to learn every time, won't I be suffering?" No, you will not be suffering. When you learn to obey, you will gain all the blessings and grace. When others refuse to learn, it is the time God wants you to learn. Whenever there is a lesson to learn, know that this is the time the Lord wants you to learn.

2. When I coordinate with others, I often hurt others unintentionally because I am quick-tempered. After I hurt someone, I don't have the courage to face him. Even if we coordinate later on, I'd feel very unnatural. We'd be very polite to each other and try not to get on each other's nerve. That's why I feel very hypocritical. Yet it's hard for me to change

my character. What should I do?

Bro. Pi:

It is meaningless for the denominations to learn coordination, because they are not in the body. But for us it is important and indispensable. I mentioned before about the example of coordination between the tongue and the teeth. The tongue is often bitten by the teeth. If both were tongues, neither would be bitten. But God created the tongue and the teeth together in the mouth, so that there would be lessons to be learned. This is God's arrangement. Let us realize that everything that happens around us is a lesson from God. Whatever the circumstances, they are opportunities arranged by God for us to learn.

An enlightened person will see God's hand in everything and learn from it. If we can see God's hand, there won't be so much friction among us. We know the truth of coordination, but when it comes to real life encounters, we would be in turmoil because our lives are too tender. Everyone is learning lessons, but it's important how we learn them. A Chinese saying goes: "Many learn kung-fu but few master it." While learning lessons, we must always look up to the Lord and pray: "O Lord, what do you want me to learn from this lesson?"

You will not succeed if you are not learning the lessons in a prayerful spirit. All human methods like trying to be patient and to be gentle are useless. We don't learn lessons of life by our own efforts. Learning to be patient with our own efforts is not learning lessons, but is rather nurturing the flesh. The more patient you try to be, the more carnally minded you'll be; and the more patient you try to be, the angrier you will become. You will even explode one day. A vessel who learns lessons will always bring everything to the Lord. The Lord's servant said, "Praying is the solution to every problem."

Other than praying, we need to fellowship. We will have poor coor-

dination if we do not fellowship well. Some people who are more introverted may say, “Forget it! Consider myself unlucky. I’ll just endure it.” He doesn’t speak out but he grumbles a lot within. Another may speak out but his spirit is stubborn. They don’t have the spirit of fellowship but the spirit of rebuking and judging. As a result, as soon as they open their mouths, they will start to quarrel. Therefore before you fellowship, you must pray well and even while you are talking, you must still be praying inside. Other than this, I don’t think there is a better way. If there is a lack of prayer and communication, the problem will become worse. If you do not fellowship in the spirit, matters will also become more complicated.

3. We shouldn’t be a goody-goody, but how do we stop being one?

Bro. Pi:

When someone says or does something that harms the testimony of the New Testament Church and you still nod to him and smile, then you are being a goody-goody. When someone speaks against the ministry of the Lord’s servant and goes against the truth and you don’t speak up, but agree with them, then you are being a goody-goody. Once, when a co-worker said something that hurt the ministry of Bro. Hong, I immediately arose to rebuke him severely. If I went on listening to him at that moment, I would have been a goody-goody. A person who doesn’t fight when he should and gives way when he shouldn’t is also a goody-goody.

Sis. Sheu:

A few days ago, Bro. Hong told us about a brother on Mount Zion who dared not speak up when he saw his companions not doing the right thing. Later he felt guilty and spoke up but the damage was already done and it could not be reversed. When he was asked why he didn’t speak up then and there, he said he was afraid and did not want to make people feel offended. Such a person is a goody-goody.

Bro. Hong:

To stop being a goody-goody, **one must deny self**. Before we can denounce a goody-goody, we must know what a goody-goody is. Otherwise, we will not be able to denounce one. Likewise, we have to recognize the ‘self’ before we can deny it. A goody-goody has his expressions and a ‘self’ has its actions. When the Lord Jesus said that He had to go to Jerusalem to be crucified, Peter said immediately, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you!” The Lord Jesus rebuked him sharply, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Out of love, Peter tried to stop the Lord Jesus from going to Jerusalem. Jesus should have praised Peter, but what did He say instead? “Get behind me, Satan!” He went on, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” Peter did not realize that this old self was that old goody-goody and that his love for the Lord was an expression of ‘self’ until the Lord’s words dawned on him. Therefore if we want to deal with this goody-goody in us, we must first recognize the expressions of this old *self*.

4. *While we were laying the foundation of the longhouse, we had to vibrate the cement before pouring in more. This was to make the foundation firmer. When a brother saw that we did not vibrate the cement, he did not speak up timely. Later I asked several brothers whether or not they would speak up if they were him. But they all said they wouldn't. I think I, too, wouldn't dare to speak up under such circumstances. What should we do?*

Bro. Hong:

You should speak up timely, but at the same time watch how you speak. First of all, **your spirit has to be calm**. Time is a crucial factor when pouring cement. If you don't speak in time, the cement will harden in half an hour and you will not be able to change anything even if you want to. Maybe the bustling situation then was hard for you to speak up. Yet, you should not have kept quiet. If we didn't do it correctly, it would

be too late in half an hour. Under such circumstances, I would rather speak up what I know even if my words might offend others. We must deal with matters according to how important and urgent they are. Of course, this requires a well-experienced life. If everyone refused to speak up, there wouldn't be any remedy for the mistake made. If we all refused to speak up and affected the future safety of many, we may regret it for the rest of our lives.

Bro. Pi:

I think there is another flexible way to speak up. If you cannot directly speak to the person in charge, speak to him indirectly. That day, the Lord's servant was at the job site. You could have spoken to the Lord's servant, and let him speak to him. In that way, it would be easier for him to accept. Let us be wise as serpents (but do not become serpents). We must be wise, and not rigid. That day, Sis. Sheu was also around. If you didn't tell Bro. Hong, you could have told Sis. Sheu, and prevented a disaster. Therefore, it is important to be wise. If we are wise, we will do things satisfactorily.

5. We have to speak the truth in love, but how do we speak it to a very weak brother? If a brother dies because of what we said and stops coming to service, what should we do? What is the standard for speaking the truth? How do we speak the truth in God's will?

Bro. Hong:

This is a matter of **spiritual feelings** and life. Take for example, a patient who has a tumor that has to be removed. A wise surgeon would first check the patient's overall health to see if he could withstand a surgery. If not, he would first help him improve his health until he is fit. An unwise surgeon, however, would start operating as soon as he sees the tumor regardless of whether the patient could take it or not. That would not be edifying.

Our purpose of speaking the truth is to edify others. We hope that they will depart from errors and be edified before God. If someone's spiritual condition is so poor that he doesn't even come to service and you just blurt out the truth to him, he will definitely not be able to handle it. Instead of helping him, you will stumble him. Therefore, when we help someone, we have to be like a good shepherd who gives food at the proper time. When a child cannot take solid food, give him milk. When he can take solid food, give him bread. When he is sick, give him soup. When he has recovered, then give him bread. Everything should be done according to each individual's condition and need. The way the Lord Jesus helped Nicodemus was different from the way He helped the Samaritan woman. Nicodemus' name was published but not the Samaritan woman's. All these involve considerations. We need to understand what others feel before we can bind up their wounds.

The Levites were in charge of the lamps in the Old Testament. After the wax melted, the wick would turn from red to black. The charred part then had to be carefully trimmed off with a wick trimmer so that the light would be rekindled. Both the wick trimmer and the tray were made of gold. The trimmed wick would be put onto golden trays before being carefully thrown away. This was the ministerial attitude a priest should have. This shows how we should understand the feeling of a weak person. When a person is weak, he will turn dim and dark. Whoever bumps into him will be smoked to tears. At such moment, how do you trim him? What kind of trimmer do you use? We need to **show consideration for their weaknesses**. This is **the principle of the salvation of our Lord Jesus: The Word became flesh**.

The Lord Jesus, the Word that became flesh, came into the world to save us. He wanted to understand our weaknesses but not to become weak like us. We must also have compassion on the weak. That way, he will not feel unbearable, thinking that you despise him. When the Lord Jesus met the Samaritan woman, He did not reveal the glory of the Messi-

ah right away. If He did, she would have fled. The Lord Jesus first hid His light and said, "Please give me a drink." He meant to say: Are you thirsty? Me, too. He let her feel that He was like her, not somebody high above or holy and divine. As a result, she had no fear at all. Instead, she felt so natural that she said, "How is that you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" She sounded as though she was holier than the Lord. The Lord Jesus didn't say at once, "You, a Samaritan woman, have already had five husbands. Now you have another, but none of them is yours!" Had He said so, she would have been frightened out of her wits and fled for her life. How then could the Lord gain her? We need to learn to serve the weak. If you are always so strong and holy, how would the weak dare to come close to you? So when we help someone, let's learn to understand his feeling. That way, we will come close to him and gain him.

When we **speak the truth in love, we don't just blurt it out any way we like. We need to consider the individual we are going to speak to, and the place and time** we are going to speak. Sometimes, we can speak openly but sometimes not. Sometimes we need to discuss privately. If we speak publicly, he may lack the grace to take it. If we rebuke him openly, it will be even harder for him to accept it. It is correct to speak the truth in love but it needs considerations and good judgment. All these have something to do with our learning in life lessons. The more mature our lives are, the more we will know how to help and serve others. No one will feel uneasy to come to us.

A group of people caught an adulterous woman and brought her before Jesus. They came arrogantly and self-righteously saying, "According to Moses' Law, she should be stoned to death." However, the attitude of the Lord Jesus was completely different from that of those people. Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His fingers. In the end, He was left alone with the woman standing there. He said to her, "Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go! And sin no more!" The Lord had served the woman and gained her. We need to learn such

lessons while we serve. We must learn them precisely before we can gain more people from different backgrounds.

6. Sometimes, we speak the truth politely but it seems to have no effect. Some people, however, speak frankly, making the other party cry for days and the effect seems much greater. Is that good?

Bro. Pi:

There are no fixed rules, but in general, we speak with politeness and anointing. If the other party has a mature life to take harsh words, we may speak harshly if necessary. When doctors treat their patients, they need to prescribe the right medicine for the sick, and not just aspirin for every patient. There is no set rule.

7. I have been sick for a long time and the Lord still hasn't healed me. How do I learn the lesson of faith well under such circumstances?

Bro. Hong:

The lesson of faith is life-long and it gets deeper with time. **Faith is built on God. Faith is our understanding of God's will for a certain matter and accepting it in His way.** If we ask God to do something according to our ideal and hope, that can only be considered as our desire and our wish before the Lord and not the faith of Abraham. **Faith is surrendering our rights to God and letting Him do whatever He wants according to His will.**

The book of Hebrews says, "These all died in faith." The Lord said, "If you believe, you will see the glory of God." Both cases involved faith but some believed and died while others, like Lazarus, lived. His faith made him rise from the dead. The definition of faith is the action of response after seeing (understanding) God's will. If you want to learn the lesson of faith, you must first know what God's will is. In all things, we need to understand His will. Once we understand it, we must believe in

God's word steadfastly.

Like in the case of all nations returning to Zion, we understood that it was God's will and we believed in it steadfastly. When Mount Zion was plundered and when we were scattered, we still sang "Zion is Our Home," vowing to return to Zion by life or by death. This is faith. Faith does not always lead to life. Some people believed until they died and they died in faith. It is the same with sicknesses. You need to know what God's will is in your sickness. If the Lord wants to be glorified and to manifest His mighty healing power through our sicknesses, then we must firmly believe that His will shall be accomplished. If not, we must also believe that God has His higher will for us. Like Sis. Kong, let's commit our sickness to God with the spirit of "if I die, I die." Such commitment is also faith.

8. If I cannot do certain jobs because of sicknesses, does this indicate that I have little faith or no faith?

Bro. Hong:

God requires each of us according to our strength. He will not ask us to do more than what we can. We only have to be faithful according to the strength He has given us. Other than some special leading, God will only require from us what we have and not what we do not have. If we are not that strong, we only have to be faithful to God within the limits of our strength. If you are weak and you cannot do heavy work, you don't have to do it. This is not being faithless. If we know that some works are too strenuous for us and they are not what God wants us to do, but we still do them out of the zeal of the natural man, we will end up ruining our health and testing God. This is not faith. When the Lord Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, the devil told Him to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, but He refused. Could the Lord Jesus throw Himself down? Yes, but at that time, God did not want Him to throw Himself down. And so, He did not jump down. He was not being faithless. Had He jumped down, He would have had tempted God.

9. *The Lord's servant delivered a message "All Things in Common" in which he said, "A person with a lot of belongings will certainly not have an abundant life." I realized that ever since I consecrated, my possessions increased. How do we achieve "all things in common"? Do we hand everything over to the congregation?*

Bro. Hong:

When we say "all things in common" we don't mean we are not allowed to have personal possessions. Rather, we need to have an accurate **understanding that these things are being used by me but they don't belong to me; they belong to the congregation. If anyone needs them, he can take them anytime.** We need to have such recognition and capacity of life. This is putting ourselves in the body. You share all things at home. Now that you are in God's house, you must all the more be so. A few of you share a room. Each of you has your own things. If someone needs something, will you lend it to him? Some people would not let others use his things, and would even say, "What are mine are mine and what are yours are also mine." This is wrong. What we seek after is the spirit of a body. We must immerse ourselves into the body and disappear in it. Let us dissolve ourselves and all our belongings into the body, without any reservations.

10. *Some companions do not take good care of the church's belongings. They take and use them whenever they like. They either return them broken, or don't return them at all. The brothers of the ironworks factory often borrow tools from the construction team and do not return them, so the construction team always has to hide their tools. As a result, they hide their tools when they go to other consecrated lands. When the construction team hides their tools, it shows that they have the spirit of treasuring the church properties. But do they fail to achieve "all things in common"? Should we set rules and have borrowers check out tools?*

Bro. Pi:

The condition of the brothers shows that they are not being on the right track. They lack the *spirit of a son*. It is even worse on Mount Zion. Tools are often destroyed and found lying around everywhere. But when they are needed, they cannot be found, and so we always end up having to buy new ones. This is wasting the money of God's house. All these conditions indicate the lack of learning life lessons.

Bro. Hong:

Gentiles stress on laws and rules. If you don't follow the rules, go home and be self-employed. But should we, the house of God, also use laws? Of course it is okay but we prefer the **law of life**, which is the fundamental way to solve problems. The law of life is applicable only when our life is mature. As long as you are a child, you still need the law written on tablets of stone. The law on the tablets of stone is our tutor that brings us to Christ. It has some uses but the value is not great.

The law of the Spirit of life is the best. It helps you to learn from your life, from your spirit, so that you would say to yourself: "These tools are the properties of God's house. I shouldn't use them or take them at random." This feeling within you will stop you from acting randomly according with your wishes. Such consideration is learning to obey the law of life. The law of life is what the church has to keep. The church does not have rigid written laws but she has the law of life — the law of Christ. **The law of Christ is the self-control in a person's life, and it increases in proportion to his maturity. The more self-control a person has, the more disciplined and well-behaved he will be.**

If a person abuses the properties of God's house and has no guilty conscience even when he damages them, this proves that his life is very tender and his spiritual sensitivity is dull. God's children need to start learning their spiritual life lessons in everything. Only then will their work have true value. We are still in the process of learning, so we often have

such immature conditions. Before a person's life is abundant and mature, he will not cherish the things in God's home. **Those who abuse the properties of God's house are often those who live in their old self.** They only cherish their own things but not church's properties. Now, some people on Mount Zion have their own cars. Wow! They even wax them until they shine. But nobody cares for the communal cars nor washes them. Nobody says a word when these cars are broken or damaged. We mentioned that whoever wanted to use the cars must sign up, and report all damages to us so that the maintenance group could fix them in time. But our words seem to have no effect on them. All these off-track conditions of God's children need to be corrected. If not, God's name will not be glorified.

11. I know that the arrangement of the spiritual minister is God's will and trusting in his arrangement is what God wants me to do, so I try to do it diligently. But sometimes, I find it so strenuous that I feel restless. Then I would have my own feeling and lose my faith. What should I do?

Bro. Hong:

It is your soulish life (old self) that makes you feel restless. If this soulish life is not put to death, you will never have rest. If you are not afraid of failures and are prepared to face embarrassment when you fail, you will not have these struggles and disturbances. Instead, you will feel released. If you believe that the thing you do is entrusted to you by God, you will trust that God will be responsible for you when you cannot handle it. When the time comes, God's grace will be upon you and you will find that His grace is sufficient for you. Of course, you may not feel confident and strong in every matter you deal with. When God entrusts us with something, we may feel incompetent, thinking that the burden is heavy. But since we know that it is from God, we will look up to Him, commit ourselves to Him, and find rest. When the time comes, we will see Him bearing all our responsibilities. We serve the Lord by His grace because we can do nothing by ourselves. None of us is competent to carry

out this spiritual ministry. Rather, our competence comes from God. Therefore we say, “Not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the LORD.”

12. As far as learning lessons is concerned, failures and successes do not affect me much. I believe that success will come after failure, and that failures may come again after success. Therefore, I am not too concerned whether I succeed or fail. Will such attitude prevent me from learning deeper lessons?

Bro. Hong:

We do not learn lessons for just one or two days. We must keep learning lessons until the Lord comes and until we are caught up into the air. So just go ahead and learn diligently. When you learn, do not be afraid of failures because we learn through failures. In fact, you cannot learn any lesson without failures. When we say that a person has learned a lesson, we mean that he has been crushed in life and has learned something from this experience. How can one be broken or crushed? **If we have never failed before, we would not understand what “being broken” is and it would be hard for us to learn lessons. We are broken when we fail and fall.** So don't be afraid of failures. When lessons come, don't flee. If you fail, try again.

After learning a lesson, there will be more similar lessons to learn. As we learn, lessons will increase and become deeper and harder to learn. It starts from spiritual primary school to high school, then to university and further to the Ph.D. level. The more you learn, the further you advance. God allows us to stumble and fail because He wants us to be broken more often and more thoroughly. People always like to save face. It is hard for them to be broken. The ‘spiritual face’ is also hard to be broken. We must fail terribly before the Lord can be manifested on us. Without severe failures, our Lord will be covered up by the virtues of our natural man. God wants us to be a man of God and not a “good” man. A “good” man is not of much value in the eyes of God. Only a man of God such as

Moses and Elijah can let God be revealed on him. **If “good” men are not stricken down, men of God will not appear.** If we only seem to be “good guys” in the sight of men, people may favor us. However, in this way, God won’t be glorified. Such condition is not really learning lessons.

13. I feel that I am small and insignificant because I cannot do anything in the consecrated lands. I can only help to do some odd jobs. How do I become a useful vessel to God?

Bro. Hong:

It is all right to be a small vessel! **Useful vessels are not determined by size.** One of the diagonal beams up in the corner of the Holy Temple on Mount Zion is crooked and small. It may be small, but it fits that corner perfectly and even looks artistic. The vessels whom the Lord uses do not have to have “big” functions like being eloquent, leading hymns, delivering sermons, or shepherding the church. All we have to do is offer up according to the grace we have received from God. In other words, we just have to be faithful according to the size of our function and to the level our faith. When the Lord wants you to serve this way and you serve thus, it is enough. You don’t have to let people see how important your role is.

Sometimes, what seems unimportant is actually indispensable. For example, a small screw inside a watch may seem insignificant but without it, the watch would not work. A body will be healthy when each member, big and small, carries out its own function. But it would not be normal if every member of the body had all-around functions. As long as every member stands firm in its own position and performs its own function faithfully, it will be a useful and noble vessel before God.

Be a Person Who Can Be Corrected and Admonished

*(June 6, 1995 — Evening co-workers' ministration service
on Mount Moriah)*

1. How should I balance out my time between work and spiritual equipping in the consecrated land?

Bro. Pi:

Do you mean you cannot cope with both work and spiritual equipping at the same time? An old saying goes, “Work as you study and study as you work.” Some people can only study when they are given a specific time. They can’t work as they study, and vice versa. Another saying goes: “If you can only help the poor when you’re rich, you will never help the poor. If you have to wait until you have the time to study, you will never get down to it.” It is the same with your spiritual edification. You don’t have to sit at a desk behind closed doors and come face to face with the Lord to be edified. A person who knows how to be spiritually equipped will be equipped even while he works.

The most important equipping is learning the lessons of life. Don’t be a workaholic who thinks of work all day. A workaholic may be rather laborious and faithful but in the end he will become irritable and vulnerable to anger. Work done in this manner holds no value. We are currently laboriously building the holy temple on Mount Moriah. If we merely focus on the external construction and not the spiritual life edification, there won’t be much value in our work. If our objective is only to get the work done, we could have hired people to do it.

