

VOLUME THREE

BASIC
ELEMENTS
of the
CHRISTIAN
LIFE

*W*ITNESS LEE &
WATCHMAN NEE

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Living Stream Ministry
Anaheim, California • www.lsm.org

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Mass-distribution Edition, August, 2003.

ISBN 0-7363-2215-9

See back page for local distribution information.

Published by:

Living Stream Ministry

2431 W. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92801 U.S.A.

P. O. Box 2121, Anaheim, CA 92814 U.S.A.

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PREFACE

This book is composed of three chapters, which present some basic elements of the Christian life.

This material has been published previously as three separate booklets: *Two Principles of Living* by Watchman Nee and *The Way to Build Up the Church* and *Pray-reading the Word* by Witness Lee.

CHAPTER ONE

TWO PRINCIPLES OF LIVING— THE PRINCIPLE OF LIFE OR THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHT AND WRONG

“For we walk by faith, not by appearance” (2 Cor. 5:7).

“Behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with Him” (Matt. 17:3).

“When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone” (v. 8).

“Hear Him!” (v. 5b).

“But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by man’s day; rather I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself; but I am not justified by this, but He who examines me is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:3-4).

“The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9b).

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (vv. 16-17). (*The tree of the knowledge of good and evil* can also be translated “the tree of the knowledge of right and wrong.”)

After God created man, He considered the problem of man’s food. The act of giving life is the beginning of life, but food is for the maintenance of life. God created a living man and therefore needed to consider how man should live. Man should not just live; man also needs a living. God wanted man to depend on Him for his living in the same way that he was dependent upon food for his living. “For in Him we live

and move and are" (Acts 17:28). Thus, God uses two trees to speak to us in a parable. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are a kind of parable. They show us that man has two different kinds of food and can live either by life or by the knowledge of good and evil, that is, the knowledge of right and wrong. Many people have read about the two trees in Genesis 2, but we would like to emphasize that the two trees were put there to show us that man, especially a Christian, can live on earth according to two different principles. Man can live according to the principle of right and wrong or according to the principle of life. Some Christians take the principle of right and wrong as the standard for their living, while other Christians take the principle of life as their standard for living.

Today we would like to spend some time before God to see these two principles for living. What does it mean when a person lives according to right and wrong? What does it mean when a person lives according to life? Many people only have the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in their lives. Other people have the tree of life in their lives. Some have both trees. The Word of God tells us, however, that he who eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil shall surely die, while he who eats of the tree of life shall live. God also shows us that whoever lives by the knowledge of good and evil will lose his position before God. If man wants to constantly live before God, then he must know what it means to eat the fruit of the tree of life.

TWO PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

Here, I would like to add another principle for living: the principle of sin. You could say that everyone in the world can live according to at least three principles: they can live by sin, or they can live by right and wrong, or they can live by life.

What does this mean? It is very simple. Many people live on earth by following the lusts of their flesh. They are sons of wrath who are bound by the fashions of the world. They live and act according to the operation of the evil spirits in their hearts. Their principle for living is that they live by sin (Eph. 2:1-3). This morning I do not want to speak about this

principle. I believe that many among us have already left the principle of sin. What we will consider this morning is apart from the principle of sin. These two trees represent two principles of living. After becoming Christians, some people live by the principle of right and wrong, while others live by the principle of life.

In speaking about this matter, I am making the assumption that we have already left the principle of sin and are walking before God. If we would consider a little, we would see that some people live according to the principle of right and wrong or good and evil. Please remember that the principle of right and wrong, the principle of good and evil, is not Christianity. Christianity is a matter of life, not of being according to a standard. Christianity speaks of life, not of good and evil. Christianity teaches life, not right and wrong. There are many young brothers and sisters here this morning. I would like to tell you that after you received the Lord Jesus and gained a new life, you gained something marvelous inwardly. You obtained another principle of living. But if you do not know about it, you will set the principle of life aside and begin to follow the principle of right and wrong.

