

DAILY READING

WEEK 11 THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY AND BEING REVIVED EVERY MORNING

WEEK 11 — DAY 4

Scripture Reading

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.

John 21:15 Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

FOUR MAJOR STEPS IN PRACTICING THE NEW WAY

Preaching the Gospel

The first matter in the Christian service is the preaching of the gospel. This is like marriage and childbirth. After a young couple become married, the first thing that occurs is childbearing. After a child is born, the center of the family is shifted to the child. If a couple has no child, there is a big lack. Children are the focus of the family. This is true in the West as well as in the East. It is a natural law that God put into man. Praise the Lord that we are all saved today. In other words, we are all married. What ought to follow is childbearing. The spiritual childbearing is the preaching of the gospel. Paul said, "For though you have ten thousand guides in Christ, yet not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). Paul preached the gospel and led many to salvation. These Corinthian believers then became the spiritual children begotten by Paul.

The Lord told us in John 15:5 that He is the vine and we are the branches. The usefulness of the vine does not lie in its blossoms; it is not for people to appreciate the flowers. Rather, it is for fruitbearing. If a vine does not bring forth fruit, its destiny is to be cut off (v. 2). The meaning of being cut off is not to go to hell, nor to go into perdition. Rather, it means that believers will lose their enjoyment in Christ. Originally you are a branch abiding in the vine. Everything that the vine is and has is your portion and enjoyment. But if you only enjoy and do not bear fruit, you will lose the rich enjoyment of Christ.

It is a terrible thing to be cut off from the vine. The Bible says that the consequence of being cut off is a kind of punishment and loss. To avoid the destiny of being cut off, we must bear fruit. For us who are serving the Lord, the primary thing is the preaching of the gospel. In the long run, the fruit-bearing must be done in an optimal way. There must not be too many or too few; it must not be done too quickly or too slowly.

Nourishing

After the fruitbearing comes the nourishing. Every mother knows that the first thing a newborn child does is drink milk. Hence, the first thing a mother has to learn is how to nurse her child. In the past our way has been to invite people to come to the meeting in the meeting

hall on the Lord's Day morning immediately after we baptize them. We realize now that this method is not so correct. After a child is born, we do not ask him to come to us to be fed. Rather, we have to go to him and feed him with milk. If we cannot go to the homes of the new ones daily, we should go at least once every three days. The best way is to go every day. When we go to the homes of the new brothers and sisters and feed them with spiritual food, this is what we call the home meetings.

Whether in the East or in the West, the churches baptize a large number of people every year. But year after year the church attendance has not increased appreciably. The reason for this is that most of the newly baptized ones soon die. Take Kaohsiung as an example. In 1952 there were sixty people meeting here. By now thirty-seven years have passed. If we use sixty as a base number, and we baptize an average of two hundred per year, we should have brought in over seven thousand. But the number of attendants in Kaohsiung today is only about twelve hundred. Where are the other six thousand? Perhaps they have all died. The reason for this is that after a person is saved, we are zealous to remind him to come to the meetings. If he does not show up this week, we may call him by phone. There is still some zeal within us, but this zeal does not last long. After two or three months no one cares about where these newly baptized ones are anymore. This is why I have said that in the past we begot many, but with the begetting there was no nourishing. Even when there was the nourishing, the nourishing was not done properly.

We make appointments for people to come to the meetings. We use the phone to invite them to come. We even hire taxis to pick them up for the meetings and prepare love feasts for them to attend. All we think about is for them to come, come, come. It never occurs to us that we can also go, go, go. In the past when the new ones came, we considered that they were so obliging and kind to have come to us, that they have done us such a big favor and have so highly honored us! Now why not turn the thought around? Rather than painstakingly inviting them to come, why do we not go to them to do them a favor and honor them? In the future, we have to turn the matter around. We will no longer oblige people to come to the meetings. Instead, we will go to their homes to meet with them.

For example, if ten persons have been baptized, each one of us should claim one of these to care for. It would be best if some would fight for them saying, "This one is mine. I want this one!" This is a good sign. I hope no one would be so polite as to say, "Oh, I cannot do it. You take all of them!" Outwardly speaking, this is politeness. But actually, this is going backward. This is to shrink from responsibility. If every one of us would bear the responsibility of nourishing others, I absolutely believe that the newly baptized ones will not die, for they will all be sustained by the home meetings.—from *The New Testament Priests of the Gospel*, ch. 2.