Therefore, the most important is for us to be edified through the hardships at work. One who knows how to learn lessons is able to see the

Lord's hand and hear His voice in all circumstances. If you think that you need a specific time to learn life lessons, you will never get to learn them. It is not practical for us to put aside our works and concentrate fully on Bible study. However, we are to learn the lessons of life as we work and vice versa. We need to combine work with spiritual training and the learning of life lessons. Learning to coordinate with others at work is an important lesson of life. Naturally, everyone likes to have some time for daily devotion and edification. But if your schedule does not work out that way, you can still learn life lessons. In fact, your learning through work would be even more concrete.

We learn life lessons and gain spiritual edification while we work and coordinate with others in our daily lives. Some people are faithful at work but they cannot be corrected. They crumble like wafers at the slightest touch. Before the Lord, such faithfulness and diligence do not carry much value. May the Lord help us to be trained and equipped, as well as to learn life lessons through our livelihood and work.

Bro. Hong:

The New Testament Church preaches and testifies for the truth. Therefore, we need to diligently seek to understand the truth of the Bible. At the same time, we should not neglect learning life lessons. The main role of serving God is to bring life to others. And an abundant life comes from learning lessons well. The Lord Jesus said, "I came to let people gain life and gain it more abundantly." Thus, we who serve the Lord are to "let people gain life and gain it more abundantly." Since we are vessels who provide life, we need to learn spiritual lessons. How can our spiritual life reach abundance? It's by denying ourselves. For that reason, the Lord Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me."

At times, in our ministration, we have works to rush. We end up having insufficient time to equip ourselves in the truth such as reading the

Bible and spiritual books. Inevitably, we become anxious and face a dilemma: Work or equipping ourselves, which is more important? How do I balance it out? This is how I feel: Just accept whatever the Lord reveals through the circumstances. If He reveals that there is some work to be rushed out during this period of time, we should concentrate on them. The Lord will understand that we don't have the time to read the Bible and spiritual books. So when you rush the work, you need not worry that you haven't read a certain number of chapters of the Bible today, or if you haven't finished reading the Spiritual Flow. There is no need to be anxious. You will have opportunities to do so in the future.

But at the same time, I also feel that you need to seize every opportunity to read the Bible and spiritual books while you are young and your memory is good. Time and tide wait for no man. In Taipei, there was an undergraduate from the Christian Assembly who attended class as usual and never failed to attend church services several times a week. How could someone with such a tight schedule possibly have time to study the Bible? Yet he still managed to do so. Moreover, he was able to read both the Old and New Testament in just two weeks! How was that possible? He would read the Bible whenever he had time, like during meals, and even while using the restroom. He bought a cheap Bible and separated it into individual booklets according to the various books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and so on. These booklets were very handy and he brought them around in his pocket, reading them whenever he wanted. Therefore, make the most of your time. If you don't seize it, it will pass you by.

I hope that while you are still young, you will seize every opportunity and every minute and second to learn. I believe that if we have the determination, the Lord will help us and grant us more time. You don't have to worry about failing to balance between your daily tasks and spiritual equipping. If a certain job has to be rushed, concentrate on the job until it is done. For example, if you are doing a cementing work, you need to complete it at one go. You can't say, "Time's up, I have to go and read

my Spiritual Flow now.” If God does not arrange much time for us, we still must do our best and be at peace before the Lord. Like when the Lord Jesus was a child, after returning home to Nazareth with His parents, He began to work as a carpenter for eighteen years. He no longer had the opportunity to sit at the temple to listen to the teachers and ask questions. Instead, He calmly worked in Nazareth, full of the presence of God the Father. This is what we should learn. Let’s be faithful in all circumstances that the Lord places us in.

2. Why aren’t we, the newly consecrated young co-workers, as dynamic as our senior co-workers?

Bro. Pi:

It is good that you feel that way. Some people are too self-complacent, and that is not right. **The driving force and perseverance of a person have a lot to do with his vision and determination.** They are also developed under the influence of circumstances and a person’s background in life. Children from poor families who lead hard lives know how to strive better. They are also more determined to make progress. On the other hand, children from well-off families are more pampered and have less impetus. This also applies to one’s spiritual life. While we were battling with the KMT, our spirits were strong and alert. Now that there are no more battles and afflictions, our spirits have become slack and many problems have also emerged. Yet, a person who lives in the vision will not let himself fall. He knows how to keep himself alert and be transformed daily by the renewing of his mind. He does not indulge in previous successes or in his own abilities. Rather, he has the driving force as well as perseverance.

If your vision is blurred, you will lose your enthusiasm and impetus, and your spiritual life will also be at risk. Time is a very trying factor. Some people are very zealous when they first serve the Lord. This is the “first love.” But as time goes on, the prolonged workload will reduce their zeal

and willpower. Eventually, their spirits become stale and they end up jumping down from the altar. May we always maintain our first love and zeal. Then we will have impetus and perseverance. To achieve this, we need to hold fast to the vision and never disobey it.

Bro. Hong:

The young co-workers feel that they are not as dynamic as their seniors. I believe that this has to do with one's **steadfastness to the Lord's call**. This is a very important issue. It will be good enough as long as you remain steadfast until the end. It is not important whether you appear impressive or dynamic, as if you did something great. The thirty mighty men who fought in the battle of Mount Carmel resolved to disregard their future, their education, and careers. They chose to offer themselves completely to the Lord. Such spirit is truly precious. When the Lord was on earth, He called His disciples, namely Peter, Andrew, James, and John. At the Lord's call, these disciples immediately left their boats and their fathers to follow Him. They didn't hesitate but followed without reservation. Moreover, they followed until the end. With such a determination, you will do well.

When your seniors were called, they offered themselves up in tears in some dynamic scene. It is good to have this scene but it is also fine if you don't. What is more important and precious is your certainty and firmness to the Lord's call; responding resolutely, unconditionally, and without doubt; offering up completely and following steadfastly until the end. I believe you all have this quality and are willing to keep it. May the Lord continue to preserve your attitude. Following and serving the Lord is like running a marathon. May the Lord give us steadfastness and long-lasting perseverance.

3. Throughout the past few years, the consecrated lands have become more and more developed and are greatly blessed by God. We now live more comfortable lives. As soon as the companions got married, they

would have their own homes, refrigerators, laundry machines, etc. But because of better circumstances, some companions lost their original will of serving God. Worse still, they could not be corrected or admonished. It is hard for us to admonish them because we fear that they might stumble. Yet, if we don't admonish them, their inappropriate conduct may affect others. Brothers and sisters have also noticed their condition and brought up this issue in private. This condition has been going on for two years now. We have said what we need to and have also prayed, but nothing has changed. I hope that the Lord's servant will help us on this.

Bro. Pi:

I feel the same way about this matter. The condition on Mount Zion is even worse than that of the consecrated lands of Southeast Asia. The Lord's servant has been very concerned about this. I don't see anything wrong with owning washers and refrigerators. Washers replace human labor and save us more time to serve God. Refrigerators keep food fresh and hygienic. This isn't a problem. But what is the problem? It is that when we are rich in materialistic things, we tend to seek for a luxurious life — a life of ease. We are supposed to live on Zion in peace, not in ease. If we live in ease, and only care for our own paneled houses, we will fall from grace and gradually lose our zeal for God's will and His house. On Mount Zion, private properties tend to be well taken care of while communal properties are neglected. This is rather abnormal.

Apostle Paul said that he knew **how to be abased, and how to abound**. When he was in need, he did not greed for others' wealth and lose his dignity. When he abounded, he didn't seek luxury and become degenerated. A person who has an abundant life learns both to suffer need and to abound at any time. Some are able to fight with the Lord's servant during hard times and appear to be strong amidst afflictions and trials. Yet, in times of riches, they are no longer satisfied with their lives and begin to have strife and contention. They covet the life of comfort, and hence, fall

from grace. This makes us worry. Therefore, we must be careful when we abound.

All these conditions reflect a person's life. If your life is tender, you will not appreciate the messages delivered from the pulpit and the Lord's blessings. You will be quick to lose your first love, turn lukewarm, and lose your love for Mount Zion. This would be terrible — this is also a wile of Satan. During the days of wandering, we longed to return to Zion, saying, "Everything will be fine once we go back to Zion." Now that we have returned to Mount Zion, some like to head for Babylon instead. What do you think we should do? Every one of us needs to face the Lord's light, and live before Him in the vision. We cannot take root on earth. We must anchor our lives in New Jerusalem and in the Millennium. Only then will we have the capacity to abound and to be abased. May the Lord be merciful to the co-workers and brothers and sisters.

Bro. Hong:

A life of ease has also appeared in the consecrated lands of Southeast Asia. We must face this problem seriously. This had been my constant worry prior to our return to Zion. God's grace was overwhelming while we were wandering. Amidst extreme hardships, we were filled with the militant spirit and of the spirit of returning to Zion. We maintained a high spirit and kept ourselves in the spirit of joy and alertness, not being slack even for a moment. However, I had a concealed worry: Will we degenerate after we return to Zion? Will we degenerate when circumstances change for the better and will we live in comfort without battles? I thought to myself: After returning to Zion, we should often fast and pray so that we will remain alert at all times. We must also try to maintain our original lifestyle by going to work by foot instead of by car. I knew that after we returned to Zion, we would construct roads and end up getting motorcycles and cars. I also anticipated that once we got accustomed to cars, our legs would become weak and feeble. We would have rheumatism and arthritis. After these years, all my worries came true.

The easy lifestyle of the people of Zion has corrupted and stumbled many. This is a terrible crisis that causes much worry! If we don't find God's mercy and are not delivered from this condition in time, I dare not imagine how much His hand will come upon us. Such conditions of living in ease exist because we are not like Paul, who learned to be content in any circumstance. We tend to be alert amidst afflictions and poverty, but we lose our alertness as soon as we become successful and prosperous. Once our spirits are slack, we will lose our strength and become weak.

Here is another tragic sign: When we were in afflictions, we could still exhort and encourage one another, and accept corrections. But now, there are some who cannot be exhorted or corrected. They do whatever they like and you can't do anything about it. If you were to admonish them, they would rebel, and even publicly oppose and quit. This was the typical spirit of Korah and his company. Such disobedience is terrible. It was enough to provoke God to open the earth and swallow them up! If our attitude hinders others from correcting us, then we must seriously deal with it and completely remove this evil root! If this evil root is not eradicated, the fate of Korah and his company will come upon us one day. Therefore, we must uproot this mystery of lawlessness the moment it starts to work! **Don't be someone who is both incorrigible and irritable.**

Brothers and sisters, **the more a person surrenders himself, the more he finds grace.** Since we have been called to serve God in His church, we must always be ready to surrender ourselves to Him. We must also surrender ourselves to the co-workers and companions through whom the Lord may speak and edify us. We must gladly accept everybody's admonishment — not only from the co-workers who lead us but also from our fellow companions. If we are humble, God will be gracious to us and we will gain help and edification in various aspects. When people speak frankly to us, we must see it as God speaking to us through people, and that this is His way of being gracious to us. Otherwise, we will surely

revolt.

We often struggle with circumstances and people because we're too egoistic and have not understood God's way of granting grace. Sometimes we may say, "O Lord, I place myself in Your hand so You may mold me." But how will the Lord mold us? Will He stretch His hand from heaven to mold us? No! He molds us through the companions and circumstances around us. Rejecting these is rejecting the Lord's moldings. Some may say, "I will listen to my leader but not my companions." While others may say, "I will only listen to Bro. Hong and no one else!" One day all those who say this will not listen to Bro. Hong either. By then, they will say, "I will only listen to the Lord Jesus and no one else!" And eventually, even the Lord Jesus' words might mean nothing to them. Then they'd probably want God the Father to speak to them instead.

Those who reject admonishment do not recognize God's molding hand. They simply refuse to surrender their rights to God. These people are dreadful and pathetic. I hope we will always **accept the admonishment of others** and say "Amen" to the circumstances God uses to mold us. In this way, we will see God's grace abounding in us at any time. To those who have, more will be given. **The more you are willing to listen, the more others will correct you, and the more chances you will have to find grace.**

If you refuse to listen to admonishments, less people will dare to correct you. You will end up being one that no one dares touch. With no one admonishing you, your flesh will be comfortable and free. You can live in the lusts of your flesh and do whatever you like. As a result, your spirit will suffer loss, your spiritual eyes will become blind, and your spiritual senses numb. At the end, you may even lose the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's judgment is in store for such kind of people. Therefore, we have to uncover and deal with this lawlessness as soon as it starts to work in us! Flee from it as we would a killer tiger. We must never allow

ourselves to become those who refuse admonishment. Otherwise, it would mean the end of our spiritual future and ministration.

When God raises up people to talk to you, you must prostrate before the Lord, whether or not it sounds pleasant or reasonable to you. Sis. Kong gave us a good example in this aspect. Many people opposed her, accused her of preaching false doctrines, and even wanted her to repent. Not only had the false co-workers opposed her, but also the true co-workers. But what was Sis. Kong's reaction to all of this?

Sis. Kong was positive that what she preached was right. She knew that the co-workers opposed the truth because they were still not enlightened. However, when they openly told her, "You preach false doctrines, you must repent!" she immediately prostrated before the Lord. She did not struggle with this circumstance, nor did she admit to a mistake she didn't make. Rather, she said, "O Lord, this is the circumstance You have raised up. I'm willing to prostrate before You. If what I preach is wrong, then I am willing to accept Your correction and forsake what I had preached." When she prostrated humbly before the Lord, she clearly heard the Lord's reply in the spirit, "The truth you preach is absolutely correct!" Sis. Kong didn't pretend to be humble and admit that what she preached was wrong. But she humbly prostrated before the Lord and waited for the co-workers to turn around. Her attitude was extremely precious and important. It is not easy for any one to still be humble when he or she is falsely accused. On the contrary, it is easy to become offended and upset. But reacting in this way does not edify others.

I hope that all the co-workers and brothers and sisters who serve the Lord will look into the lesson of Paul: Be content with all circumstances. He knew how to be abased and how to be honored. He had learned both to abound and to suffer need. Some people can stand the trials of poverty but not the test of riches. Once circumstances turn favorable, they become slack. **When their spirit slackens, they are like people**

without defense. They fail to stand firm in their consecrated positions and cannot maintain their consecrated spirit. Eventually, they'd lose the power of consecration and fall into Satan's wiles. Being aware of such conditions on Mount Zion, I have been praying for the co-workers in Southeast Asia lest they fall into the same condition.

Most of the co-workers in Southeast Asia are from the first generation. They came at the Lord's call after seeing the vision. What tends to happen is that gradually, one after another, they would get married and start families of their own. As their children grow up, problems increase and things become more complicated. Also, with the increase of their personal belongings, they end up like some of the people of Zion who have lost the congregational spirit. In place of this, they have a self-centered spirit and fall into their own interests. We must avoid this! Let us plea for the Lord's mercy, asking Him to teach us how to abound in times of prosperity and great blessings. We shouldn't be slack in the spirit lest we get caught off guard when we abound.

Once our spirit slackens, we will become too fragile to accept admonishments and corrections. And once our spirit slackens, we will lose the spirit of battling. We will end up taking off our armor and staying behind the battlefield. We will think it's time for peace and that the war is over: What's this helmet and battle gear for? Why do I need this clumsy armor? As a result, you may fall prey to your enemies at anytime. Pray that the Lord be merciful to us that we may learn from history.

We should quickly deal with every condition that hinders us from accepting others' admonishments. Let's have this desire: **You are welcome to correct and admonish me.** Accepting corrections is the way and the key to finding grace. **Never allow ourselves to be so stubborn that no one dares to correct us. We will progress and gain an abundant life only when we listen to what we dislike to hear.** Always listening to sweet words may bring us more harm than good. It is just like how

eating candy may lead to cavities. May the Lord add us grace so that we will surrender ourselves to Him and to the circumstances arranged by Him. Let's be molded, trained and adorned by the Lord through the circumstances.

4. Lately, everyone has been rushing the construction of the Eden Longhouse. I saw no one maintaining the cars so I volunteered. However, I don't feel right when I see others working hard to catch up with the schedule of the construction while I am repairing cars in the other corner. I feel detached from the congregation. Am I thinking too much? Please advise me.

Bro. Pi:

When the feet do the walking, will they think they do not belong to the body just because they are not doing the work of the hands? We divide up the work, but we coordinate with one another. What will happen to the trucks needed to transport the logs if no one maintains them during the construction of the longhouse? Obviously, in the construction of the longhouse, vehicle maintenance is also needed. A mechanic's job may not be prominent, but God will remember his labor. After you have finished your work, you can then join in the construction of the longhouse. This is how it should be. If you do not do what the congregation has arranged for you, but what you like to, then you are not doing congregational work, but your own work that will not be remembered by God. If you do the work arranged by the congregation, you are coordinating with the congregation. You are then a part of the congregation, regardless of what kind of work you do. The feet cannot be denied nor excluded from the body just because they cannot hold things as hands do.

Bro. Hong:

When you repair cars, it is also for the congregation. You don't have to work at the construction site of the longhouse to be part of the congregation. The construction of the longhouse involves various kinds of work.

Vehicle maintenance is one of the most important jobs of the congregation. Sis. Sheu wants you to repair the cars and take a look at the work site occasionally. Since you are the only person who is familiar with maintenance work, it's important that you stay on your job. If you don't, we'll be stuck with no vehicles to use. Moreover, there are many cars waiting to be repaired. Of course if somebody could replace you in maintenance work, it would be good if you could help out in the longhouse construction, because you, too, are a skilled worker. With more skilled workers discussing together we would work better. In short, this is all rather flexible.

5. Mount Moriah has many vehicles but we have been rough with them. Sometimes we use passenger vehicles at the work sites where they become very dirty. Some good cars even have drained batteries and failed engines. This condition worries us. What should we do about this?

Bro. Pi:

Sons and hired workers are different. A **son** cherishes everything in the house because he is the heir. But a **hired worker** acts differently. He doesn't care when things are broken. He may say, "What does it matter to me?" The spirit of a son is hard to find on Mount Zion. Personal cars are well taken care of, but communal cars for congregational use lie around uncared for after being used. Nobody cares to clean them and no one confesses when there are damages.

The Lord's servant often says that it doesn't matter if the cars are broken. We just need to take the cars to the garage and report the damages to the brothers of the maintenance group so they could fix them. However, there are still some who just refuse to speak up. They not only lack the spirit of a son, they are even worse than hired workers. Hired workers work for wages, but at least they work cautiously to avoid getting reprimanded from the boss. We have no laws on Mount Zion. Everything is controlled by the Holy Spirit. But some people refuse to submit to the Holy Spirit and are not easily advised. Nevertheless, the discipline of the

Holy Spirit can be awesome. We can tell how much *spirit of a son* a person has by seeing how much he treasures God's property. Brothers and sisters, we cannot afford to lose the spirit of a son. If we do, we would probably lose our birthrights and blessings. This is solemn indeed!

Bro. Hong:

I didn't expect that such condition would exist among you — it is identical to that of Zion. Such a situation is intolerable! When we are rough with the way we use our vehicles, we are not cherishing God's property but abusing it. This is a terrible and pathetic condition. As God's children, we should treasure God's possessions, what more to say we are co-workers who serve God. Even an ordinary brother or sister with the spirit of a son would cherish God's property. I am puzzled by the degree of our degeneration. Such condition should never exist. If you have no concern for God's property, then you do not live like God's children because God's children will surely cherish the things of God. If one does not cherish the property of God, it is evident that the spirit of a son in him is weak or he might have even lost the spirit. Degenerated men have lost the spirit of a son. But we, who have been redeemed by God, should show the grace we have found and avoid degeneration.

We inherited Eden Isle for just over a year, and yet the same condition also appeared there. In such a small place like Eden Isle, tools are found everywhere. How could this be? Those who used the tools would often leave tools lying around everywhere. Such a condition cannot glorify God nor edify men. We must pray earnestly and fill in the loopholes before the problem of not treasuring God's inheritance becomes too serious. By then, there would be no remedy but judgment.

I've mentioned this to the people of Zion so many times that it embarrasses me to even talk about it again. Even the listeners would say, "Here he goes again!" Therefore, my lips are now sealed and I can only wait for God to work. Do you think He will work? I believe He will. He

already allowed someone to get into a car accident. Fortunately, God is merciful. God spared his life with a narrow escape. Otherwise, this person would have been killed. If this accident still doesn't wake him up, I will fear for him. I hope that such conditions in Southeast Asia will cease before they get out of hand. I hope that we will acquire good habits when using and handling cars. Let us not abuse our vehicles. Then we will be able to testify that we are the children of God. If we are faithful in small matters, God will entrust us with bigger tasks. I hope that every one of us will be attentive in learning this lesson.