THE MEANING OF FOLLOWING THE PRINCIPLE OF RIGHT AND WRONG

What is the principle of right and wrong? If our conduct is controlled by the principle of right and wrong, then we ask if something is right or wrong whenever we have to make a decision. Would it be good to do this, or would it be evil? When we ask whether it is good, we are, in effect, asking ourselves, "Am I right to do this or not? Many people consider much whether something is good or evil. They consider whether they can or cannot do a certain thing. They ask, "Is this right or wrong?" As they carefully consider a certain matter, being Christians, they determine whether it is good and right to do that thing. By taking care to decide whether or not something is good and right, they consider themselves to be good Christians.

God's Word says, "The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest

thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). At the most, this practice is only a discerning of good from evil. At best, it is merely choosing and rejecting—choosing good and rejecting evil. This is not Christianity. Christianity does not have an outward good and an outward evil. It does not have a definite standard in place. I may choose something good and reject something evil today, but this is not Christianity. It is the Old Testament, the law, worldly religions, human morality, and human ethics, but it is not Christianity.

CHRISTIANITY IS BASED ON LIFE

What is Christianity? Christianity is life. Christianity is not a matter of asking whether something is right or wrong. Christianity is a matter of checking with the life inside us whenever we do something. What does the new life which God has given us tell us inwardly about this matter? It is very strange that many people have only seen an outward standard, the standard of good and evil. But God has not given us an outward standard. Christianity is not a new set of Ten Commandments. In Christianity we have not been brought to a new Sinai, nor has God given us a new set of rules and regulations with "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Christianity does not require that we ask whether something is right or wrong, good or evil. On the contrary, whenever we do anything, there is a life within us which rises up to speak with us. When we feel right inwardly, when we feel the life inside of us moving, when we are strong within and sense the anointing, we know that we have life. Many times something is right and good in the eyes of man, but strangely the inner life has no response and grows cold and retreats.

Please remember, God's Word tells us that our Christian living is based on an inner life, not an outward standard of right and wrong. Many worldly people, who are not saved, live according to the best standard of living they can attain: the principle of right and wrong. If you or I also live by the principle of right or wrong, we are the same as worldly people. Christians are different from non-Christians because we do not live by an outward standard or law. Our subject is not human morality or concepts. We do not determine whether

something is right or wrong by subjecting it to human criticism or opinion. Today we have only one question: What does our inner life say? If the life is strong and active within us, we can do this; if the life is cold and retreating within us, we should not. Our principle for living is inward instead of outward. This is the only real principle of living; the others are false. People may say that many things are right to do, and I may feel that to do them is right, but what does the sense of the inner life tell us? The inner life does not agree. If we were to do them, we would not be rewarded, and if we were not to do them, there should be no shame, because they are outside of us. We can only see what is really right when the Spirit of God operates within us. If we feel that there is life inwardly, then that matter is right. If we do not feel the inward life, then the matter is wrong. Right and wrong are not decided by an outward standard but by the inner life.

THE STANDARD OF LIFE IS HIGHER THAN THE STANDARD OF GOOD

Once this matter is resolved, we can see that we must not only avoid all that is evil but also all that is merely good. Christians can only do that which comes out of life. We can see that there are evil things, good things, and things of life. We are not saying that Christians should only do things that are good and things that are of life. Rather, we are saying that Christians must not do good things or evil things. God said, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Note that "good and evil" are put together here as one way, while "life" is another way. Christians should not just refuse evil, they should even refuse good. There is a standard that is higher than the standard of good; it is the standard of life.