The Tent and the Altar

*(June 7, 1995 — Co-workers' ministration service
on Mount Moriah)*

1. The companions serving in the consecrated lands of Southeast Asia are constantly on the move. When another companion takes over, his thoughts and methods of doing things are usually different from that of the previous companion in charge. This causes the previous companion in charge to feel that all he had done were in vain. For example, because we are shorthanded and inexperienced, we grow some short-term crops besides the passion fruit and durian. But the newly arrived companion might feel that since we are so shorthanded, we should just care for the more profitable crops and forget about the short-term crops. As a result, we feel that all our efforts have been wasted. What should be done about this?

Bro. Pi:

Concerning this matter, I think that the leaving companion should brief the new companion and hand over the job before leaving. He should list all the jobs he has done and what he suggests to be continued, everything in details. In the army, when the troops switch positions, they are always given a detailed list of the enemy's situation, the equipment used and battlefield condition. Maybe we should also try to do the same when switching jobs. After being informed, if the newly arrived companion still insists on doing things his way, then his spirit is questionable. He needs to examine his work to see if it is done in the interest of the Body (congregation).

If you don't discuss before you decide anything, and choose to destroy what has been planted, it will really be a shame. You will waste much of others' efforts. All personal ambitions, individual ways and construc-

tions are harmful to the congregation. Whether you plant or uproot, you must do according to the overall plan of the spiritual minister. If everyone has his own ways, such as while one plants another plucks; while one builds and another tears, each trying to show off his own skills, then this isn't the spirit of the congregation.

Bro. Hong:

Concerning our consecrated enterprises, especially the newly established ones, we need sufficient discussion and a common understanding before making decision. Then, it will be less confusing. In general, the successor must be aware of what the previous person has done. If the existing crops are not detrimental to our enterprise, we don't have to destroy them. We must try not to waste the inheritance of God. Every one of us may have his unique skill in enterprising, but we must contribute our skills in the spirit of discussing.

I feel that discussions are very important. **The spirit of discussing is vital to our consecrated enterprises.** When we do not do a job well or coordinate well, it is either because we have not had a discussion or because we do not discuss well. What's worse, some people never give others a chance to discuss. This happens on Mount Zion and also in some other consecrated lands. They are rather subjective and self-opinionated. Such attitude cannot testify for the Lord on the consecrated lands. Not only must we run the enterprises well but also take note of how we run them: Are we managing the enterprises in the spirit of discussing? Are we enterprising in a spirit of harmony, or a spirit of strife and contention? What God wants to see is our spirit. As long as we run the enterprises in harmony and in the spirit of discussing, it does not matter even if our achievement is not that obvious or our profit is not so great.

Frankly speaking, all things belong to God. It doesn't matter how much money we make, because it is easy for God to bless us. But **through running the enterprises, God wants to see how we display the testi-**

mony of harmony and manifest His glory. This is the true value of the consecrated enterprise. Since we do all this for the testimony of consecration, we must pay more attention to the testimony than to the skills and the profit. So, **the testimony is our first priority. Profit is secondary.**

It is hard for some people to coordinate with others. As soon as he arrives, he will take control of everything and make decisions. Others will not have a chance to make any suggestions, let alone to correct him. It is very hard to work harmoniously with such a person. Everytime something needs to be done, he always puts other in a difficult position so that they don't know what to do. Such enterprises will have little spiritual value. The enterprises on Mount Moriah have just begun. I hope that the co-workers here will have a thorough discussion and reach a consensus before doing things. Do what is right in the sight of all men and don't ever be so self-confident. You will not do a better job if you are self-centered. Humans are limited and there is always someone better. We must always discuss humbly with others and give God's Spirit a chance to move among us. Then the most high will of God shall be revealed to us.

The spirit of discussing is very important. Unlike the worldly meetings, where a majority of votes decide a motion, our discussions are finalized by the spiritual minister who is revealed and entrusted by the Holy Spirit. Then there will be spiritual order instead of confusion. If we do not abide by the spiritual order, the Holy Spirit will not be able to move freely and thoroughly, and all our efforts will be in vain. **We must do our part to speak out our feelings, and then let the spiritual minister make the final decision.** In this way, the Holy Spirit will be able to reveal what is best for us, and there will be no confusions. If someone oversteps his position and confuses the spiritual order, the outcome will be terrible and solemn.

When Ruth Chang was leading the church, Tan Kui-fang did not

stay in his position. He disobeyed the spiritual order by disrespecting Chang. He did whatever he wanted and went wherever he pleased. Chang was totally ignorant of all that he did. His condition was very fearful and serious, because it prevented the Holy Spirit from working. God soon cast him away. I repeat: The Holy Spirit will not permit anyone in the New Testament Church, especially in the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade, to overstep his boundaries to do whatever he wants and disobey the spiritual order. Anyone who does do this will greatly offend God and his consequence will be tragic. The Holy Spirit will personally intervene! That is why Tan Kui-fang had a very tragic end. As he disrupted the spiritual order in God's house, God did not tolerate him. God publicly exposed his ugliness before God eliminated him. We must guard ourselves against such condition and learn from history.

The New Testament Church is rebuilt and controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is where the Holy Spirit works, so flesh and blood have no position here. You may do whatever you want and nobody can stop you, but God will cast you aside, and the Holy Spirit will winnow you away. When a person is rejected by God, he will also be rejected by all the saints — such a person is most pitiful.

Tan once gained the favor of a group of young people, but after his unruliness was exposed by the Holy Spirit, these once-deceived youths awakened and deserted him. When he left Hong Kong for Taiwan, no one came to send him off. It was so tragic! Obviously, it is a very serious matter to act randomly as one pleases in God's house, for it really displeases and provokes God to anger. I hope that such a condition will not reoccur in the New Testament Church, especially in the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. I also hope that by the Lord's grace, we will learn to be humble and consider others better than ourselves. In this way, we will discuss in all things and not become self-opinionated, causing the congregation and ourselves to suffer loss.

It is always good to have a spirit of discussing. Just like in a family, the father often contributes his ideas and thoughts for consideration. He knows what to do but he won't give orders like a commander. Instead, he listens to everyone's opinions and observes their responses. When a father shares his thoughts, it does not mean that he has no definite opinion. He hopes the whole family will work in one accord after understanding his feelings and thoughts. This is the spirit of discussing. Actually, a father can decide as he has planned, but a one-man show would not be as beautiful. In the house of Jacob there are no ranks; we are classified by age. Therefore, when there is work to be done, there should not be one person giving orders while the rest bitterly listen and obey. We are one family, having a common life, vision, spirit, path, and goal. We offer up in one accord to accomplish God's will. How beautiful is this spirit of discussing!

On Mount Zion, when I have an idea of how to handle certain matters I always discuss my feelings with the apostles first. We would proceed only when everyone felt good about it. Only with such spirit of fellowship will we have a true bond in life. With such unity, the enemy will find no grounds to attack us. We will then fulfill the function of the Body of Christ, which is to trample on, to shame, and to boast victory over the enemies. God will then be greatly glorified.

We gain experience and learn lessons through failures. We will know what to do when the co-workers are relocated in the future. In short, we need adequate discussions. We must know what those before us have done, what the current work progress is and how we should carry on after they leave. That way, the newly arrived will not ruin the work of those before them by starting something new. I repeat: If we have any good ideas, we may contribute them in a discussion, but it must be done in the spirit of discussing, of perfecting, and of love. It cannot be done to criticize, judge, or rebuke. It would not be nice if we go to a new place and disregard all the labor and hardships of those before us.

We must always respect one another. Even if the person before you may not have done a good job, remember that they have been working faithfully and diligently. To God, their work holds value — we cannot simply deny it. It is not nice just to look at the fruits of one's work, and not his labor. If you have any ideas for improvement, you may contribute them in a public discussion. We will strive to attain the best result, and the way which will satisfy and glorify God the most. This is our wish and goal. It is most hurtful and unedifying to simply criticize and deny others' labor without truly understanding the situation first. We must learn from each other, and learn to discuss with mutual respect. With a respectful spirit, you will know how you should speak. I hope we will have better discussions concerning our enterprise in the future.

Let me give you another example: You all know that the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade has entrusted Sis. Sheu to shepherd the churches and manage the consecrated enterprises in Southeast Asia. God has also greatly revealed her ministry. Presently, all of you have come to Mount Moriah to build the Eden Longhouse. Each of you does your own part in this project, and everyday Bro. Nathaniel announces the work assignment. He must know the overall situation and relate it to Sis. Sheu from time to time. She must be informed of the progress of the project and what is coming up. If she has any feelings for changes, she will let Bro. Nathaniel know. He can then make a summed-up report so that everyone knows what to do. Each of you may have different allocated work, but you work in harmony under the knowledge of Sis. Sheu. Currently, every team on Mount Zion files a work report everyday. When we read the daily work report, we are well-informed on the work progress of the entire mountain. Even when we are here, Bro. Shen-ming would fax us reports every two to three days. Sis. Li-chu also keeps an eye on the overall situation and informs us of big and small matters. So even though we are not on Mount Zion, we still know the progress there. This is what we mean by having discussions and a bond in life. It would be awful if the leader was ignorant of what we are doing.

If we pay more attention to the **spirit of discussing** and the **spiritual order**, our coordination will become more harmonious and our ministration more abundant. Our enterprises will also abound in God's blessings. It is because the Holy Spirit will be able to move among us more freely. Bro. Alfred's recent trip to Tahiti has been very successful. I always like to personally praise someone who deserves it. I find it hard to suppress my joy and feelings when I see what is good. I speak as often as I am delighted.

Bro. Alfred has been in Tahiti for three months, and his shepherding is excellent. He is a really good shepherd. Many brothers and sisters wrote to say how good a shepherd he is. The key is his enlightenment in leading the flock to **have a life connection with the spiritual minister, as well as bringing the messages, feelings and condition of the spiritual minister to the flock**. This is the secret and the reason of his success. **He shepherds the flock according to the feelings of the master builder**. Bro. Alfred himself also has a close connection with the master builder; not in theory but in reality. He serves God with this bond in life. As a result, I can understand the condition in Tahiti from his discussions with us, even though I am not there. This ministration is excellent.

The New Testament Church, the Body of Christ, has matured. Bro. Alfred's ministration is proof of this maturity. Here in Southeast Asia, Sis. Sheu is also doing the same thing. We are not physically in Southeast Asia but through the connection and the discussion that she has with us, we are well-informed of the situation here. Now, the co-workers in the West are also gradually finding grace in this aspect and they are progressing. All these indicate that the New Testament Church is growing to the full stature of the Body of Christ. This is a good sign. May the Lord be gracious to us so we may maintain this spiritual virtue of having fellowship in the Holy Spirit. Let our spirit of discussing always be smooth and unceasing. This will allow the function of the Body of Christ to be revealed even more.

2. How do I know my way of life, work and ministration are in the will of God?

Bro. Pi:

God's maidservant Sis. Kong said, "Apart from knowing God's will and that I'm a woman, I know nothing else." She was fully absorbed in God's will. A person who is filled with the will of God lives, works and serves for God's will. Such ministration does not come from knowledge, but from a person's life and spirit. Personally, I've never thought of this question. I just make sure that I act in the same spirit with the Lord's servant and take the same steps with him. In this way, all my life, work and ministration will surely be in God's will. It is that simple.

The denominations also talk about God's will but very obscurely. However, we know a very concrete way to do God's will: Say "Amen" to whatever the Lord's servant does and says. By saying "Amen" to whatever he does is abiding by God's will in a practical way. Bro. Alfred has always been mindful of the feelings of the Lord's servant ever since he went to Tahiti. Sis. Sheu also does the same. Before making a decision, she would pay heed to the feelings of the Lord's servant. Therefore to assure that our life, work and ministration are in God's will, we have to keep ourselves in line with the Lord's servants' feelings and vision. If we do, then we are fulfilling God's will, and our life, work, and ministration will glorify God and have everlasting value.

Bro. Hong:

In the New Testament Church, doing God's will is not just a mere theory, but a reality. For we know who God's mouthpiece and representative is. He is the vessel God sent to us — God's will is entrusted to him, and through him, it is made known to the saints. Therefore, **obeying the words of the one sent by God is doing God's will**. As it is stated in the Bible, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him who He sent."

The Lord can testify on my behalf how dedicated I was to Him when I was in the Christian Assembly. I really wished to live a valuable life. I didn't want to be a preacher to whom the Lord would finally say, "I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoer!" Therefore, I earnestly sought to understand God's will. But how could I understand it? What is God's will? I had no idea. My problems were solved only after I recognized the ministry of Sis.Kong, and understood that she was the mouthpiece of God. Through her, God's will was made known to His people. From then on, I laid aside all that was of myself to co-work with her. Sis. Kong's vision became my vision, and the truth she preached became the truth I preached. I wanted to have a share in her work. Apart from Sis. Kong's work, I didn't have my own work. Sis. Kong co-worked with God, and I co-worked with her. Therefore, I was also co-working with God and doing God's work. Sis. Kong was the mouthpiece of God's will. When I live, work and serve according to Sis. Kong's teachings, I am living in the will of God. If you stick to this principle, you can be sure that your livelihood, work and ministration are in God's will.

If you abide by the principle of, 'Believing in the one God has sent is doing God's work,' you can confidently say, "O Lord, I thank you. My current livelihood, work and ministration are all in Your will." If God asks you, "What kind of work are you doing?" You can answer, "I believe in the one You have sent, so You can't disregard me!" Brothers and sisters, this recognition towards *the one God has sent* is a revelation God has given the New Testament Church. Such recognition is her fount of riches. It is also the assurance of our ministration and our glorious hope in serving the Lord.

3. In the early days of Mount Zion and other consecrated lands, life was hard but full of joy. The companions distinctly displayed the testimony of harmony and unity. Now, Mount Zion and other consecrated lands are well-established and prosperous, but the testimony of harmony and caring for one another has become less obvious. Are we waiting until the Eden Longhouse is completed to revive this testimony of unity to its

abundance?

Bro. Pi:

It is a fact that the testimony of unity on Zion and other consecrated lands is not as strong as before. We all have the same feelings about this. However, we need to have this enlightenment: Let us focus on the congregation and not on individuals. For if we look at individuals, and things in parts, we will see unfavorable conditions. As with the human body, you cannot deny it is a person's body just because there are flaws and defects in some members. If you don't focus on the congregation as a whole but on the individuals, you will even find some individualistic and self-centered people not dwelling in the testimony of unity. They even cause strife and discord in the congregation. From their works you know that they are not in the body. We are frightened for such people. Like the fallen branches of a vine, they will be thrown away and wither, and finally be burned by fire.

Why does God allow such condition to exist among us? I think God has His good purpose in it. Such a condition is trialsome to people, especially those who want to consecrate themselves to serve God. When they see this disharmony — not loving but fighting one another, they give up the idea of serving God. There are also some people who have consecrated themselves but because they cannot stand the circumstances, they left. So this condition is a great trial to us.

We are walking in God's will when we walk on this way. We need to maintain a close relationship with God and stay faithful to Him. Even if others don't learn their lessons of loving one another, we still have to try our best to merge into the body, blend into the main flow, and love the brothers and sisters sincerely as we advance in the leading of the Lord's servant. The disharmony will affect some people but not all. People are not affected because they focus on the whole congregation and not on some irregular individuals. They follow the mainstream and not the *coun-*

tercurrent. We believe that this countercurrent will not affect the flow of the mainstream. These off-track conditions will not destroy the testimony of the entire New Testament Church. The New Testament Church shall be victorious. This body will attain the full stature of the Body of Christ. Many who come to Mount Zion don't see the shortcomings of the minority. They only see that we love one another and live in unity, and they are drawn to us. Therefore we shouldn't be bothered and dismayed by some abnormal conditions of the minority. Rather, we must pray for them and let the Lord take care of them.

We should also flee from the adverse current of discord and seek peace diligently. The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." The Son of God has accomplished peace on the cross: Men are reconciled to God and to each other. The work of Satan is always the opposite. He causes men to leave God and fight among themselves. Since we are the sons of God, we must not only love one another but also do away with disunity among the brethren. Making irresponsible remarks and gossiping are most damaging to the harmony of the church, and they are detested by God. The pursuit of peace and unity are summed up in this saying: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Bro. Hong:

We used to attract people, but not so much now. Why is it so? How did we attract people in the past? What made us so captivating? Why are we not as captivating now? What is the key reason to our failure? We need to ponder over it and recover what we have lost.

Tonight, let us search for the answer from Abraham's experience: "Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land.' And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD" (Gen. 12:7-8).

There were two indispensable things in the life, work, and ministration of Abraham in the land of Canaan: **The tent** and **the altar**. In the beginning, Abraham and Lot dwelt in harmony. But after they prospered, they began to have strife. The testimony of unity and harmony was destroyed. How could this have happened?

Hebrews 11:13 says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Abraham had entered Canaan, the land God promised him. But he confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim in the Promised Land. The key factor lies in the spirit of sojourning. **Whenever the trait of sojourning in us is lost, our drawing power will also disappear. So the drawing power lies in the life of a sojourner and pilgrim — one who is not rooted on earth.** This means living in tents, just like Abraham. As soon as we begin to take root on earth, the testimony of the tent will be lost and we will no longer draw people to us. The people of God will only draw others when they do not take root on earth. They are strangers and pilgrims on earth. Brothers and sisters, our citizenship is in heaven. We are pilgrims living in tents on the Promised Land. We don’t take root on earth. Our city’s foundation is not on earth. Like Abraham, we are looking forward to the city with foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Today, if we want to draw people to us, we must have the testimony of the tent and the altar. The tent and the altar make us draw people. For people are not attracted to poverty but to the spirit of a sojourner.

Why did the people of Zion lose their drawing power after returning to Zion? Why do the co-workers in the consecrated lands fail to live in unity and how did they lose the power of attraction? Degeneration is the cause of it. Degenerated men are easily influenced by material possessions. Once their material possessions increase, they become attached to the earth. The tighter they are bound to the earth, the more distant they will be from heaven. Unknowingly, they become rooted on earth. Their

tents have been torn down and replaced with brick houses which are not easily moved around. Therefore, we must **beseech the Lord to restore the testimony of the tent among us. Let us always have the spirit of strangers and pilgrims.** Then, we will not have strife but harmony.

While the three families of Tang and Liu were wandering at the pigsty in Shiserliao, they lived as sojourners dwelling in tents. There, they also had an altar to call upon the name of the LORD. They were always connected to heaven and so they sang, “The darkest corner of the world is our paradise and the most tragic encounter among men is our blessing.” Therefore, if Mount Zion and her offshoots want to restore the abundant testimony of dwelling in harmony, we must first restore the tent and the altar, and see to it that these two things always exist in our life. The tent means being a pilgrim and a stranger on earth. The altar means being a servant of the Lord — I call upon His name and everything I have is for Him. Therefore it does not mean that poverty will draw people. Rather it is the tent and the altar that draws people — the spirit of a sojourner — the spirit of not being rooted on earth. We will attract people when we are completely drawn to the heavenly vision, to live and offer up everything for this vision. Brothers and sisters, why did the 30 mighty men attract and move people so much? It is because they had no tomorrow, no future, no education and no career. This is having the tent and the altar.

Brothers and sisters, after we have known how to be abased and how to abound (*see* Phil. 4:12), we will attract people even when we are wealthy and rich in God’s blessings. We will not lose our drawing power because we are rich. If our riches are in favor of God, we will still attract people. Mount Zion is displaying such testimony before the Gentiles. Many people are very impressed by Zion. They say, “Wow! It’s incredible! You have just built the Victory Hall and now you are building the multi-level parking lot!” Because we are not rooted on earth, everything we have is for God. May the Lord preserve our life of the tent and of the altar, and let these two things always remain in us.

Know the Right Person to Discuss With

*(June 8, 1995 — Co-workers' ministration service
on Mount Moriah)*

- 1. There are many consecrated lands in Southeast Asia and we, the companions, are often transferred to different consecrated lands to serve. We come across many problems and disagreements in our service and coordination, especially when the spiritual minister is absent. When we have problems, we dare not discuss them with the local companion-in-charge for fear of misunderstandings. Because we are afraid to talk to the person in charge, we talk behind his back and resolve nothing. After some time, the problems are forgotten. We think to ourselves, since this companion is leading, we should just obey. Yet the problem remains unresolved. Not long after, the same problem recurs.*

Again, we dare not confront the co-worker put in charge by the spiritual minister, but discuss matters privately. Sometimes we even talk about bad experiences of the past, resulting in more disagreements against him. We begin to feel that he is unrighteous, biased, and stubborn. We are often bothered by this problem and are greatly distressed by our conflicts, though they are not prominent. But we don't dare to discuss this matter with the spiritual minister. Such problems also exist in our coordination in the church enterprise.

We dare not voice out because we think that the other party will not listen to us. As a result, we find ourselves talking behind his back, causing the testimony to suffer loss. In addition, we have many conflicts and trials in our daily lives. When we go to the spiritual minister, she would exhort us saying, "You can speak the truth and accept one another in love." However, we often failed. As we know, not everyone has the grace to speak the truth (frank words) or listen to the truth. You

think you are speaking the truth in love, but the other party may think that you have no love and aren't being encouraging. We end up not knowing how to serve people with love.

Sometimes, when we speak the truth in love, the companions would say, "Sis. Sheu does not even speak to me this way. How dare you speak to me in this manner!" Some would also say, "Sis. Sheu often reprimands us so severely when she comes. Bro. Hong never talks to us that way!" I hope that the Lord's servants will advise us so we may know how to serve others, and be established in God's love.

Bro. Pi:

Problems concerning coordination can occur in the churches as well as the consecrated lands. It is not a lesson that can be learned in a day, but rather in a lifetime. Everyone has lessons to learn, but the vital point is how you learn them. When you learn lessons, you need enlightenment. Without enlightenment, you will not be learning lessons with your spirit but with your mind. Problems will escalate if we do not walk in the spirit but try to analyze and judge things with our mind. Resorting to the mind means living in self. One who lives in self will bring agony to others and himself.

God wants us to learn lessons through all kinds of circumstances. Without these circumstances, we will not learn lessons. Therefore circumstances are our best teachers. We must realize that the Lord exists in all circumstances. Since the circumstances are raised by Him, we should not avoid or oppose them, nor be discouraged by them. If you are dissatisfied with the circumstances, you are dissatisfied with God.

It is hard to decide what we should do when we have hard feelings towards our companions. If we don't speak out, we will be grievous and the problem will remain unsolved. Yet, if we speak up we fear that they will not listen; and if we tell the spiritual minister, we might be called a

tattletale. What a dilemma. At such a moment, it is better for us to pray and bring the matter before God. We must also discuss with the spiritual minister, particularly on matters concerning the testimony of the body. We would rather be reprimanded than to be a nice guy. As for personal lessons, we should pray and learn them in secret. Put our body under the subjection of the spirit, and exercise the spirit. Try to understand what kind of lesson He wants us to learn in the circumstances raised up by Him. You may experience frequent failures in your lessons, but don't be discouraged. Severely deal with the carnal self through prayers. The Lord's grace is sufficient for us. Once we prostrate before God, this lesson will come to pass.

Some people ask, "What does living in the light and living in the dark mean?" An example of living in the dark is: Whenever a problem arises, you would only see the mistakes of others and would constantly blame and judge others. If you live in the light, you would not focus on the shortcomings and weaknesses of others, especially those who coordinate with you. You would first examine yourself and concede your own shortcomings. It is always easy to spot other's faults. When God puts a person next to us, He expects us to learn lessons. If we can't get along with that person and want the Lord to remove him, then we are not getting along with the Lord. This means living in the dark. Even if a different person is put besides us, we will still not learn the lesson well. This is because we haven't known the secret of learning lessons and we are unaware of how evil, dreadful, and undesirable our "self" is.

Moreover, speaking the truth requires spiritual wisdom. It is not simply pointing out the mistakes of others. If we shepherd the church in that manner, the sheep will flee. Therefore, before we speak frank words to someone, we must first seek in the spirit and consider the spiritual level of the person.

Learning life lessons is more important than doing work of any kind.

Work done without any learning of life lessons will be a work without much value. Your work will be valuable if you learn your lessons well in your work.

Bro. Hong:

It is inevitable to have conflicts while coordinating with others. If we don't solve these problems by God's grace, we will be bothered by grievances and hard feelings. What then should we do? We should find someone with whom we can discuss our problems, burdens, grievances and bitterness. But with whom? It is important to talk to the right person. **God has set up in His house the ministers to help solve problems. God's people should come to these spiritual ministers and openly discuss their problems with them.** We must know whom to discuss with because not everyone can solve our problems. Simply telling anyone your problems is not the way to resolve problems. The only way is to fellowship with the spiritual ministers appointed by God. Otherwise, your problems will not be solved and even more problems may arise, thereby corrupting the faith of many.

I often hear about the encounters, problems, and conditions of brothers and sisters from others instead of from them directly. These brothers and sisters have found the wrong person for discussion. They do not know who to discuss with. I am not informed of some matters that I should know. The person who had a problem refused to let me know his problem. Instead, he told a third person who spread the news around. By the time I learned about it, a majority of people had known about it. This is the result of not knowing the right person to discuss with.

Problems become more complicated when some uncircumcised lips spread around whatever they hear. Natural man likes to gossip. Some may not like to preach the word of God, but they love to spread rumors. Some cannot sleep if they don't tell others what they know. They will die if you tell them not to talk. You cannot simply tell such people anything. What-

ever happens in the church should be told only to the spiritual ministers. I hope you will learn this lesson concretely. Even if you don't want to discuss with the spiritual ministers, you might as well keep it to yourself. We have many past examples of failures which resulted from not discussing with the right person. Consequently, the problems were not solved but became even more complicated.

Some matters that should be discussed openly are spoken in private. Words spoken in private can easily give way to the devil. If you want to speak the truth to each other, you must first pray earnestly, and then speak in a calm spirit. Proverbs 27:5 says, "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed." I believe that if you learn cautiously and discuss all your problems and feelings with the right person, all your problems, whether they are personal, mutual or congregational, will be solved with God's help.

It is very dangerous to discuss with the wrong person. We can learn this from the Bible. When Moses went up to the mountain, the Israelites lost patience in waiting for him and so they went to Aaron, who later made the golden calf and provoked God to punish them in His wrath. This is the serious consequence of discussing with the wrong person!

When we coordinate and serve here in Southeast Asia, we must **recognize who the spiritual leader is** and whom God's entrustment is upon. With these important factors in mind, bring all your problems to the spiritual minister, the entrusted vessel. In doing so, you will be blessed by God. If we have a decision to make or a problem to solve, we must first know that the criterion lies with the spiritual minister. There was an incident concerning Fan that is worth pondering.

When Fan returned from the West, he first went to Southeast Asia before returning to Hong Kong. In Southeast Asia, he heard of some controversies. By the time he returned to Hong Kong, he didn't sound right.

When Sis. Kong was still alive, Fan and Cheung were as close as a family. It was different this time. Fan looked very solemn. This puzzled Cheung. Later, when they sat down for a discussion, Fan asked, “Sis. Ruth, is the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets or on the foundation of the head of the apostles?” At that, everyone was shocked! Why did he ask such a question? Cheung was also surprised, and did not know how to handle this matter. Later, a co-worker broke the silence and asked, “Bro. Fan, if there is no head of the apostles as you meant, what are you going to say about this: When you, the apostles, have different viewpoints, which one of you should we listen to?” Fan was stunned and also awakened by the question.

Now, why do I mention this? Because Satan has a wife that attempts to destroy the unitary leadership and the testimony of unity. He makes people deny the leader appointed by God and believe that there are other spokesmen apart from the God-appointed leader. As Miriam said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through you, Moses?” (She became a leper as a result.) Korah and his company also said, “Does the Lord only speak to you, Moses? (As a result, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up). These questions instigate men to have many leaders and mouthpieces. This will upset the spiritual order and the administration in God’s house. When the spine of unity is destroyed, the testimony of the body will not appear. Therefore, we must maintain the spiritual order so as to avoid confusion in God’s house and to find solutions to our problems. **The spiritual leader appointed by God is the key person to discuss with in order to solve all problems.** Otherwise, we will be lost.

Of course, this does not mean that we cannot discuss with other co-workers. The companions and co-workers may also discuss among themselves. If you think that a certain co-worker can understand you better and share your burdens, you can tell him about your problems, and let him seek the Lord together with you. This is not prohibited, for we are all fellow members of the same body. But both of you need to bring the

problems to the attention of the spiritual minister when discussions fail to settle your problems. Discussing with the spiritual minister is always the right way to go. For both personal and congregational problems, we need to follow the same principle. Acknowledging the spiritual minister is a lifelong lesson which you may have to learn everyday. So, we must be ready to face it everyday. If we learn to discuss with the spiritual minister with such recognition, God will gradually lead us through all our interpersonal problems and church problems. As long as we seek God with reverence and humility, His Spirit will surely help us solve all problems.

Some people always have unsolved problems because they never learn their lessons well. Why is this? It is because they do not surrender themselves while trying to learn lessons. They are self-centered and advocate their own rights and ideas. Among them, the Holy Spirit cannot find an outlet, or an obvious outlet, where He can flow freely. If a person surrenders his rights and lets the Holy Spirit have a position, a free path, and an outlet in him, the power of the Holy Spirit will naturally come upon him and he will have no unsolved problems.

If any two people have persistent problems in coordination, this implies that neither of them is serious in learning his lessons. If one of them chooses to humble himself and obey the power of the Holy Spirit, their problems will surely be solved because the Holy Spirit has found a free path to show His power. When the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested, no carnal self can stop it. May the Lord keep our hearts and make us grow throughout the learning process. Though we may fail, we are not afraid of failures. Whenever we fail, let the light of the Lord shine on us even brighter. May He deliver us from our hostile conditions which prevent us from coordinating well with other members of the body. I believe that in the days of the full-scale revival, God's salvation will come upon us in a wonderful way. He will liberate us from disharmony. May the Lord be gracious to us. Since we have discovered our problem, let us face it and learn diligently from it. Then the dividing

walls among us will be broken down. There will be no more failures in coordination nor discord among us.

2. While coordinating, we may have different ideas and opinions. How do we keep the harmonious spirit under such circumstances?

Bro. Hong:

Differences in opinions are inevitable. When differences arise, let us respect other's opinions while trying to find some common grounds. We cannot expect others to think like us, for such a demand is too much to ask for. We must learn to be more receptive in accepting others who have different ideas.

Some people are more opinionated. Once they have some ideas, they can hardly accept the input of others. It is impossible to change his concept. We should be strong-minded but not opinionated. A person without his own mind is like a person without a backbone. A strong-minded person should always be ready to accept greater and tougher challenges. This requires us to be open-minded, because we will not progress if we are too self-opinionated. There are some old brothers on Mount Zion who grow melons using age-old experiences of rural China. They will not accept new and better ways of growing melons. No one is allowed to touch what they grow and tend. In being so opinionated, they prevent themselves from improving and becoming more receptive.

There is always someone smarter out there. Don't ever think that you are the best. There could be someone smarter right before your eyes. Therefore, to find greater grace, let us be humble in all things.

3. Our ironworks factory often gets contract works from the gentiles. It is difficult to balance our work and ministrations. For example: During special conventions, we still have to work on many projects. When we take on a contract job we need to complete it on schedule. For in-

stance, when the Lord's servant came this time, we were still rushing a project. By right, we should join the service and be listening to God's words delivered by the Lord's servants. However, over the years we have missed much grace in this aspect. How can we achieve perfection in both aspects? I often wonder if there is any spiritual value in our hard labor.

Bro. Pi:

This is about balancing work and lessons of life. As a matter of fact, working and learning lessons of life or gaining spiritual edification are interrelated, and not two separate issues. The lessons of life are learned during work, and spiritual edification is obtained while working. We cannot put aside important work and concentrate on spiritual edification alone. If the project is not urgent, we can adjust our schedule and come to the service to receive edification. How can there be no spiritual value when you work for God? Even sweeping the floor has spiritual value if you do it in the vision.

Your work will have no value if you grumble. For example, when you see assignments keep coming in, your eyes are filled with rage. Then you start to take it out on others by accusing this person for not working and that person for idling away. If this is the case, you had better stop working, lest you offend God.

There are occasions when you cannot attend services and have no time to read the Bible and the Spiritual Flows because you have works to rush. When circumstances allow, you can think of ways to make it up. On Mount Zion, we thought of this method: We installed speakers and television sets in the factories, processing house, and kitchen — places where we usually rush work. So those who cannot join the service still get to watch and listen to the messages. Now, we have another plan: We're going to play Bible tapes for those who do not have time to read the Bible.

Even without making these up, you can concretely learn the lessons

of life during work. It will not be sensible if you put your work aside and only focus on edification. If everyone chooses to be Mary, who will be Martha? We must decide for ourselves when to be Mary and when to be Martha.

Bro. Hong:

If possible, let us take or reject contract jobs at our convenience. When we are busy, let's take fewer projects, and when we are not as busy, take on more. But can we really decide on the contract work at our convenience? Moreover, our job includes follow-up maintenance and repair services. If our installation malfunctions, we have to go and fix the problem immediately. Sometimes we have to follow the schedules preset by the customers. We cannot say that we are too busy to go, or we are having spiritual edification service. Since we have no control of the schedule, I believe that the Lord will understand. Let us do what we should, as our works carry spiritual value. If the Lord comes and finds you repairing the steam boiler while others are attending the special convention, I believe that both you as well as those at the convention will be caught up. Both of your works carry value because they are all done for the Lord's sake.

Of course, the more the Lord blesses us, the busier we will become. We will need more workers and more prayers. May the Lord raise up more workers. Also, you who are skilled workmen need to train more apprentices. Some masters do not know how to produce apprentices. They work laboriously and faithfully, but they do not know how to teach others. They have no apprentices, and therefore no successors. It is a great pity.

Before the Lord raises up more people, or before you find more apprentices, you have to be versatile: Sometimes you are the boss and other times, the employee. One moment you will be delivering messages and imparting the truth on the pulpit, the next moment you will be up on the roof nailing shingles. When we are short-handed, a person has to cope with a variety of jobs. We have no alternative. May the Lord give us more

grace. Let our joy increase with our work. Let us receive more blessings from Him.

4. When I first served God, I was very earnest, devoted, and dynamic. But after serving for fifteen years, I am not as earnest and dynamic as before. Sis. Sheu said that I have changed, and I am not as devoted. I myself also feel that I am not learning the spiritual lessons as well as I ought to. I know my condition and I want to brace myself up, but it seems very tiresome and difficult. How do I brace myself up and prevent myself from changing for the worst?

Bro. Pi:

Becoming weak at times is inevitable, but deterioration should be avoided. Once something deteriorates, it decays. We have become a new creation in Christ. If we deteriorate, we will become an old creation, old Adam. Therefore, we need additional mercy from the Lord.

Time is the most trying factor. Most of one's first faith and love are lost when time prolongs. The initial freshness is lost, faith wavers, and love cools off. These are signs of man's degenerated nature. In Revelation 2:4-5, the Lord Jesus rebuked the church in Ephesus saying, "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent."

The phrase "remember therefore from where you have fallen" means: You must get up from where you have fallen. We must repent to the Lord and do the first works. The so-called first works are our initial fervency in serving the Lord. It is quite simple to offer up fervently for a moment, but it is not easy to stay on the altar and be burned continuously. We lose our first faith and love because we can't withstand long-term trials and pain. The Lord Jesus especially warned the Church in Ephesus not to lose their

first love.

Here is a true story: There was a gold digger who did not strike gold after digging for many years. He had put in much effort but gained nothing. Frustrated and discouraged, he sold his gold mine at a very low price. However, after digging a meter further, the new owner struck gold! The first owner was so regretful. If he had persevered until the end he would have struck gold. Therefore, if we endure to the end, we will be saved. How sad it would be if you had been diligent and alert for years, only to become weak when the Lord comes and be left in the Great Tribulation. On this path of the cross, it is easy to have the determination, but it is hard to persevere to the end. Since we have been walking on this path for so long, and moreover with hope and glory, let us persevere to the end. What does “to the end” mean? It means until we meet the Lord. Anything before we meet the Lord is not considered *the end*!

Nevertheless, we need the Lord’s mercy in everything we do. To endure and persevere requires more prayers and supplications. Many fail to endure because they lack prayers. They have too little communication with the Lord, so they fail to draw strength from above. Apostle Paul said, “Whenever I am weak, I am strong.” How did he accomplish that? He constantly came before the Lord to renew his strength. Today, it is also the same for us. I am in my 70s and now that I have gone so far in digging the gold mine, how can I give up? I must continue to dig! I must dig until I strike gold — until the Lord comes! May the Lord be merciful to us.

Bro. Hong:

On the path of following the Lord, we often feel that we are not as good as we used to be. When we feel so, it will be good if we sincerely face our condition, seek God’s light, and be established in it. This should be our reaction.

On the other hand, in the course of following the Lord, every stage

is different. At each stage, our feelings and experiences vary. Sometimes we tend to seek back our past experiences. We even think that if we recover our previous experiences we are in hope. Otherwise, we are ruined. Actually, it is not always the case. Our pilgrim in following the Lord differs at different stages. With the progressing growth of our spiritual life, our understanding and concept towards every circumstance and matter also differs. **We cannot consider yesterday's experiences as our criterion for today.** For example, when we were first converted, we were only at a stage of enjoying God's salvation and being joyous. At that stage, we would normally feel more fervent and enthusiastic. This is only the beginning. As we progress, we experience different stages, at which, we would naturally feel different.

Psalm 23 says that the Lord is our shepherd and we are His sheep. It describes the different stages at which the sheep follow the Shepherd. First, He makes us *lie down in green pastures and leads us beside the still waters*. This is a stage where we have enjoyment. But we can't lie down in green pastures and stay beside the still waters forever. We have yet to advance and walk on the path of righteousness. Walking on the path of righteousness is different. At this stage we can no longer lie down and rest, but strive and walk, so we will feel worn out. The stage in verse 4 is even more advanced: *Walking through the valley of the shadow of death*. The valley of the shadow of death is scary, dangerous, difficult, and painful. This is a stage at which we'd feel lonely. Therefore, sometimes, we'd think, "Hey! I was so strong before, but why am I so weak now? I used to be so happy but where has my happiness gone? I used to feel so released; why do I feel bound and oppressed in the spirit? I used to be brave; why am I so timid now?" We think that we have fallen and have problems with the Lord. Of course, it is good and also essential to examine ourselves at all times, but we need to know that this may only be another advanced leading of the Lord.

As the Lord leads us forward step by step, our experiences will also

deepen with every step we take. When our lives become more matured, God's demand on us will also increase. The path He arranges for us will be increasingly difficult. So, we will naturally feel different, but it does not mean that we have backslided or have become weak. On the contrary, we have entered a new stage in which God wants us to learn new lessons and find more grace. Again, as we advance, we will see *God prepare a table before us in the presence of our enemies*. The valley of the shadow of death is considered difficult, but an even greater danger lies ahead; there will be enemies and battles. Under such circumstances, God wants us to have a more profound experience: Feasting in the presence of our enemies. These are all in the process of following the Lord.

Hence, I often encourage brothers and sisters to be diligent to enter that rest (*see* Heb. 4:11) and live in the presence of God by faith. In so doing, our faith is anchored at the Most Holy Place, and we will depart from the superficial feelings that we had when we first believed. **Then we will no longer follow the Lord by our own feelings, but by faith.** The Israelites fell in the wilderness because they lost the confidence they had at first. They could not hold their faith firmly until the end, and so they turned away from the living God. Today, the only way for us to hold fast until the end is to live in faith. We live by faith, not by our personal feelings.

Emotions cause one to change easily, but faith causes one to remain steadfast. A person who lives by his own emotions is gullible. He is susceptible to abrupt mood swings. One moment he feels like he is in heaven, and the next moment he feels like he is in hell. When he wakes up in the morning, he prays and feels close to the Lord. He is full of joy and enjoys the presence of the Lord. But a while later when he goes to work and hears something that offends him, he would find it unbearable, like living in hell. So, one's feelings are unreliable. They can make one volatile. Such condition indicates immaturity. Like a little kid, he will cry if you raise your voice at him. But he will smile again if you give him some

candy. He is quick to change and unpredictable. May our lives grow and mature with each passing day so that we will not live by our feelings but by faith before God. In this way, we will not fall so easily.

5. Children in the consecrated lands seem exceptionally naughty. What should we do?

Bro. Pi:

A Chinese saying goes, “We will do our best and let God do the rest.” As parents, we should discipline our children. We cannot ignore them just because they are hard to manage or we are too busy. We must do our duty to discipline our children and educate them with God’s words. As to what will become of them, it’s not up to us to decide. We should make an effort to chastise our children if someone complains about their mischief.