I have spoken about this matter with many young brothers, but I would like to repeat my story again today. When I first began to serve the Lord, I sought to avoid all that was evil and deliberately set myself to do what was good. According to the human point of view, I seemed to be making splendid progress in avoiding evil and doing good. There was

a problem, however. Since I was pursuing right and wrong, I wanted to be clear about what was right and what was wrong in each matter before I did anything. At that time I had a co-worker who was two years older than I, and we were always disagreeing. The differences that arose between us did not concern our own personal affairs. Our disagreements were about public matters, and our disputes were public too. I used to say to myself: That is wrong; if he wants to do things that way, I will protest. But no matter how much I protested, he would never give way. His only excuse was that he was two years older than I. I could argue with any other reason, but I could not argue with the fact that he was two years older than I. I could not get around this argument, but inwardly I did not agree with him. I told this story to an elderly sister, who had a wealth of spiritual experience, and I asked her to arbitrate. Was he right or was I? She did not say he was right, nor did she say he was wrong. She simply stared at me and said, You should do as he says." I was unhappy inwardly and thought, "If I am right, tell me so; if I am wrong, then say it. Why do you say that I should do as he says?" I asked her to give me a reason for her answer. She said, "In the Lord the younger should submit to the older." "But," I retorted, "in the Lord, if the younger is right and the older wrong, must the younger still submit?" At that time I was in secondary school and had learned nothing of discipline, so I gave free vent to my anger. She still smiled and said, "You had better do as he says."

Once some people were going to be baptized, and there were three of us caring for the matter. I was the youngest, then the brother two years older than I, and finally there was a Brother Wu, who was seven years older than he. I thought, "You are two years older than I, so I have to submit to you in everything. He is even older; let us see whether or not you will submit." We got together to discuss this matter, but he refused to accept anything from Brother Wu. At every point he insisted on having his own way. Finally, he said, "Just leave things to me; I will do it alone." I thought, "What kind of logic is this? You insist that I always obey you because you are my senior, but you never need to obey your senior." Immediately I sought out this sister to ask her about this matter. I

was upset that she did not pay attention to right or wrong. She stood up and asked, Have you not seen what the life of Christ is? Over the past few months, you have continually come to say that you are right and this brother is wrong. Do you not know what the cross is? You are insisting on the rightness of the matter, but I insist upon the life of the cross." I had been insisting upon right and wrong. I had not seen the matter of life, nor the cross. So she asked me, "Do you think you are right in doing this? Do you think you are right to say these things? Do you think it is right for you to tell me these things? They are all right according to reason, but I would ask how you feel inwardly. What is your inner sense?" I could only confess that I had been right according to reason but wrong according to the inner life.

The standard of Christian living does not only deal with evil things but also with good and right things. Many matters are right according to human standards, but the divine standard pronounces them wrong because they lack the divine life. On the day to which I just referred, I saw this light for the first time. From then on I began to ask myself if the life I lived before God was according to the principle of life or the principle of what I considered right and wrong. I would check, "Am I doing this just because it is right?" The key to everything is this point: Others may say something is right. We also may say that it is right, but does the Lord's life rise up within us or does it recede when we begin to do something? When we begin to do something, do we sense the anointing or do we feel weighed down? As we are doing that thing, do we have an increasing sense that we are on the right track, or is something telling us that we are off? Please remember that life does not make decisions according to outward standards of right and wrong. Matters should be decided according to the sense of God's life or the sense of death. Decisions should be made according to God's life as it rises up or recedes within us. No Christian should say that he can do something because it is good or right. We must ask the Lord within us. What is the inner feeling that the Lord gives? Do we feel joyful inwardly about this matter? Do we have spiritual happiness

and peace? These are the matters that decide our spiritual path.

When I was visiting Honor Oak, there was another brother who was also a guest there. He had many criticisms of the place. He had been a pastor and was a good preacher, and he knew that Honor Oak had much to offer spiritually. Still, he disapproved of many things. Whenever we ran into each other, he would tell me how much better his place was than Honor Oak. During the two or three months we were together, his criticism exceeded that of everyone else. One day he went too far, so I asked him, "You say Honor Oak is bad, so would it not be best if you left? Why do you remain here?" He answered, pointing to his heart, "The reason lies here; it wants to stay. Every time I pack my things to leave, my peace of heart leaves. Once I even left for two weeks, but I had to write and ask to return." I said, "Brother, have you seen these two ways: the way of life and the way of what you consider to be right or wrong?" He said, "Some days I go to my room to pack my bags as many as three times. But each time I want to leave, there is an inward forbidding. Inwardly, I feel that they are doing things wrong, but I also feel that it would be wrong for me to go." God had shown him that if he could receive spiritual help there, he should stay there to meet God. We all can see that this is not a matter of what we conceive as right or wrong. God uses His life to control His children.