There are two abnormal conditions among the parents on Mount Zion: One type of parents is very protective of their children. You cannot say anything bad about their children. If you do, they will be upset and even hate you. The other kind of parents is just the opposite. They will give their children a good spanking once they hear that they have misbehaved. Both of these conditions are extreme. We must always commit our children to God. Do not pamper or spoil them. There should be rules and regulations for them when they are young because they do not know about learning spiritual lessons. If a child makes a mistake, you may punish him, but not abusively. Before we punish our children, we must let them know why they are being punished.

It is not right to spoil or to be over-protective of our children. Some parents on Mount Zion spoil their children. They won’t let their children work even when the children from down the mountain are working on Mount Zion. Parents need to pray often for their children, and entrust them to the Lord. They need to provide them daily with spiritual educa-

tion and lead them to pray before meals and going to bed. It's important for them to be spiritually educated while still young, so they will revere God from their youth.

Bro. Hong:

The Bible says that an elder or a bishop must manage his own family well and see that his children give him due respect. It's our duty to manage our own family. However, whether we can manage it well is another matter. It will be our negligence and shortcoming if we do not manage our family. But when we do, we may not manage well. At this point we can only entrust our family to the Lord.

Besides managing our family, we must also pray. God will remember what we do and accept it. Some people try to manage others' families, but not their own. When there is a squabble between children from two families, some will try to discipline the other family's children instead of their own. Never let your children be as untouchable as "the last emperor." If this is the case, you have neglected your duty.

God Is in Every Step of Our Life, Work and Ministration — He is at the Start, the Middle and the Conclusion

(June 9, 1995 — Co-workers' ministration service on Mount Moriah)

1. We have learned from the discussions of the Lord's servant that we must begin our work and daily lives with prayer, but it is very difficult to put these words into practice. We normally go to work after morning prayer (service). Initially, we prayed at the work sites before starting work, but we stopped after a while. What should we do about this condition?

Bro. Pi:

Don't be afraid of praying more. The more you pray, the better. We should not assume that we have covered everything at morning prayer and hence we needn't pray again at the work sites. Before we start work everyday, we must pray to entrust everything to the Lord, be it the day's projects, coordination, machine operation, or work safety. We must ask the Lord to keep us and let today's work be done smoothly.

Prayers before daily work are not to be replaced by the morning prayers. During morning service, because we are great in number, there is a lesser chance for every individual to pray openly. But since there are fewer people at the work sites, you have a better chance to pray. Praying can speed up the work. A task without prayer will be plagued with problems. You may labor to death but without much success. We must begin our daily tasks with prayers, especially before driving. Before you get behind the wheel, pray that you will have a safe journey. Never consider praying as a waste of time. If you spend time on praying, you will save time in the things you do. If you don't pray before work and problems

arise, you will waste even more time. This is our experience. Bro. Alfred also testified that the slow business at Araka got better when they began to pray. There is an obvious distinction between praying and not praying. Therefore, we need to pray before we begin any task.

Bro. Hong:

When we begin our day with prayers we do not expect a difference. We pray because our God is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Beginning and the End. He is the Author, the Director, and the Finisher. Without God, we will have no real beginning. And a beginning without God is valueless. Through prayers, we let God begin everything. **Let Him begin, direct, and end our daily lives.** Let Him fill our lives and become our all. **In short, let God be the start, middle, and conclusion of our life, work, and ministration.** This is the concept and recognition we should have.

Of course, before your spirit of prayer is established by God, you still need to communicate with God through the outward action of praying. But gradually, we must let the spirit of prayer be built up in our lives so that we may become those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. A man of prayer does not always have the outward form of praying, but he is always filled with the spirit of prayer. For that reason, Paul urged Timothy to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” May we all build up the life of prayer, and let God become our all.

I believe that Paul was a man of prayer. The spirit of prayer filled him and God was his all. To him, everything began with God, was directed by God, and ended with God. His entire life was filled with God. So he prayed, “With my whole being I shall bring honor to Christ” (Phil. 1:20, *TEV*). Let us encourage each other in this aspect. The companions at Araka pray before beginning each day’s business. This is to make God their everything. They begin and continue the business and continue with the help

of God, entrusting everything they do to Him. This is a complete reliance on God. It is an expression of magnifying God and rejoicing in Him. And this is pleasing to Him.

Once, I saw a painting of a farmer praying in his field after work at dusk. He offered the fruit of his entire day's labor to God, beseeching His blessings. It was a very beautiful scene! This farmer was pleased and blessed by God. His crops were linked to heaven through prayer. It would be excellent if our farming team and the other teams would do the same.

I remember the farming team of Mount Zion used to sing praises to God, before and after work. They began a day's farming with prayers and praising. Their praises continued as they worked and as they returned from work. Their lives were full of thanksgiving, praising, and shouts of "Hallelujah!" This kind of life and work greatly glorifies God. The natural man usually lacks patience and perseverance. He may have a fine start but a poor finish. Hence, the Lord Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray persistently, to build up a life of prayer. May we all become a man of prayer.

2. I often fail in keeping vigils, because I'm frequently on the road. I'm usually exhausted after a long day's work and find it difficult to get up at night. Is this due to my inadequate determination to keep vigil and my insufficient vigilance? My wife suggested that I pray at 8:00 or 9:00 P.M. before going to sleep, but this isn't really keeping vigil. How should I adjust myself between work and keeping vigils?

Bro. Pi:

Vigil prayers shouldn't become a ritual because it is every Christian's duty to pray. For that reason, Apostle Peter said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Our prayers will have no effect if we make prayer a ritual. Our prayers will only have great value if we pray out of burden — the burden to carry out the mission of the era, to save souls and to turn around the fate of this genera-

tion. If you have such burden, you will find yourself dissatisfied when you don't pray.

You mentioned that you cannot get up for vigil prayer because your work is tiring. Actually, you can pray while you are driving. It's a good time to pray in the spirit. When we pray, we don't have a rigid style. We don't have to find a place to kneel down and pray. A man of prayer always lives in the spirit of prayer.

We would rather stop the vigil prayers if they have become a formality. We could then find a more suitable time to pray. It is most blessed to be a man of prayer. At any time, he can communicate with the Lord in the spirit. It is so sweet to have an intimate talk and walk with the Lord. On this narrow path, only the Lord is our dearest and most beloved and the only way to meet Him is through prayer

Bro. Hong:

Vigil prayer is not solely for nighttime but also daytime. We used to have a 24-hour vigil prayer at the watchtower on Mount Zion. Actually, if you consider the time difference around the world, you'll find that daytime in the East is nighttime in the West. Therefore, when we take turns to pray, we are having a round-the-clock vigil prayer. So, if we are busy, have little time, or are physically exhausted, we can then choose a more convenient time to pray, and let those who are more physically fit to pray at night. This way, we would still be in the spirit of keeping vigil.

In these last days, God wants us to be the watchmen of the era. He wants us to be faithful watchmen in this crooked and perverse generation. Watchmen do not just pray for an hour a day when it's their turn, but for the whole day. A watchman always has the spirit of watching the testimony. We are all here to assume the ministry of a watchman. We set up a Vigil Prayer Schedule so that round-the-clock prayers may rise up as a sweet aroma before the Lord. Yet, what is more important is not the sched-

ule, but the spirit of keeping watch.

It is important for us to keep watch in the spirit at all times for God's testimony on earth. A person loses the vigilant spirit as soon as he becomes indifferent towards the matters of God. The priests in the Old Testament era put on the ephod and were vigilant for God's people and His testimony on a round-the-clock basis. At the temple, the overseers and musicians also took turns to serve day and night non-stop. Keeping watch with prayer is a very important ministration. God's testimony needs to be guarded through watching and praying so that the enemies will have no chance to attack and destroy.

3. Every time we rushed our work, we would be very tired and would often fall asleep while praying in the spirit. Therefore, it is sometimes very difficult for us to pray aloud. At times, we wouldn't know what to pray for. So we would hesitate and end up not praying. Sis. Sheu often told us that praying is very important. Her encouragement would motivate us for two days but then we would go back to our former condition. Does such rushing of work hold any value?

Bro. Pi:

The Lord will understand if you doze off during prayer because you are exhausted from work. You don't have to feel guilty. As for not knowing what to pray, it is because you lack practice in praying. Maybe you rarely pray in private. Prayers come from burden. A person with burden will pray even if he was told not to. Prayers without burden will be in vain. Some people never pray aloud. Do they ever pray? Yes, but not in the midst of the congregation. Why? Because they are afraid that they will not pray well and be embarrassed. This is the problem of the old self.

We pray because we have an earnest burden for the souls of this generation and for the revival of the church. We have the ministry of Elijah the prophet who said, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years

except at my word.” Elijah implied that things would not be fine without his prayer. He was not being proud. He had a sense of mission and an earnest burden in his entrustment. Such prayers hold value.

The same thing applies to work. You will be very bitter if you have no vision, sense of mission, or burden when you work. Everything will be different when you work in the vision, mission, and burden. You will find yourself joyous, even in the midst of hardships and afflictions. When you know that you are working for the Lord, your work will be acceptable to Him and will hold value.

Bro. Hong:

We used to have a prayer book. Does anyone still have it? In the book, there is a diagram showing several concentric circles. The innermost circle represents the Most High Throne. The second circle is the Grace of Jesus Christ Crusade. The third circle indicates the churches. Outside the circle of the churches is the circle for the denominations, followed by the circle of the Israelites. Finally, the outermost circle symbolizes all nations and peoples. Back then, we used to pray in the order of this illustration. Of course, that was only the first stage of practicing how to pray. Since many of us did not know how to pray, we printed this prayer book to help us pray in more detail. It taught us the primary things to pray about. We took turns to pray about the various topics in order according to the prayer book. If someone does not know what to pray for, he can exercise his prayer with the help of the prayer book. It is good to pray in this order when you are still inexperienced. When you are more experienced, you will no longer need the prayer book but pray freely according to the new and lively leading of the Holy Spirit.

In our prayer ministration, our physical exhaustion and self-centered life will sometimes hold us back from praying out loud. This is something we must learn to overcome. For some, dozing off during prayer is a habit. Yet for others it is because they are sometimes over-exhausted from

work that they cannot stay awake. If this is the case, the Lord understands and we just have to try our best.

Sometimes, you dare not pray aloud because you fear that you may not pray well. This is a sign of the self-centered life. If you don't pray so as to "save face," you are not being faithful and are falling short of the Lord. We who are learning to serve the Lord should avoid this. We must become examples for all the saints. Therefore, we must pray diligently. Those who seldom pray aloud must try your best to do so more often. If you don't pray well, you can ask the Lord to help you. It doesn't matter if you have no eloquence; you can train yourself. All spiritual gifts can be sought and acquired. Of course, we don't seek them for the purpose of making our prayers sound more pleasant. But we need to pray adequately clear so others can understand us and say "Amen" to our prayers. Some people stammer while they pray as though they are panicking. As a result, others cannot say "Amen" because they cannot understand the prayer.

As we learn how to serve, we also learn how to pray. Let us grab every opportunity to learn and try our best.

4. Just now, the Lord's servant mentioned the watchful spirit. Ever since the King's Pavilion was built, Hebron began to have more and more visitors. We can't tell which of the tourists are in fact the enemies. Sometimes, we tend to be so cautious that our spirit of testifying boldly is suppressed. How do we maintain a watchful spirit while keeping the spirit of testifying?

Bro. Pi:

We have two unbalanced conditions. The first is not staying on guard — taking wolves for sheep. This is not being alert in the spirit. The other condition is judging by appearance. As soon as you see someone who looks like a secret agent, your countenance will change, your eyes will be filled with rage, and you will deal with him as you would the devil Satan.

These two conditions of over-reacting are abnormal, immature, and a sign of inexperience.

Let us be alert in the spirit and watch over the testimony in the spirit of prayer. We must ask the Lord to give us the gift of discerning of spirits. Wolves wear sheepskin and Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, a real spy will never give himself away through his appearance. So, we must always live in the spirit of alertness and ask God to teach us how to discern. It doesn't matter if he really is a special agent. We can still preach to him in a meek spirit and let the Lord do the rest. If the Lord is not watching, the person who is watching will be doing it in vain.

Bro. Hong:

This is a matter of discerning of spirits. Sometimes, the devil Satan is like a roaring lion and other times, he is disguised as an angel of light. It is easier to guard oneself against a roaring lion than an angel of light in disguise. That's why we are often deceived. Therefore, we need to be trained in this aspect so that our power of discerning will become stronger. Let us become a vessel with sharp eyes who can tell right from wrong and good from evil.

How do we obtain a sharp discerning power? The power of discerning is obtained through exercising the spirit. We need to read the book *Exercise the Spirit and Deal Away with the Self* thoroughly, meditate on it, and do accordingly. A person's power of discerning will naturally become prominent if his spiritual life is rich and matured, and if his spiritual sensitivity is sharp. If your spiritual life remains tender, your discerning power will not be strong. But if you live in the spirit daily, your spiritual sensitivity will be sharp, and the power of discerning the spirits will also be very strong. Therefore, exercising the spirit is a very important lesson.

Someone once said, "If you want to know someone, you have to first know yourself. For only those who know themselves are able to know

others. How much you know yourself, that much you will know others.” In *Exercise the Spirit and Deal Away with the Self*, we mentioned about recognizing and dealing away with the self (natural man). Before you can deal with the self, you have to first recognize it. How much you can deal with self depends on how much you recognize it. Likewise, you must first know the natural man of others before you can really recognize them, discern their spirits, and deal with them appropriately.

The gospel team on Mount Zion has to deal with different kinds of people. Some gospel team members can't handle certain tourists well. This is because the power of discernment cannot be obtained through teaching. In some cases, if you tell someone to be more alert and sober, he will be so alert to an extent that he will treat all newcomers as potential enemies. This proves that he is inexperienced. If that person is an adversary, keep it to yourself. There is no need to indicate that you know his identity or let him know that he has been exposed. We always hope to convert more people. We should give them a chance to turn around. These people have not become slaves of the dictator by choice. They have to please their master to make a living. Therefore, we have to understand and pity them. We don't have to expose them. Some people come as angels of light in disguise, but they would not dare to be unruly when they meet those who have sharp eyes to see through them. Initially, they might have wanted to collect information but later they would think twice. Most of these people are trained. When they sense that you can see through their façade, they will not dare to act recklessly.

Now, the offshoots of Zion are also becoming more renowned. There will be more and more intruders coming to our midst. We pray that the Lord will help us exercise the spirit and deal with our natural man in our daily living. If we deeply learn this lesson, our power of discerning will be stronger and we will not be easily deceived. Some of these minions are very good at making up stories, but others are not so good at fabricating one. Therefore, they can be easily exposed at a glance. Over thirty years

of serving in the New Testament Church, we have experienced many battles, encountered many informers and messengers of Satan. Through all these we have gradually acquired the power of discerning.

When we learn to serve God, *Exercise the Spirit and Deal Away with the Self* is the most basic lesson to learn. It trains our power of discerning spirits so that we become people with keen spiritual eyesight and sense of smell. Priests of the Old Testament had to be without blemish. Those who had a blind eye or a broken nose could not become priests. It tells us that those without bright spiritual eyesight or those with a poor spiritual sense of smell cannot serve God. I find that there are quite a few one-eyed priests in the New Testament Church today. Since they only have one eye, they are not bright in the spirit. Some others may have two eyes, but are shortsighted and cannot see clearly.

We need to have both **spiritual eyesight** and **spiritual sense of smell**. We should discern not only what we can see but also what we cannot see by our sense of smell. At times, you may overlook something but its smell will give it away. A fox does not smell like a lamb. Some foxes look like lambs after putting on sheepskins, but you can still detect the stench of the fox if your sense of smell is sharp. A healthy person has an accurate and sharp vision and a keen sense of smell. He may not see a rotting dead mouse under a chest of drawers, but he will find it by the smell. Many of those who come into our midst look casual. This calls for the spiritual nose that can detect the smell of the fox and dog.

I believe the Lord will help us. Since the Lord is gradually bringing more people to our midst, I believe He will assist us in handling them. As long as we learn diligently, the Lord will help us improve. When you encounter more of these situations, you will not be deceived as easily but will see more clearly and become more experienced. Sometimes, it doesn't hurt to be deceived a few times. You will learn from it and will not be

deceived easily later on. When we were inexperienced, we were often deceived and mistook the foxes for sheep. Now, we are sharper and more experienced. May the Lord train us in this aspect.

5. We know that we have to live, work and serve in the spirit. But oftentimes, when we become busy, we don't do things in the spirit. How do we keep ourselves living in the spirit in all things?

Bro. Pi:

Let us read Psalm 16:8–9, “I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope.” When David said that he always set the Lord before him, he meant to say that whenever he worked or spoke, he did it before the Lord. This is exercising the spirit. Before you speak or do something, first come to God and let His light shine on you. This is what usually happens: When we kneel down to pray, we are with God and He is with us. But as soon as we stand up, we lose God’s presence. It is no doubt that the Lord is with us. However, the question is: Do we always set the Lord before us? Why do we often do and say the wrong things, offending God and men? It is because we do not talk and act before the Lord or live in His light.

David revered God. He always set the LORD before him. This is exercising the spirit. You must set the Lord before you even when you discuss with someone. In the spirit, you need to have close connection with the throne at all times. Whenever brothers and sisters ask me questions, my spirit would seek before God: “O Lord, where lies the focal point of this question? How should I answer it?” Similarly, when you meet anyone, you also need to have connection with God in the spirit. By setting the Lord before you in this way, you are exercising the spirit. Wonderfully, after exercising your spirit for a considerable time, you will find yourself inseparable from the Lord. The Lord will always be with you and you will always be living before the Lord.

Before we make random remarks and act casually, let's first come before the throne of God to let His light shine on us. A voice will remind us, "These words are not edifying. Doing this will not glorify God." If you always stand before the Lord, He will teach you at all times. In this way you will live in the spirit and in the light.

Bro. Hong:

We need to exercise the spirit. Exercises will lead to maturity. I remember when I first learned how to drive. My instructor taught me step by step: First, step on the clutch. Then, shift the gear and step on the accelerator. After that, ease your foot from the clutch to move the car forward. This move alone took a lot of practice. In the beginning, I couldn't get my pedaling right. My eyes had to keep looking at my feet instead of looking to the front. It was so difficult! Sometimes, I would be so engaged with my hands that I would neglect my feet. Other times I would be so busy with my feet I would forget to use my eyes. I was so busy that I became dazed. Actually, why did I have to look at my feet? My eyes couldn't possibly help me step on the pedals. This was all due to inexperience. Once I became experienced, I would respond from reflex. Now, I can step on the clutch, accelerator, and shift the gear smoothly and naturally. I can keep my eyes focusing on the road while talking and driving at the same time. My hands, feet, eyes and mouth can coordinate very well. It is the same with spiritual matters. You must diligently exercise your spirit. After all, practice makes perfect. Very soon, you will be well-experienced.

If you still have to think and remind yourself before you respond, it proves that you haven't had adequate practice. If you have learned your lesson well and lived in the spirit at all times, you don't have to constantly remind yourself to live in the spirit, or wonder whether you are living in the soul or in the spirit. Naturally you will live in the spirit, before God and in His light. When God's light appears, you will face it and not avoid it. As a result, the light in you will become stronger and the Spirit will move even more freely in you. However, all this requires practice. Without practic-

ing diligently, it is impossible to live in the spirit. Therefore we must put in more effort to learn earnestly.

6. *I feel that my life is still very tender when it comes to learning the lesson of obedience. I doubt the co-worker in charge whom Sis. Sheu has sent and disagree with his way of doing things. For example, there was a companion who had some problems concerning her life and coordination here. So she wanted to discuss with you (Bro. Hong) before you leave. However, that co-worker in charge wanted her to serve in the kitchen. He even told her that since she was so busy, she should forget about discussing with the Lord's servant. Should she obey such a leading? If she does, will the Lord bear all her responsibilities?*

Bro. Pi:

The lesson of obedience is common in all the consecrated lands. It is not difficult to obey if the person in charge is gentle in the spirit. However, you will find it difficult to obey if he is not as you have anticipated and does not cater to your preferences. We must be clear about the spiritual order and the law of the spirit. It doesn't mean that the person in charge has to be as perfect as the Lord Jesus before you obey him. No one is perfect. Everyone has shortcomings and weaknesses. Those who are being led must be prepared to obey. **Lessons of obedience can only be learned under unfavorable circumstances.** So sometimes, in order to teach us obedience, the Lord will put us in special circumstances which we find difficult to obey. He does this to break us. Can you say "Amen"?

The lesson of obedience means death to the old self. If your old self (natural man) is not completely dead, you will not obey even if the Lord Jesus came in person to guide you. The Lord Jesus *was obedient to the point of death*. Therefore, regardless of who is in charge, you must first learn the lesson of death, daily carrying the death of Jesus and being slain willingly. Obedience is the key to obtain strength, and disobedience is the obstacle to spiritual growth.

I remember a companion told me, “There is someone in charge who is good in everything. I completely obey him when he leads. But I will not obey the other person who does not know how to lead me!” Brothers and sisters, you must obey the person whom the Lord’s servant has put in charge, unless he has turned apostate. If he still co-works with the Lord’s servant and is confirmed by him, you will suffer loss if you don’t obey him. Tan Kui-Fang refused to obey Ruth Chang when she was still in ministry. Ultimately, he ruined both himself and her.

The obedience in the military is “unconditional.” You still have to obey even when your superior is wrong: If he says that the blackboard is white, you must also agree that it is white. Yet, we do not obey that way. If you disagree about something, you may discuss. If you fear that an argument may result if you discuss with the person locally in charge, and you think this might affect your coordination with him in the future, then you can discuss with the spiritual minister. But you must not hold grudges against the person in charge and disobey him. **Therefore, we have to obey to the point of death.** If your carnal self doesn’t die, you will not be able to obey. If we judge the person in charge according to our standards, or by his abilities and knowledge, we will never be able to obey him. When we obey him, we are actually obeying God’s will and the sending of the Lord’s servant, Bro. Hong. We don’t obey him by looking at his abilities and level of education. We must learn to obey the senior and also obey one another. That way, we will grow to the stature of the fullness of the Body of Christ. On the contrary, we will be harming the church, the testimony, and ourselves if we disobey.

Bro. Hong:

While learning the lesson of obedience, we often ask these questions: When is the lesson of obedience considered learned? Am I being obedient if I do this or that? How do I become obedient? These are very practical and personal questions.

What we need to learn is the obedience of the Lord Jesus — the **obedience to accomplish God's will**. If we are obedient to someone not in God's will, we are not obeying God or His will. God will not be glorified through us and His will cannot be done. The Lord Jesus accomplished God's will through obedience. We must imitate Him and learn from His obedience. This obedience comes from willingness, so it glorifies God and carries value.

The Lord Jesus was obedient. To Him, obedience meant: "I am ready to obey You, and I am determined to obey." Hence, He obeyed willingly, with much anointing and to the point of death — even death on a cross. Through His obedience, God's will was done. Therefore, when we learn the lesson of obedience, we must contemplate the following: Is my obedience according to God's will? Will it accomplish God's will? If your answer is yes, then you have learned the lesson of obedience well.

It is easy for us to obey all the leadings of the spiritual minister. Of course, you may also have your reasons not to. When the spiritual minister returns, you want to discuss with him, but the co-worker in charge says no. At this time, will you still go to discuss with the spiritual minister? If you insist, will you be considered disobedient? But if you don't discuss, won't you feel wronged?

Look at how the Lord Jesus obeyed. He only knew that to be crucified was God's will. He did not defend Himself, saying, "Don't you know what kind of people get crucified? Why then do you want to crucify me? What crime have I committed?" The Lord Jesus did not think of these. Let us learn to have the Lord's obedience. We just have to ask ourselves: Is this the will of God? Am I being obedient to accomplish God's will? We don't have to ask ourselves: "Should I obey in this way? Why does this co-worker want me to obey in this way?" **It will be hard for you to be crucified if you have to know why you should obey.** The Lord Jesus would not have been crucified if He did not realize that it was the will of

the Father. He would have disobeyed God if He tried to reason with the law of Rome as to what kind of people deserved crucifixion. Then the Lord Jesus would have also failed to fulfill the will of God and complete His salvation. Therefore, let us pray that God will help us imitate the Lord Jesus to become obedient for the accomplishment of God's will. I believe that if we have such recognition, we will learn to obey faster and easier.

7. Because my life is not that abundant, I do not know the right way to speak honest words. I am very straightforward when I speak frank words to others, to both adults and children alike. I speak according to the feelings and peace in me. I wonder if what I say is edifying or actually stumbling others.

Bro. Pi:

“Speaking your feelings with peace in the spirit” and “speaking your feelings” are two different matters. The former speaks from the spirit, while the latter speaks from the feelings of the soul. When we have any feelings, let us first bring and weigh them before the Lord, instead of just blurting it out. Paul said, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12). In other words, we can say and do anything, but there is something to consider: Will my words and actions glorify God and edify men?

“Speaking the truth” and “speaking the truth in love” are also different. Sometimes, the truth (frank words) is spoken, but not in love. It is spoken in the spirit of judging and condemning. Such truthful words are awful! Therefore, before we speak, we must seek and pray diligently before the Lord to make sure that we speak in the Lord's love and by the motivation of the Holy Spirit. Even speaking the truth in love needs to be done carefully. Otherwise, your truthful words may injure and kill. In short, we say and do all things to glorify God and edify men. We would rather not say or do anything that does otherwise.

Some people claim to have a straightforward nature: “I’m a very direct person, and always go straight to the point. I speak my mind. I’m not like people who beat around the bush.” Beating around the bush is not right, and being frank is a virtue. But it must also be controlled by the Holy Spirit. If not, when you shepherd someday, the sheep will be frightened away by you. The majority of the flock is spiritually tender. They cannot endure weighty words that do not come from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, even a word or a change of countenance can stumble the spiritually tender. When we shepherd the flock, we need to understand their feelings and the condition of their spiritual life. We need to shepherd them according to their spiritual level. Therefore, you should never go by your own feelings but by the peace in you. The peace in you is from the spirit. However, the peace of some people may not be the peace in the spirit. It is an imaginary peace that comes from their soul (mind). We need to be clear about this.

Bro. Hong:

“Speaking the truth in love” is an advanced lesson, but also a hard lesson to learn. Until now, we haven’t learned it well. Although we hope to learn this lesson, many a times, we still fail and dare not say what we should. And sometimes when we do speak frank words, we tend to hesitate speaking out again when we don’t see immediately results. **However, we must learn this lesson because it is a process that the New Testament Church must go through before attaining a full stature and a harmonious coordination.** The stature of the New Testament Church will not reach its fullness if we do not learn the lesson of speaking and holding fast to the truth in love.

“Speaking the truth in love” can also be interpreted as “**holding fast to the Truth in love.**” We speak the truth (frank words) because we hold fast to the Truth. We don’t want the Truth to suffer loss among us. Therefore, when we discover something that harms the Truth or prevents us from holding fast to the Truth, we must speak out. When we speak the

truth, those things which harm the Truth will be stopped and removed. We must reach this stage of holding fast to the Truth before the Body of Christ can reach its fullness and before the church can truly become the pillar and foundation of the Truth. If the Truth is still not expressed and held fast to in the New Testament Church, this means that the testimony of the church is still not abundant. **To hold fast to the Truth, we must speak the truth (frank words).** If every one of us is willing to learn this lesson of speaking the truth, the fullness of Christ will soon be seen. When everyone is truthful, there will be no more room for lies. All of us will live for the Truth, and no one will be selfish. All who speak will speak for the Truth, so no one will speak in fear. Then we will bring about the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Of course, the one you speak to may not accept your truthful words. He may even think that you are mean and relentless. This is a common response. I believe that God will bear the responsibility if those who speak have a pure and calm spirit, and a spirit to perfect others. The other party may find it hard to accept your frank words and feel uncomfortable for a while, but they will understand it later.

The Bible also says, “No chastening seems to be joyful for the present...” Parents will speak the truth (frank words) to their children. They even say words of judgment and rebuke to educate them in love. To the prodigal children, these reprimanding words are very unpleasant and hard to accept. However, parents speak these words out of love to guide their children to walk in the Truth and so their children will be kept from the world and Satan. Therefore, this lesson of speaking the truth has to be learned. I am also learning it diligently.

Of course, we must always adjust ourselves to make sure that we have the **spirit of love**. What is the spirit of love? It is a **spirit that perfects, edifies, and constructs. I speak the truth to you, not to criticize, judge or destroy you, but to establish you in the Truth.** In the

spirit of love, we speak constructive words to perfect others so that they may be built up on the Truth, and depart from falsehood, deception and evil. We must encourage one another to learn this lesson. I believe the Lord will help us.

Marriage of the Saints

(June 26, 1995 — Family talk in Hebron between the Lord's servants and the brothers and sisters of West Malaysia)

1. As shepherds, we try our best to bring the flock before the Lord's servant to find grace. However, no matter how hard we try, some sheep just won't come. I feel terrible. How do we help these sheep? I myself have many infirmities and faults; how do I make up for them?

Bro. Pi:

A shepherd should be earnest in leading the sheep to God's will, to the Lord's servant. This should be his greatest hope. However, if some sheep refuse to come, there is no need to be anxious, feel bad, or lose hope. Just do your duty as a faithful shepherd.

In tending the flock, **especially the weak sheep, it is very important to have the spirit of a parent, and a sacrificial love.** In addition to praying for them, you must admonish them with God's words. When the sheep cannot stand up, and continues in weakness, we continue to pray for him and never give up on him. When the Holy Spirit works, he will stand up again. As Apostle Paul had said, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." If a sheep cannot be brought up, look upon God who gives the increase for help.

The Chinese have a saying: "Plant now, and worry about the harvest later." In the same way, when we shepherd the flock, we only try our best now, and care not for the result. Whether the sheep will be weak or strong, or whether they will be able to enter God's kingdom, we entrust all these to the Lord. We hope that the entire flock will be overcomers, but as for some who are without the vision, we need to suffer long-term travail

for them. We can only pray for them, nourish them with God's words, and do our best to support and help them constantly.

Also, we cannot labor over a few weak sheep and forget about reaching out to the non-believers. We have to continue preaching to gain more people. This is the way to go forward. Usually, after we preach we may gain a group of people, but not many of them will stay on the path of the cross. Some are either unwilling to follow, or turn weak. For this path requires longsuffering and perseverance. In short, be it in season or out of season, we must preach the gospel and never give up.

A shepherd should be diligent and earnest but not anxious. Once you get impatient, you might hurt the sheep, especially the weak ones. When Jacob met with Esau, Esau urged him to continue on the journey. But Jacob said to Esau, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die." Therefore, you must not push the flock too hard, but nurture them with a gentle spirit. Take heed not to hurt any of them. To gain a sheep is not easy, but to hurt one is. In conclusion, we trust in God and hand the flock to Him. Whether they will make it or not, the Lord is responsible, but we must do our part.

Bro. Hong:

Bro. Pi has given us a clear answer to this question. There are some sheep we can do nothing other than wait for the Lord's time. Often we have spoken what needed to be said and have tried all our means, yet we still see no results. They need more time and space to learn lessons before they turn around. Therefore, after we have done our duty, we can only wait. A parental spirit is necessary in shepherding, but having this spirit does not guarantee success in raising all the sheep. We, as parents, know that for some children, no teachings, exhortations, or punishments can work on them. We can only hope that with more time and space, they will turn around. So, we just do our part, and leave the results to God. We need

not over-worry. If God's time has not come, and they still have to wander for a while and face more trials in Babylon, let's entrust them to the Lord by faith. This is not being negligent in caring, but completely trusting in God.

In every church, not everyone is strong; some may be weak and some may be sick. We used to have about 200 goats on Mount Zion. Only a third of the flock was strong. The majority was skinny and weak, while some were sick or injured. Everyday we had to tend several different kinds of goats. A shepherd cannot expect all sheep to be the same. It is normal for a flock to have a discrepancy. As long as we do not neglect our duties, we need not feel bad or guilty. Being overly anxious will not bring us glorious hope but unnecessary fretting and burdens. So we must learn to do our duty and trust by faith.

The New Testament Church's history over the past 30 years has been glorious, yet harsh. The New Testament Church, as a whole, is growing and advancing daily in the Lord's grace. But if we take a closer look at each individual, we find many unsatisfactory things among them. Sometimes we feel helpless when we see the conditions of certain sheep. Daily we sigh before the Lord for them and then for ourselves. We also examine ourselves before God: Have I done my duty well? Do I have shortcomings? Have I been faithful? We were so discouraged when there was no sign of improvement. Then God reminded me of the story of Jacob's family. Life was really hard for old Jacob. He had four wives and twelve sons, and also some daughters. The family was really complicated and quite clamorous. His family problems made his hair gray. However, God had chosen this family. Today, it is the same for the New Testament Church. The more revived she is, and the more people there are, the more diverse conditions there will be. At this time, we cannot expect every sheep to be on track. We can only be at peace and look upon God, lest we become like Moses who spoke hastily and could not enter Canaan. So, let's do our duty, and leave the rest to God.

2. If a brother or sister marries someone outside the church, where does the church stand concerning this matter?

Bro. Pi:

Some brothers and sisters don't believe that God arranges marriages. God is pleased with the marriages that He has arranged. If brothers and sisters find their life partners from among the Gentiles, we, as shepherds should tell them the truth: Believers and unbelievers should not be yoked together. Abraham wanted to find a wife for his son Isaac. He especially instructed his servant not to look for one from the daughters of the Canaanites, but from his country, and from his kindred. In today's term, to find a wife from our country and from our family means that we should marry within God's house (the New Testament Church). Marrying Gentiles is not in accordance with the truth or the will of God.

Secondly, the shepherd should cite examples of the consequences of marrying Gentiles to the brothers and sisters. I remember one sister who told the Lord's servant that she wanted to marry a Gentile. The Lord's servant tried to convince her that God would not be pleased with it. She seemed to have a lot of faith in bringing her husband back to the New Testament Church. However, she ended up with a divorce. It is just like a person who is standing on a table. It is hard to pull someone up to where you are standing. That is why very few marriages with Gentiles turn out all right. Some brothers and sisters handle their marriage more carefully. While dating, they would first impart the truth to the other party. Then they would wait until the other party has genuinely accepted the truth, transformed in life, and has obtained the vision before they talked about marriage. If not, they would not comply. However, what often happens is that the other party will accept the truth in order to get married. After marriage, they would put the Lord aside, and stop attending services. The better ones will not interfere with your church attending. Others will not allow it. If you want to attend service, they will persecute and torment you, turning the house into a living hell. Finally, you end up going separate

ways.

Entrusting your marriage to the Lord is most blessed. He will choose and arrange for you, and be responsible for you. We have a hymn that says; “May the Lord choose my path. I will not choose it myself.” The consequence of making your own choices is scary, because you will have to bear your own responsibilities and eat the bitter fruit.

In short, as shepherds, we need to tell the brothers and sisters the truth and warn them of the tragic examples. If they remain stubborn and refuse to listen, we can do nothing but leave them alone. It will be too late for regrets when they taste the bitter fruits and suffer.

3. Nehemiah would pull out the hair of those who married Gentiles, and rebuke them. Just now Bro. Pi said that if they refused to heed advice, then leave them alone. Some people suggested that we should pull their hair out as Nehemiah did. If not, they would not be warned.

Bro. Pi:

In the Old Testament, Nehemiah pulled out the hair of those who married Gentiles by the law. If we also do this, have we not fallen under the law? What we can do is to speak the truth in love to sustain, help, and exhort them in love. We must not use the law. For all who are of the works of the law are under the curse.

Bro. Hong:

Whenever such a thing occurs, as shepherds, we should state the ground of the truth clearly. If they cannot abide by the truth, we can only commit them to God. We believe that when God’s hands come upon them, it will be worse than pulling out their hair.

In the New Testament Church, we have seen many of God’s children who married Gentiles end in tragedy. We rarely find couples that end

up happy. When sisters, whose marriages have failed, come crying to me with their children and ask me to pray for them, I really don't know what to pray for them. Once a sister came sobbing with tears, "God's servant, I was wrong! I really regret it." What is the use of regretting now? Your mother repeatedly tried to dissuade you in tears but you would not listen. You were stubborn. You thought that out of the entire world, he was the only one for you. Now, you are crying. You have suffered but the matter is not over yet. The pain will continue. Every time she came to Mount Zion, she would tell me how much she had suffered and how she sneaked out this time with much difficulty. For some people, they have to reach this stage before they can be awakened. So there is nothing we can do for those, who know the danger of a furnace, but still insist on jumping into the fire. We really feel sorry for this sister. However, the church cannot stop her from partaking the bread and the cup, nor punish her for marrying a Gentile.

In Christ, we have only the law of Christ, the living law, not the ordinances from the Old Testament. Having Nehemiah's evil-hating spirit is good. Seeing how God's people had desecrated themselves in marriages and fallen from grace, Nehemiah contended with them; he even pulled out their hair. God's people should have a jealous spirit like that of Nehemiah. Nonetheless, we cannot act like Nehemiah because he was in the Old Testament. I think it is more effective for the Holy Spirit to discipline them than for us to pull their hair out.

4. I have a sister who married an idol-worshipping Gentile before returning to New Testament Church. After she returned, she became zealous for the Lord, but her husband kept persecuting her. Now she has to attend services or come up to Hebron without letting him know. Should she continue to cover up or just let him know?

Bro. Pi:

I don't think it is advisable for your sister to continue covering up

facts. If she continues on, she will be very depressed in the spirit. However, if she wants to keep it open, she needs sufficient faith. We cannot help her make a decision nor encourage her in any way.

She may stop covering up if she is firm in the faith, clear towards the vision and strong in defending the truth. She should have this attitude: I'm ready to pay any price to hold fast the truth. I'll never give up until I have the freedom to attend services and read the Bible and spiritual books. If her husband threatens her with divorce, then let her do what the Bible says: If the unbeliever departs, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. We do not encourage divorce. However, in order to hold fast to the truth and serve God freely, if the husband wants a divorce, let it be so. Nonetheless, she must decide for herself. Of course, during her trials and persecutions, brothers and sisters should take special care to support, comfort, and pray for her lest she be devoured by the enemy.

Bro. Hong:

Bro. Pi has explicitly answered this question. From the above-mentioned example, we strongly feel that the co-workers, elders or deacons who shepherd the church must care for the marriages of the saints, lest they fall into the abyss of misery because of their marriages. We really don't want to see God's sheep in the predicament of being devoured by the beasts. Whether they listen or not, we must do our best to exhort, warn, and turn them around. Some young people know the truth, but fail to overcome temptations and thus lower God's standards. Once they give Satan an inch, he will take the whole yard and then make them give in completely. This is Satan's deadly deception! They know they should not, but they still jump into the fiery pit. Once they are burned with passion, they are not even afraid of going to hell. Therefore, the young generation of the New Testament Church must pray diligently for your marriage. Keep yourselves alert lest you fail in marriage and be sorry for life.

5. *God arranges marriages in the church. Does He arrange marriages among the Gentiles?*

Bro. Pi:

All marriages should be arranged by God. He matched Adam with Eve, Isaac with Rebecca, and Boaz with Ruth. Therefore, God's children should surrender to Him the right to choose their marriage partners and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal all things. The Gentiles do not know God nor respect His rule. So they do not surrender to Him their right of choice. They do not abide by God's principle on marriage. The couple will stay together if they get along, and will separate if they do not. Such marriage is a union of the flesh. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1:28). This is the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah, and also that of the last generation.

Bro. Hong:

Marriage is arranged by God and should be honored by all. Does He arrange all marriages? Not necessarily so. Who arranged those marriages that were not arranged by God? Let us read Genesis, "Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" (Gen. 6:1,2,4). These were marriages made by men as they pleased according to their lusts and passion. They did not marry by God's original ordinance, nor by His will. So God did not arrange these marriages, and He did not bless them. Therefore, the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh" (Gen. 6:3).

Someone mentioned putting away (divorce) his wife, and the Lord

said, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together let not man separate.’ They (the Pharisees) said to Him, ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, **but from the beginning it was not so**’ ” (Matt. 19:4–8).

From the beginning it was not so. This phrase reveals that ever since man fell from grace, God did not necessarily unite all marriages. They took wives as they desired. God did not arrange this kind of marriage. Some Gentiles even use fortune-telling to arrange their marriages. The evil spirits arrange them. Some even use violent means to force a marriage and this is also definitely not from God. A believer united with an unbeliever is not a marriage God would arrange. The prerequisite to God’s arrangement is a union between believers.

6. Some churches lack manpower. If they sell Zion’s products and preach at the same time, introducing our products while handing out gospel tracts, would it give others a bad impression?

Bro. Pi:

There is nothing bad about selling products and preaching at the same time. The House of Triumph on Zion is where we sell Zion’s products and produce. It is also where we display the gospel pamphlets which the visitors can take as they wish. Consecrated enterprise and preaching the gospel are not two separate issues — they can be done simultaneously. This is killing two birds with one stone. To do it together or separately all depends on the situation. There is no rigid pattern.