EXTERNALITIES DO NOT GOVERN DECISIONS

The greatest error among God's children is that many people determine right and wrong by what they see. Many people determine right and wrong according to their backgrounds and based upon their years of experience. Therefore, they do not know what is really right and what is really wrong. Please remember that Christian living is based upon the inward life. Many people only have externalities before God. Many people decide what is right or wrong according to outward things. Life, however, is a different matter. Those with life know what it is.

I hope we all would see this before God: No Christian can determine anything apart from life. Whatever increases the

inner life is right, and whatever decreases the inner life is wrong. No one should determine whether a matter is right or wrong by some outward standard.

I recall going to a certain place where the brothers were working with real effect. God was truly using them. If you were to ask me whether or not their work was perfect, I would have to say that there was room for improvement. In great humility they asked me to point out anything I saw that could be corrected, so I pointed out this and that. They asked me several times, but they did not change anything. Was I annoyed? No! A foolish person would become annoyed, but one who knows God could not be upset. I could only indicate external matters that needed adjustment, but I could not see what God was doing within them. I had no way to tell God what He should do within them.

In another place I visited, the brothers were not preaching the gospel. They discussed the matter with me and asked if I thought that they should be doing so. I answered, "Doctrinally speaking, we certainly should preach the gospel." They said they realized this as well, but that surprisingly God did not give them the life to do so. Those who know God can only stand aside in silence, for our pathway is His life, not right and wrong. The difference between these two principles is immense. Brothers and sisters, the contrast here is too great. So many people only think whether it is right or wrong for them to do something. But today we should not act according to what is right and what is wrong. The one question we must ask today is whether the divine life within us rises or falls. This is what must determine the path we take. Everything is decided in our hearts.

"HEAR HIM"

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses was present, representing the outward, moral standard, and Elijah was present, representing the outward, human standard (Matt. 17:3). We all know that Moses stands for the law, and Elijah stands for the prophets. The standard of the law was present, and the standard of the prophets was present. In the Old Testament the law and the prophets were most qualified to

speak, but God silenced them here. God told Peter, "This is My Son, the Beloved.... Hear Him!" (v. 5). Today the standard for Christian living is no longer the law, nor is it the prophets. The standard for Christian living is now Christ Himself; it is the indwelling Christ within us. Therefore, it is not a question of whether we are right or wrong but of whether or not the divine life in us agrees with something. Often, to our surprise, we find that the life within us disapproves of what we approve. When this happens, we cannot insist on what we think is right.

THE DIVINE LIFE MUST BE SATISFIED

I recall a story of two brothers, both Christians, who had a rice paddy. Rice paddies need to be irrigated. Their paddy was halfway up a hill; others were lower down. In the great heat of the day they drew water and filled their paddy. In the evening they went to sleep. But while they were sleeping, the farmer lower down the hill dug a hole in the irrigation channel surrounding the brothers' field and let all the water flow into his field. The next morning the brothers saw what had happened, but they said nothing. Again they filled the channels with water. The following day they saw that their field had been emptied again, but they still did not say anything. They were Christians and felt that they should endure in silence. This happened every day for a week. Some people suggested that they stand guard in their field at night to catch the thief and beat him. They did not say a word in response; they just endured because they were Christians.

According to the human concept, they should have been walking joyfully, happily, and victoriously because they were enduring in silence, even after drawing water daily and having it stolen so many times. But strangely enough, even though they drew water every day and remained silent while others stole it, they did not have peace in their hearts. They then went to see a brother with some experience in the Lord's work and said, "We do not understand why we have no peace after enduring for seven or eight days. Christians should endure and allow others to steal from them, but we do not have peace in our hearts." This brother was very experienced.