We must be wise when preaching the gospel or selling products. We

do not need to talk too much when selling. We don't do business in a dishonorable way like the Gentile vendors. All our products are of good quality with reasonable prices. Our customers will speak for us. Our enterprise in the House of 'Triumph does not come from advertisements but from our customers' recommendations. Since our products are so good, selling and preaching at the same time is beneficial for all.

7. For many years we separated preaching the gospel from selling produce and products. We did that because we feared that people would have the impression that the church was doing business.

Bro. Pi:

Whether or not we should preach and sell at the same time depends on the leading of the Holy Spirit. There is no rigid rule. It is not mandatory to sell and preach at the same time. Instead, it should be done flexibly with wisdom and discretion. For example, you can place a gospel pamphlet in the produce bag for the customer. In so doing, you have preached the gospel.

Bro. Hong:

When we preach the gospel and sell our products simultaneously, and if we fear that we might leave others the impression that the church is doing business, it shows that we do not understand what *consecrated enterprise* is. The aim of consecrated enterprise is not to seek profit, but the well-being of others, and to share with them the best of God's creation. **The gospel we preach saves souls and the products we sell promote good health. Thus, we care for others' soul and body.** If you have this insight, you will have faith and courage to say that the church is not doing business but is benefiting mankind.

8. During the youth conventions, we have the opportunity to speak on the pulpit or to be group leaders. How do we speak as a mouthpiece for God? What should we focus on? In what aspects should we work on so

that the brothers and sisters may benefit more? How should we lead the youth and edify them?

Bro. Pi:

I feel that to be a mouthpiece of God, one must first seek the gift of preaching and edifying the church. Desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. To be a mouthpiece, one should act conscientiously. Every time you speak on the pulpit, it should be like your first time. Seek for words from God quietly in the spirit lest you fall short of Him. It should also be like your last time so that you will deliver His words to its fullness. Preaching from the pulpit is not giving a good speech but edifying the saints and honoring God's entrustment on us.

Bro. Hong:

Ephesians 6:18–20 says, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints — and for me, that **utterance** may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Preaching God's message is making known the mystery of the gospel. To do this, you need *utterance* (eloquence). Such utterance is not the ability to debate or the worldly eloquence. It is spiritual utterance that can make known the mystery of the gospel. In order to have this spiritual utterance, you, as the mouthpiece of God, **must accept God's molding and refining until His words are demonstrated in your life. Then, your preaching will have great results.** If you only preach theories, there will be little effect. Therefore, to become God's mouthpiece, one must not only have the gift of prophesying but also a solid spiritual life.

Some vessels are slick speakers. The contents of their speeches are also quite abundant but they have little effect on the audience. Why? They lack the anointing, which is the essence of a hard-pressed life. Their words

are not rich in the sap of life. Therefore, **spiritual gifts must match up with the spiritual life in order to produce more effect.**

Paul was an ambassador in chains for the mystery of the gospel. His life was trained up during his imprisonment, so he could clearly speak of the gospel. A messenger of the gospel who wants to make known the gospel must be in chains. So, an ambassador of the gospel is an ambassador in chains who is willing to lose his personal freedom for the Lord's gospel. He allows himself to be completely filled with the gospel so that he is worthy of his preaching. Then the effect and power produced from his preaching will be great. The Lord's maidservant Sis. Kong was really an ambassador of the gospel, one in chains. Therefore she was able to make known the mystery of the gospel and display its power.

9. The Lord's servant brought us the revolutionary diet of eating brown rice and raw vegetables. This is the diet of returning to God's rule and it is definitely good for Jacob's house. We should completely obey the apostles' teachings and follow diligently. However, every individual still has his own preferences. After eating healthy for a while, people tend to request for some dishes with degenerated flavor (such as deep frying). They would say that it is not a big deal to have it once in a while. Should we, who serve in the kitchen, follow the apostles' teachings completely, regardless of any reaction from people? Or should we cater for the taste buds of everyone? Should we give in and be more lenient?

Bro. Pi:

Our trip to Southeast Asia has given us an experience of a revolutionary change in diet. We only eat fresh vegetables, fruits, and fish. Other meats we only sampled. We feel very healthy and energetic. The hypertension of the Lord's servant and my diabetes seem to have disappeared. This is the diet of returning to nature and God's rule. In ancient times, people lived to be 700 or 800 years old. Back then, they did not deep-fry,

pan-fry or add preservatives to their food. They only had Eden food — fresh vegetables and fruits. Daniel and his three friends did not eat the king's delicacies, nor take his wine but ate vegetables and drank water. They turned out better and healthier than the others. This example also shows us that a diet back to God's rule is greatly beneficial to our health. We should try harder to accept this diet.

We have eaten very well. Back in Taiwan we do not have so much pesticide-free fruits and vegetables. The Lord's servant did not make it a rule that you must eat like this. But this healthy diet is good. He only hopes that everyone will try to return to Eden and eat healthily. If some people prefer the degenerated way of eating, just let them have it. Once they experience the bad effects of such diet, they will naturally stop eating that way.

Bro. Hong:

Changing our eating habits may take a while. Many find it difficult to change it right away. Since they have been used to their way of eating for decades, it is difficult for them to eat more vegetables and less meat. Some people cannot survive without meat. To them, a vegetarian diet is too plain, and not nutritious enough. They never feel full and think they look pale. This is only psychological. However, this concept may be hard to change quickly. Some are ignorant, while others are aware but unable to control their diet. So they choose the suicidal diet to gratify their cravings. Since we know that a natural diet is good for the health, we should make a bigger effort. If some cannot adjust himself and change immediately, we can only ask God to be merciful to them, and we should treat them according to the extent of their faith.

If we are willing to do God's will and strive toward this goal, He will confirm what we do. We preach the truth and what we do benefits man's body, soul, and spirit. The Holy Spirit will surely confirm and reveal the truth. The truth will ultimately triumph. Many people acknowledge

our toxic-free enterprises and buy everything we sell. They listen to what we say because what we do is from God and is good for man. At the beginning, our ideas may not be easily accepted by the public. But we will take one step at a time. Those who want to survive will come. As for the others, just let them be. When their diet brings them illnesses and sufferings, we will see if they will remain stubborn, or dare to continue eating junk food.

I asked about Sis. Guat-ling's health after seeing her speedy recovery from her surgery. I asked her about her diet and she said that as soon as she came back from the hospital, she started her diet of fresh salads, juice, and sometimes some rice. It was completely different from the traditional Chinese way for confinement and postnatal care — the diet that comprises mainly of stewed meat or sesame oil chicken. Yet Sis. Guat-ling followed a diet of “returning to God's rule” and ended up healthy. Bro. Pi and I were much encouraged and we also changed our eating habits. Our diet is now very different: Fresh vegetables are our staple food, and then grains. We have lost interest in meat. And the outcome? We feel healthy! Our blood pressures have stabilized, our bellies are not full of gas, and we feel great. This diet corresponds with God's creation, and conforms to His will. Some people are affected by the bad eating habits of fallen men and cannot accept an abrupt change. We do not blame or condemn them. We only try our best to persuade them. One day, they will realize that they can no longer continue with their present lifestyle, and they will come and learn from us.

The more civilized and advanced people are, the more they are harmed by the poisons of civilization. Some have been awakened and are following us back to Eden. They are now striving in the direction of the will God has for His creation. One day, not only will the world believe in the gospel we preach, but will also do what we do. The testimony of the New Testament Church will be so glorious that all people will look up to us. This is the great mystery of godliness: God is manifested in the flesh,

seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and will be received up in glory. God is very pleased that we lead a life of returning to His rule, and going back to nature. One day we will be received into glory.

10. We hope that you (the Lord's servant) will take Sis. Ai-ping with you when you go back to Mount Zion in Taiwan. I believe all the churches would say the same to Sis. Sheu; that is, to let Sis. Ai-ping follow you back tomorrow. The reason I say this is because you and the other servants of God are getting old. From what I know, the three of you (Bro. Hong, Bro. Pi, and Bro. Kwang) only have your spouses as your main helpers. You really need someone younger to attend to you. In March, when you went to the U.S. with Mama Hong, you had to carry the hand luggage and push her wheelchair when you boarded the plane. We felt bad about this. I believe the co-workers on Mount Zion might have arranged some young people to serve you, but you probably refused. We know that Mama Hong does not have good health, and you have many church matters to tend to. If you allow us to show more concern and help you, we, as God's children, will be less worried for you.

Sis. Sheu:

It is not easy for the apostles to accept others serving them because they have been so used to serving others. Paul instructed Timothy saying, "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful in serving me" (2 Tim. 4:11, *RSV*). He also mentioned about Epaphroditus and others who served him, saying that they, too, would be rewarded in the future. Therefore, we fully agree with what Bro. Sia has said. If the Lord's servants do not mind, we hope that Sis. Ai-ping can become today's Epaphroditus, to serve the present-day Paul on behalf of the churches of Southeast Asia. We are happy to let her go, and I believe that she is more than willing to accept this grace. The health of both you and Mama Hong is not good; you really need someone to help you. However, we are also concerned

about your feelings and that of the people of Zion. We hope to come up with a good decision.

Sis. Pi-wen:

I heard that you always drive by yourself when you travel from Mount Zion to other cities. I feel that the companions should do the driving for you instead. The people of Zion say that you never let people serve you in this way. I feel that you should accept, because it is our duty to minister to the servant of God. We feel the same way as Bro. Sia and shed tears upon hearing how you had to carry the luggage and push the wheelchair when you boarded the plane. We can't bear to see you, an old man, go through all this. Therefore, we hope that you will accept our service. (Note: As the companions voiced out their feelings, everybody applauded in agreement).

Bro. Hong:

We are very touched by the love and concern of the brothers and sisters for us. The Lord will remember you for this. But I think our condition is not that severe. I can still safely drive out to town. I will speak up if I really can't take it. So don't worry. Brothers and sisters in Taiwan also showed their love and concern for me and bought me a new car. But I feel pressure driving it because I really don't need such a nice car. Since brothers and sisters have offered out of love, I don't want to hurt their feelings nor come short of their love. If I consistently decline their offering they will feel sad. I know your wishes and I will try to accept your love so you won't worry. However, it is not necessary for Sis. Ai-ping to attend to us. Processing her visa may be a problem. She would only be able to stay in Taiwan for a month or two. So I think it is not necessary for her to travel back and forth. Southeast Asia has many consecrated lands but very few people so she shouldn't have to especially go to Mount Zion just to serve a few old people. Before the Lord, we would feel very guilty. Nevertheless, may the Lord greatly remember your love.

A Holy Life

(August 19, 1995 — Family talk between the Lord's servants and the brothers and sisters of Tahiti on Eden Isle)

1. After having repented of a certain sin, I still feel that I have not been cleansed. I am not confident that I have been forgiven. Can I still partake of the bread and cup? And if I partake of the bread and cup, will it mean that my sin has been forgiven?

Bro. Pi:

It's essential to know the power of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. If we sincerely confess and repent of our sin before the Lord, we will surely be forgiven. Why do you still feel that your sins are not forgiven? It is because you don't fully understand the truth on the precious blood. 1 John 1:9 says, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** After confessing your sins, if you still doubt whether you have been forgiven, you are doubting the power of the Lord's blood. And if you still have a guilty conscience, it would be better for you not to take the bread and cup. You can only partake of the bread and cup when you are sure that the Lord has forgiven you, and when you have no guilty conscience. Even after we have been converted, we may be overtaken or caught in a sin. But the Lord's precious blood can cleanse us of our sins. Of course, we must not continue to sin after repenting and partaking of the bread and cup. As for the more serious sins, we need to bear the fruit of repentance before taking the bread and cup.

Bro. Hong:

I think many people have this problem. They still feel guilty despite having confessed their sins. It's painful for them. They have confessed and repented dozens of times of one particular sin and still aren't sure wheth-

er they have been forgiven. Have you been forgiven? Do your confessions count? It does not depend on how you feel, but on the words of God. In 1 John 1:8–9, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” These are God’s words. If anyone has repented of his sins but is still unsure whether he has received forgiveness, he is judging things by his own feelings.

God said that if we confess our sins, He will forgive us of our sins. Furthermore, He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **“To forgive us our sins” means that our sins are forgiven and that we are freed from the punishment of sins. “To cleanse us from all unrighteousness” means that we are acquitted, and that our criminal record has been cleared. It is as though we had never sinned before.** In the human kingdoms, when someone commits a crime, he will leave behind a record, regardless of whether he has been acquitted or convicted. Such a criminal record will scar him for life. But as long as we confess our sins before God, He will forgive us and cleanse us of our sins. He will take away our due punishment as well as wipe out our records of sin. We are regarded as though we never sinned. This is the power of the Lord’s precious blood.

The Lord Jesus came to the world to die for sinners. By the blood of His cross, all who confess their sins before Him will be forgiven. We deserve punishment when we sin, but God has punished the Lord Jesus for our sins. The Lord Jesus has taken over our punishment, shed His blood for us, and cleansed us of our sins. This is God’s love and salvation. God the Father had made the Lord Jesus bear the sins of the world, so that he who believes in Him will have his sins forgiven as long as he is willing to confess and repent.

God is faithful. When He says that a sin is forgiven, it is forgiven. He is also righteous. He will not punish us twice for the same sin. We

deserve God's righteous judgment when we sin, but since the Lord Jesus has borne our sins, there is no reason that God should punish us again. It would be unrighteous of Him to do that. The salvation of the Lord Jesus is so precious. Therefore, let us believe in the words of God and not in our own feelings. Our restlessness after repentance shows our disbelief in the words of God. So, if we have sinned, repent. If we still feel guilty after repentance, read again the following verse, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Let me repeat: We must believe the words of God and not our own feelings.

Can one partake of the bread and cup after committing a sin? I believe the question was referred to the sin of fornication. The forgiveness of sins and the partaking of the bread and cup are two different matters. This is because bread-breaking has to do with the testimony of the church, which is the testimony of the Body. The bread symbolizes the Body of Christ, and we are all parts of this bread, that is, parts of the testimony of Christ's body. The body of Christ is holy, so must be the testimony of the Body (the church).

If anyone commits fornication, he should repent thoroughly before the Lord. Even after obtaining forgiveness, he still must bear the fruit of repentance. He can partake of the bread and the cup only when he has openly borne the fruit of repentance — when the congregation agrees that he has forsaken his sins. If everyone's conscience is still not at ease with what he has done, or if he continues to commit fornication, he should not partake of the bread and cup. For the sake of others' conscience, he must bear the fruit of repentance. He can resume taking the bread and cup when the congregation's conscience no longer accuses him, but accepts him. Before that he should refrain from partaking of the bread and the cup. This does not mean that the Lord does not forgive him. Forgiveness is one thing, but bearing the fruit of repentance is another.

Partaking of the bread and cup not only means that we are forgiven, but that we are also accepted by the congregation who no longer condemns us. Therefore, even if your sins have been forgiven, you still can't take the bread and cup if the congregation still can't accept you. Otherwise, the congregation will suffer loss because everyone's conscience is still troubled because of you. Therefore, if you have committed sexual immorality, you must take note: Though you have confessed your sins and are forgiven, you still need to show the congregation the fruit of your repentance. Take the bread and cup only after the congregation has accepted you in their conscience. All the brothers and sisters must learn this lesson under the same principle.

2. Is it a sin to like or fall for somebody?

Bro. Pi:

Brothers and sisters should love one another, but the question is whether this love involves a male and female relationship. It is not a sin to like somebody, but if you have a lustful feeling for him or her, you have committed adultery with that person in your heart (*see* Matt. 5:28). This is a hidden sin that must be dealt with in secret by the cleansing of the Lord's blood. It is not a sin for a brother to like a sister and wish to marry her, or vice versa. But since we are in church, we must not secretly go on dates like the Gentiles. Such practices are improper among the saints.

Everything has to be done appropriately in the church. If you like someone, you may tell a co-worker, elder, or deacon, so that they can talk to the other party. If the other party also has the same feelings for you, then you may make friends and get to know each other better in a clean spirit. If he or she has no feelings for you, you should put aside your feelings. Do not force your emotion on others, but pray about it instead. If this relationship is from God, this particular brother or sister may return to you. If there is no sign that this is going to happen, then you should put it aside completely. A marriage is built on mutual love. Do not let yourself

fall into a one-sided romance. It is abnormal. I think it is better for the brothers and sisters to fellowship with the co-workers, elders or deacons about their marriages, and let them show their concern.

Bro. Hong:

It will be easier to discuss and answer this question directly with the person concerned. Is it a sin to like somebody? It depends on how you like this somebody. If your heart is pure and simple, it is not a sin. For example, when I see you kids, I like you. But if you like someone with impure intentions, it is a sin. Matthew 5:27–29 says, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”

There are two kinds of adultery: One of the flesh and the other of the heart. Some people may not have committed adultery physically, but they may have committed this sin in their hearts. Therefore, it is not a question of whether we can like a person of the opposite sex, but whether **such liking is holy and free from evil thoughts**. If you like someone and lust for her or him, it is a sin. Otherwise, it is not a sin to like somebody.

3. Is it a bad thing for a sister to talk to a brother?

Bro. Hong:

Again, the principle is the same. It depends on how you speak to that person. If it is a bad thing for a sister to talk to a brother, and vice versa, then I guess I shouldn't be speaking to Sis. Helene or Sis. Veronique at all. It all depends on your manner of talking, motives and intentions. This is something that concerns your spirit. We are not prohibiting a brother to converse with a sister, but we do care how the conversation is carried

out.

2 Corinthians 13:12 says, **“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”** The Corinthians greeted one another with a kiss. Someone asked, “The Bible clearly states that we can greet one another with a kiss, why don’t we do that now?” Is the kiss with which you greet holy? Some kisses are holy and some are not. I believe the kiss with which Paul greeted the Corinthians was holy. Yet not all the kisses with which brothers and sisters greeted one another were holy. Therefore, it is not a matter of how we greet, but whether our greetings are holy in the spirit. So, can a brother talk to a sister? If it is done in holiness, he can. There should be no problem if you are confident that the conversation will be holy without any unclean thought. But it will be a bad thing if the motive is unclean.

4. Can a brother and a sister help each other in terms of spiritual life?

Bro. Hong:

Of course it’s good if the help is pure. However, if such help could eventually go “off track,” I would say that it is better to avoid it. I have seen many such cases, especially among the youth, who claim that they are writing to each other for the purpose of encouragement, and that their correspondence involves only things about God and the *Spiritual Flow*. However, it’s strange that this brother only discusses the *Spiritual Flow* with a particular sister. They are motivated to help each other, but no one else. This is how people are. They even use the *Spiritual Flow* as a cover-up! (Note: At this time, the Lord’s servant and brothers and sisters burst into laughter.)

It all has to do with one’s spirit. We hope that all God’s children will come to know His grace and be someone **who is inwardly truthful to God**. As God’s children, the righteousness we seek must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. When the scribes and Pharisees said, “You shall not commit adultery,” they referred to the physical behavior. But the Lord

Jesus said, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” The Lord Jesus’ standard is higher than that of the scribes and Pharisees. Therefore, let us not play the word game: Can we like somebody? Can a brother talk to a sister? Can they help each other? It’s not about what you do on the outside, but about the truthfulness and holiness inside your heart. We hope that all God’s children will be truthful to God in their hearts, living before Him with all honesty and holiness.

5. How do we resist youthful lusts? Since we live in harmony in the church, why do we still want to separate the brothers from the sisters? Why do we label it youthful lusts when a brother talks with a sister? Is it a serious sin to have a boyfriend in the New Testament Church? Also, why do some brothers in the New Testament Church look at the sisters flirtatiously? How do we resist bad influence from our friends in school?

Bro. Hong:

I think all that we have previously discussed applies to these questions, too. They are all problems concerning youthful lusts. We need to sincerely learn the lesson of dealing with youthful lusts. It is true that we must live in harmony, but that doesn’t mean we can live in a jumble and be disorderly. There should be a clear boundary line between the brothers and the sisters because we are still flesh and blood, and are bound to have many temptations. So, to guard against the enemy’s wiles and youthful lusts, it is good for brothers to keep a distance from sisters and vice versa.

Keeping a distance is not equivalent to segregation or disharmony. We must be clear about this point. We live in harmony, but we do not live in a “mixed bag.” Living in harmony is not living in a muddle. Once, the KMT slandered us, saying that we live in a muddle. So we, brothers and sisters, must keep a proper distance and maintain a holy relation. This won’t stop us from living in harmony.