He said, "You have not done enough, nor have you endured enough. You should first fill the field of the person who has stolen your water. Then you can fill your own field. Go and try this, then see whether you will have peace within." They both agreed. The next day they got up earlier than usual and filled the field of the person who had stolen their water, before filling their own field. Strangely enough, they became more and more joyful as they filled that person's field. When they came to fill their own field, they had peace in their hearts. They were at peace with the thought of allowing that person to steal their water. After two or three days of doing this, the person who had stolen their water came to apologize, saying, "If this is Christianity, I want to hear about it."

This shows us that in the realm of right and wrong, enduring is right. What more can we ask one to do? These ones had spent an entire day drawing water, and not in ordinary weather, but in hot weather. They were not educated people; they were farmers. They had done the right and good thing. What else could one ask of them? Yet they had no peace inwardly. This illustrates the way of life. This is the way we take. The way of right and wrong is another way. Man says that right is good enough, but God says that only life is sufficient. We must do things to the point that joy and peace are produced inwardly. This is the difference between the way of life and the way of right and wrong. It seems as if right and wrong are sufficient and that nothing else is needed. But God is not satisfied with being right. He requires us to satisfy the divine life.

What does the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7 teach us? It teaches us nothing less than that being right is not enough. We must do things in a way which satisfies the life God has given us. This is the content of Matthew 5—7, the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount does not say that everything is all right as long as things are done according to what is right. Man asks why he has to turn the other cheek when someone hits him. Is it not good enough if we do not say anything when someone strikes us? Is it not wonderful that we have not rebuked him and have shown great restraint? But God says that it is not even enough to just

lower our heads and leave when we are struck. This does not satisfy the inner life. We must turn our other cheek for that person to strike as well. This means that we have no hate in our hearts. We are not angry and can endure this treatment a second time. Life is humble. Life can turn the other cheek for another blow. This is the way of life.

Many people say that Matthew 5—7 is too difficult for them. I admit that it is. It is impossible for us to carry out Matthew 5—7. If we try, we will die because we cannot do it. However, we have another life within us. It tells us that we will not be happy if we do not do this. It does not matter how much we have been offended by a brother or sister. If we do not kneel down to pray for him or her, we will not have inward joy. It is good to endure in silence, but if we do not follow the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, we will not have inward joy. The Sermon on the Mount teaches that we must satisfy the life of God within us. In doing these things, the divine life is satisfied, released, at peace, and happy. This is the whole matter: Are we walking in the way of life or in the way of right and wrong? If we read God's Word clearly, we will see that it is wrong to decide matters by the principle of right and wrong or to live, act, and have our being according to our self-life.

THERE SHOULD BE FULLNESS OF LIFE WITHIN

Sometimes we come across a brother who has acted very foolishly. According to what is proper, we should strongly exhort or rebuke him. We tell ourselves that he requires a serious, thorough dealing. We prepare ourselves to face the situation because we know he will be around for a few days. We go to his home and knock on the door, but then we ask ourselves whether we are right or wrong. He acted foolishly, so what can we do but exhort him? We have gone to his door and raised our hand to knock, but inwardly there is a problem. Our raised hand drops to our side. Even though we have convinced ourselves that we are right, this is not a matter of right or wrong. This is a matter of whether or not the life of God allows us. Many times when we go to exhort a brother, he will receive our exhortation with courtesy and promise to do what God says. Yet the more we preach to him, the more

our inward being wilts. When we return home, we have to admit that we have been wrong in exhorting the brother! Therefore, it is not a matter of good or bad but a matter of being full of life inwardly.