Is it a serious sin to have a boyfriend (or a girlfriend) in the New Testament Church? It depends on your motive. We never said that brothers could not associate with sisters, but that the association must be holy. Everyone can have a spiritual fellowship with any other member in the church, but when it comes to the association between opposite sexes, there are some restrictions.

If you think you have found someone who could be your potential spouse, you may start dating after consulting the elderly ones in the church. Before you go any further, you must try to know each other more. No one will prevent you from having a healthy relationship. But if you do not associate in the light, you will give Satan occasions to lure you to sin and you may suffer undesirable consequences. Therefore, we should guard ourselves against all these.

As mentioned before, it depends on how you associate with your boyfriend (or girlfriend). It is something fearful if the two of you just enjoy going out and having fun without an on-guard spirit against Satan's wiles, for bad company corrupts good character (*see* 1 Cor. 15:33). Although we dare not say that such outing is a sin, it definitely serves the youth no good purpose. In fact, it will corrupt the youth.

It is normal for you to seek a future spouse before the Lord if you have reached the marriageable age. But you must do so with a God-fearing heart and put your trust in Him. Seek God's will diligently. After God has revealed to you your possible future spouse, you may start getting to know each other. You can further your friendship only when you have a pretty good understanding of each other, and can accept each other. We hope that the youth of the New Testament Church will seek God diligently with prayers. Do not take a relationship lightly. It must be established with reverence in the light of God.

6. *What is adultery or sexual immorality?*

Bro. Hong:

To put it plainly, all extra-marital sexual activities are sexual immorality.

7. A certain brother and sister had been living together for many years and had children before they returned to the New Testament Church. Now that they are in the New Testament Church, they are still unmarried, and think it unnecessary. Can we allow that in the New Testament Church?

Bro. Pi:

Husband and wife are joined together by God, and they testify of Christ and the church. “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph. 5:30–33).

The Gentiles can take their marriages lightly, but not the saints of the New Testament Church. For the marriage of the saints is a testimony before God and men. When a man and woman cohabit, they are not considered married, but of having committed fornication. It is unholy and detrimental to the testimony of marriage. Since the couple you mentioned have returned to the New Testament Church, they should officially register as husband and wife as soon as possible, to testify before God and men that they have become one flesh. Marriages in the New Testament Church are holy because we are members of the Lord’s body. Therefore, we must be especially careful and holy when it comes to marriage.

The Bible also says that without holiness no one will enter God’s kingdom. Since we all aim to enter God’s kingdom, we should keep our own bodies holy. “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are:

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19–21).

The Gentiles can marry and divorce any time they want. Extramarital relationships and adultery are commonplace among them. This is because they are the sons of perdition. But we are God’s children who want to enter God’s kingdom. We must not commit sins, especially sexual immorality. Instead, we ought to seek holiness so that we may enter God’s kingdom.

Bro. Hong:

I wonder if this brother and sister are still living together. Marriage is a testimony before God and men. Since they have been living together for many years and have children, they should register with the registration office as husband and wife. When their marriage is made official, they will be able to testify for God formally.

I was told that the French society has this trend: They stress on freedom but not family morals. They do not like to be tied down by families or marriages. They think that marriages deprive them of their freedom and their chances of gratifying the desires of their flesh. So, they prefer not to get married. When two persons like each other, they live together. When things go bad, they separate. They feel that by so doing, no one can tie anyone down. If it is because of this concept that this brother and sister delay their marriage registration, God will not be pleased. For they have given the devil a foothold, and they are paving a way for themselves to indulge in the lust of the flesh.

A while ago, a famous singer in Taiwan died. She had been living with a French man for many years and, after her death, the beneficiary of

her estate was in question. Some said that the French man was entitled to the inheritance. Some disagreed because he was not officially her husband. Some were sure that they were not registered as husband and wife because the singer loved freedom as much as the French man did and would not be tied down by marriage. This is a good example of the French people's insincere attitude when it comes to family and marriage. To them, marriage is bondage, and to be free from that, they do not want to be married in accordance to God's plan. This is offensive to God! If this is not the reason why this brother and sister delay their marriage registration, then we hope that they will get it done as soon as possible so that they may display the testimony before God and men. We also pray that God will keep their God-fearing heart so they may live a family life in accordance with God's truth, display the testimony of marriage, and maintain the holiness of marriage. By so doing they will please God.

8. *Can we complain silently or verbally about what the spiritual leader has said?*

Bro. Pi:

Complete faith in the spiritual leader comes from one's recognition in the way God works, that is, believing in the one sent by Him. It doesn't matter if you do not understand or have doubts about the words of the spiritual leader. Talk to a co-worker or write directly to the Lord's servant. If you choose to complain or gossip instead of discussing it the proper way, you will ruin other people's faith in this spiritual leader and it would be a great offense to God.

Many people left the New Testament Church for this one reason: They doubt and disagree with the spiritual leader set up by God. Moreover, they spread "death" by ruining the faith of others in this man. They have contracted the root-rotting disease (apostasy), and they will turn apostate sooner or later. However, some people are God-fearing. When they do not understand the messages of the Lord's servant, they will pray to

God humbly and seek discussion in a right way. This is how it should be done, for God will surely let them understand. If you have bad feelings or prejudice against this minister, you must repent thoroughly. Avoid the rebellion of Korah, lest you be smitten by God.

Some people say that the spiritual leader is a “high-voltage cable” that is untouchable. If you touch it with your bare hands, you will get yourself electrocuted. **Though you cannot touch this “high-voltage cable,” you can be connected to “it” (the spiritual leader) to produce light, heat and sound.** This is wonderful. **This is because the minister is ordained and confirmed by God.**

The consequence of criticizing, judging or complaining against the spiritual leader is grave. Both Miriam and Aaron were prophets. They also happened to be Moses’ siblings. After criticizing Moses, Miriam became a leper. Also, why did most of the Israelites who came out of Egypt die in the wilderness? What sin had they committed? They opposed and murmured against Moses! Only Caleb and Joshua entered Canaan because they completely obeyed Moses. The story of the Israelites should serve as our warning. Therefore, if we don’t understand what this man (the spiritual minister) says or does, let’s discuss with a co-worker with reverence. Let us not complain or gossip behind his back, lest we offend God’s administration and incur His judgment.

Bro. Hong:

When we don’t understand the messages of the spiritual leader, we must seek fellowship. Such attitude pleases God. We may not understand all spiritual things, and it’s inevitable that we may disagree when we don’t understand. At this point, a fellowship is necessary for it pleases God. Complaints do not please God. When God’s children who love and fear Him complain about the words of the spiritual leader, they will not feel peaceful or free in the spirit. Therefore, when you complain, **you must search yourself, “Do I feel peace in the spirit?”** Do I have the presence

of God?" If not, you should repent and stop sinning immediately.

God wants all His children to respect His ordained vessel with reverence. Complaints and frets will make us suffer loss. The Israelites never stopped complaining about Moses since they left Egypt. We all know what happened to them in the end. Therefore, the answer to this question is clear: When we do not understand, we must discuss because God dislikes complaints. May the Lord keep our hearts and on this path of following the Lord. Let us understand His will in all things, that we may please Him, and live a holy life to glorify Him.

Keep Your Love towards God Fresh

(August 21, 1995 — Fellowship between the Lord's servants and the brothers and sisters of Tahiti on Eden Isle)

1. Why is the work in the consecrated lands so heavy?

Bro. Hong:

It is not normal for us to feel that the work in the consecrated lands is too heavy. I think the question lies on whether or not we have the sense of responsibility. The workload on Mount Zion in the past was much heavier than our work today. The land was huge, and only a few members (of the three families of Tan and Liu) were the ones doing all the work. Don't you think the work was heavy? It was indeed heavy. But the three families never complained that the tasks were too heavy for them, or that they were bearing the yoke of Pharaoh.

Throughout all these years after returning to Zion, we have been using all kinds of tools and machines, including five excavators of different sizes. We can almost call ourselves a construction company! We have more excavators than any construction company in the district of Chiahsien! And how many vehicles do we have? Too many to count. Our farming team now goes to work in trucks. No one, including those in the carpentry and the construction teams, goes to work on foot. Nowadays, hoes and sickles are hard to find. We see motor grass cutters instead. Though we have many machines, vehicles, and a lot of manpower to help with the work, surprisingly, some people still complain that the work on Mount Zion is too heavy.

From my observation, the hired workers constructing the retaining wall are doing hard work. They stack the stones in the scorching sun continuously for at least eight hours a day. They eat their meals at the worksite.

Yet, we never hear them complain that the work is heavy. We hire the Gentiles to take care of almost all kinds of energy-consuming jobs. We ourselves do the easier ones. Building the dike was an exception because we were pressed for time. So, why do some people still complain that the work is heavy? It is all due to the lack of motivation.

When you have the motivation to shoulder responsibilities, you won't complain. When you have the motivation, even a tough job will be a joy to you. The lack of motivation will make a task appear more difficult and burdensome. This burdensome feeling will lead to complaints. Why? Because you have lost your first love. **When we lose our first love for Zion, meaning when our love for Zion has turned cold, every job will become a heavy burden. But when this first love is restored, the work will no longer be considered heavy, but a joy.**

It is the same with attending services. In 1979, our services on Mount Zion were such an enjoyment. No one needed to be urged to go to service. We usually got up at four for morning prayer. But wonderfully, we could already see people on "Christ is the Rock" even as early as three. The same thing happened in 1986, when we returned to Zion. When it was time for the morning prayer service, everyone would happily hike up to the area around "Christ is the Rock" to enjoy the service. Some would even hike up with their babies in their arms or on their backs. Services were such a joy to all! But how about now?

Since the Victory Hall was completed, it would take us only two to five minutes to get there from our living quarters. But services have become such a burden that some have stopped attending. Some not only skip service once or twice, but for a whole year. On several occasions, when I could no longer hold my peace, I phoned to invite them to service. I said to them, "Perhaps you should carefully think it over: Is Mount Zion the place for you? If attending the morning prayer service has become a heavy burden to you, you should pray seriously about this matter. If you

think that Mount Zion is not the place for you, you may do as you feel is appropriate. Don't force yourself to stay on Mount Zion and suffer." After my stern words, they would come and attend the morning prayer service, but only for a few days. When we go abroad, they also "go abroad," away from God's kingdom. How could this happen? This is because God has blessed Zion, and everything has become convenient. Moreover, we don't seem to have any battles.

Unknowingly, a life of ease has made us lose our first love. So services and work have become heavy burdens. Since everything is burdensome, everything is troublesome. And some people have begun to enjoy going down the mountain. We must beware of these conditions. No matter what, let us try to preserve the first love that we had for God when we were called.

Eden Isle is still in her development stage and we are short of manpower. Much of the work here require special skills and there aren't many people who can help. That's why the work here seems so heavy. May the Lord add you extra strength and grace. Compared to Eden Isle, other consecrated lands do not seem so tough. But I feel that it all comes down to whether or not you have the sense of responsibility towards the work. May the Lord add us strength and restore our first love for Him. Let us **keep our love for the Lord fresh as it was when we were first called.**

2. What's the difference between will (a determined mind) and faith?

Bro. Pi:

Greater faith brings a stronger will (determination). A strong will reflects a firm faith. Faith is the seed; will is the fruit. If you have firm faith inside, you will show strong will on the outside. Faith and will combined produces strength and power. Why was Elijah's spirit so strong? Because God gave him enormous faith, which made him despise all difficulties, afflictions and hardships. He went up to Mount Carmel when Ahab

wanted to arrest him. He alone had to face all 850 false prophets, while the Israelites stood by and watched. His faith was firm and his will (spirit) was strong.

Bro. Hong:

Faith is the response in one's spirit towards the words of God. *Will* refers to how determined and how resolute you are in holding on to that response. When we are clear about God's promise and His leading for us, our response to it in the spirit is faith. If we have full faith in God's words, these words will come true because of our faith. Sometimes, such faith is put to tough tests. This is because it takes time to fulfill God's words, and the test of time is often very trying. This is where strong will is essential. If you have faith, but lack a strong will to carry your faith, your faith won't last to the end. That's why the Bible encourages us to arm ourselves with the mind (will) to suffer. When we have both the faith and the will, we will be able to inherit the promise. Therefore, although faith and will are two separate things, they are inseparable when it comes to fulfilling the words of God.

3. Can "small" brothers and sisters speak the truth to a servant or maid-servant of God?

Bro. Pi:

I believe that under the premise of speaking the truth in love, any brother or sister may do so. I also think that the servants and maidservants of God will have no problem accepting frank words in love. If you don't feel comfortable telling him or her face to face, you can write to him instead. It's probably more suitable and clearer that way. If we live in love, we will speak the truth. Speaking the truth in love is good for the co-workers and the church. Speaking the truth means speaking what you heard and saw truthfully without any fear. However, speaking it "truthfully" does not always mean it is the "truth" because it could be an inaccurate hearsay. Even if you witness it, your observation may favor your own

standpoint and not God's standard. In short, it is good to speak truthful words, for it will reveal the problems to the co-workers.

Bro. Hong:

You probably think that only "big" brothers and sisters are allowed to speak the truth to the servants or maidservants of God. Since I am just a "little" brother or sister, I am not qualified to speak. Is that what you meant? If so, your concept is wrong, and your consideration is unnecessary. The status and spiritual ministry of a person should not affect or restrict us from speaking the truth to each other in the Lord. We can speak the truth to each other in the church, and the eligibility to do so is not restricted to any particular person. You are qualified to speak as long as you do so in love.

The servants or the maidservants of God are also human. They are not perfect and they do need the brothers and sisters to speak the truth to them. Therefore, if you do have some truth to tell the servants or maidservants of God in love, speak out, for by so doing you are showing them your love. Sometimes, what you see and hear may not be accurate, due to the degree of your maturity in life and recognition. However, it would be beautiful if you speak in a humble, respectful, sincere, prayerful and loving spirit before the Lord.

4. Why can't we crack jokes in the New Testament Church?

Bro. Pi:

The church is the house of the living God. When we are in God's house, we live before Him. Therefore, **we should live a godly life and serve God with all sincerity and reverence.** Telling jokes is the opposite of godliness. Whenever you joke around, you lose your godliness. Gossips are inappropriate and are unfitting for the saints (God's people), much less telling jokes. The Bible says, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks"

(Eph. 5:4). Here it says that coarse jesting is not fitting or appropriate. The Gentiles like to jest or make silly jokes, but God's children must give thanks. It is not fitting for saints to joke around, for it may cost them their status as God's children.

God's kingdom is different from the human kingdoms. In the Gentile world, they do not fear God. They talk about pornographic and obscene things; filthy talks are common between men and women. But as God's children, we must watch what we say so as to glorify God and edify people. Not only should we refrain from coarse jesting, but also anything that does not glorify God or edify people should never come out of our mouths. We must lead a godly life, and we must speak and act with reverence for God. There is no law to forbid us from saying this or that. But we should speak and act with reverence for God. **Let us glorify God and benefit people in all things.** Let us not say or do anything that is otherwise. For when we live, it is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. As we live, we represent Christ, so we can't misrepresent Him.

5. If I can't attend the bread-breaking service on Sunday due to health problems, can I ask someone to bring me the bread and cup so I can partake of it at home?

Bro. Hong:

If it is due to health problems that you cannot attend the service, it should be fine for you to partake of the bread and cup at home. You could ask someone to bring the bread and cup back home for you.

6. Children who grow up in the West learn to be independent at an early age. Is it wrong to raise our children in this way? Or should we keep them by the parents' side until they have grown up?

Bro. Pi:

We teach our children neither by the Eastern way nor the Western

way, but by the words of God. When children are small, they need their parents, and they can't be independent. While they are growing up, they shouldn't be left alone or spoiled. They need to be closely watched. When they are wrong, we must correct them immediately. When they rebel, we can spank them. The Bible says, "Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13–14). If you allow your children to be independent and have too much freedom at a young age, you are paving a way for their destruction.

It is hard for Westerners to accept the truth of Apostleship. They think that abiding by the apostles teachings and submitting to their leading is only a thing of the past. Why? Because since young, they have been taught to be independent. Such education which emphasizes on "freedom" leads to perdition. In God's house, God chastises not only the children, but also the adults. Hebrews 12:5–8 says, "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons."

"Every son" refers to all His children, whether they are young children or adults. Even when you are in your thirties, or even fifties, God will still chastise you if you sway from the right path. Verse 6 says, "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Parents should not spoil their children if they really love them. It is only in conformity with the truth that parents should chastise their children according to God's words. I also want to emphasize that none of God's children can be independent of Him. We must always submit to God's authority.

Bro. Hong:

There is a difference in the way children are brought up in the East and in the West. Western children are taught to be independent at an early age. It is good for us to teach our children to be self-reliant so that they can take care of themselves. Otherwise, they would be lazy and incompetent and have to rely on their parents for everything. Some eight-year olds still have to be spoon-fed by their parents. They are not sick or handicapped, but are simply spoiled. It is too ridiculous to say that if you don't feed them, they won't eat. It shows that these children are not self-reliant. They are plain lazy and are overly dependent on their parents. Therefore, we need to teach our children at a young age, to take care of their own things to the best of their ability.

Being self-reliant and independent are different. The children in the West are so independent that they do not want their parents to watch over them. Once they reach a certain age or once they become knowledgeable, they want their parents to stop caring about them. Self-reliance means: I can take care of myself without bothering others. Independence means: I don't want you to bother me, leave me alone. Therefore, I think it is wrong to allow the children to acquire independent traits at an early age because they can become rebellious.

Parents should carefully teach their children according to the Bible until they have grown up. We cannot spoil our children so much that they rely on the parents for everything. We have to teach them to be self-reliant, for it is good for them. Again, self-reliance is not independence. The education of the world encourages children to be independent of their parents. Under such education, the children will say to their parents, "I am old enough to take care of myself. You can stop worrying about me." In fact, they mean to say, "I don't like to be controlled by you. You are always too nagging. I can't stand you..." As a result, many children, who hate the teaching of their parents, have gone into the way of error, ruining their entire life. Therefore, it is good to teach children how to take care of

themselves at a young age, but not to help them to be independent of parental control. We are simply helping them to develop a habit of self-reliance at an early age.

7. The Tahitians are used to swimming in bikinis. Can we wear bikinis on Eden Isle?

Bro. Hong:

You asked this question probably because you did not feel peaceful wearing them. Saints must do what is fitting. Do not be conformed to this world. Tahitians may be used to wearing bikinis, but that's their business. We are the citizens of the heavenly kingdom. We shouldn't imitate the Tahitians. We must look up to our Lord Jesus. Satan is always there to lure degenerate people to expose their bodies. But God wants us to be properly dressed. We are God's children; we must obey the truth and dress decently. Only then will we be walking in a way worthy of the saints. We must never be conformed to this world. I don't think it's appropriate to wear bikinis on Eden Isle.

8. If we give birth to a physically deformed or mentally handicapped child, or if the child has become retarded after birth because of some illness, can we give up the child because we cannot afford to raise him or her?

Bro. Pi:

There was a sister in West Malaysia who became sick during her pregnancy. The doctor confirmed that the fetus was abnormal and it would be detrimental to the mother's health. She wrote to the Lord's servant asking him to pray for her. Wonderfully, a second examination showed that the fetus was gone! God had removed it for her.

If your pregnancy truly jeopardizes your life, and if the fetus is abnormal, you may decide what to do with it as long as there is peace in your heart, or follow the doctor's advice. But you cannot give up a child

after he or she is born because that would be a sin. God surely has His good purpose in giving you this child. Perhaps He wants to give you this cross to mold you so that you may gain a more abundant life. If you give up the child, you are giving up the cross and disobeying the Lord's arrangement. Our beloved co-worker Sis. See had an abnormal child whom she took care with love for eighteen years. She considered her child a cross God had given her, so she took up the cross. When the time was up, the Lord took the child away.

There are some organizations that take care of physically or mentally handicapped children. If it is truly beyond your ability to take care of the child, you may take him or her to them. The bottom line is that you must not abandon the child. Even the Gentiles would not do such a thing, much less us.

9. Gays and lesbians find it very hard to change their sexual behavior. Does it mean the Lord's salvation is not for them?

Bro. Pi:

God desires all men to be saved, not willing that any should perish. If gays repent thoroughly and depart from their sinful behavior, God will not forsake them. His salvation will prove to be effective on them. Of course the Lord's salvation is meant for them.

10. Is artificial insemination in conformity with the truth?

Bro. Pi:

Artificial insemination can cause problems if the sperms and the ovum do not come from a husband and wife. A gynecologist in the United States was indicted because he inseminated several dozen women with his own semen. As a result, these women gave birth to children not of their own husbands. This is not in conformity with the truth — it's unethical.