I will give you another example. I met a needy brother a few days ago. He was extremely poor and needed some help. I thought that I certainly should do something for him because there was no prospect of help coming to him from any direction. Just at that point I had no surplus, so it was a great sacrifice to come to his aid. I seemed to be exceeding the limits of my strength to help him. According to what is proper, I was right. I should have been happy as I gave him some money. Yet for some unknown reason, I wilted inwardly as I gave him the money which I had promised to give him. A voice within said, "You are just acting on charity. That was not an act of life; it was merely human chivalry and natural kindness. It was not done in life but in yourself." God did not want me to do this. I have suffered concerning that matter for two or three weeks. Even though I had given the brother money, I had to bow before God, confess my sin, and ask His forgiveness when I reached home.

OUR LIVING AND ACTIONS MUST BE ACCORDING TO THE LEADING OF LIFE

Brothers and sisters, as we live before God, our actions must not be determined by good and evil, but by the life within. Whatever life wants us to do is worthwhile. Anything that we do without life, no matter how good it may be, will bring us nothing but inward condemnation. A Christian should not only repent before God for the sins he has committed; often, he must repent before God for the good things he has done. The principle of our living is not one that differentiates between good and evil. We must come before God to determine what is of life and what is of death. When we have life within and feel life rising up, we are doing the proper thing. When the life does not rise up and we cannot sense the anointing in our being, we should not care whether we are acting according to right or wrong. Instead, we must confess before God and ask His forgiveness.

Paul said that he judged nothing by himself, but that only God judged him (1 Cor. 4:3-4). Many people do not understand this passage in 1 Corinthians. This sentence is very simple, but if we do not know life, it is very difficult. If we have an outward standard of good and evil, it is very easy to judge when we are wrong and right. Paul did not act according to an outward standard of right and wrong, so he could only say, "I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself; but I am not justified in this, but He who examines me is the Lord." The one who examines us before the judgment seat is the Lord. In addition, we have a life within us that leads us on. That is the reason 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, "We walk by faith, not by appearance." We do not determine things by an outward, visible law. We live according to the leading which the Lord gives us inwardly.

We must learn the lesson before God that we should never act merely according to the standard of right and wrong. The standard of right and wrong is not bad; it is a good standard, but it is not good enough for a Christian. The Christian's standard surpasses right and wrong. The things which are wrong are wrong, but the things which are right are not always right. If we act according to God's life, He will show us that His demands are higher than those of human law. This being the case, it becomes very easy to live the Christian life. In every matter when we seek God's speaking within us, spontaneously there will be the shining of inward light. Please remember that our regeneration is a fact. It is also a fact that God is living in us through the Lord Jesus. The Lord is constantly expressing Himself within us. We hope that each of us would be able to say to God, "Grace me so that I live by the tree of life, not by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I want to constantly pay attention to life. I want to ask, 'What is the sense of life?'" If we live by this principle, we will see a great change in our Christian life.

Many problems arise because we only have a standard of right and wrong. Many mistakes are made because we do not have the standard of life. If we have the standard of life, many problems will be resolved.

PRAYER

O Lord, we stand before You beseeching You to speak again. Man is empty and cannot do anything. We can only ask for Your grace to open our eyes. Every time we open our mouths or make decisions, cause us to come before You and ask if our decision is according to right and wrong or according to the inward leading of life. Lord, cause us to see the difference between what is spiritual and what is fleshly. Cause us to really see the difference between inward light and outward law. Lord, save us from the way of death. Lord, it is wrong for us to live by discerning right from wrong. May we see that discerning right from wrong is sin and death, because only those who live in death can do this. Those who live in life must be led by life. It must be the life that takes the lead. Lord, be among us so that we would see this clearly. We have said this many times, and we want to say it again: May Your Word not be spoken in vain. Cause us to know what life is and what law is. Bless these scattered utterances. Have mercy on us, and grace us. Lead us in the way before us. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER Two

THE WAY TO BUILD UP THE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:14-19

There are three main aspects in God's eternal plan for the church. First, it is the church that must have the sonship to express God; second, it is the church through which Satan will be defeated and put to shame; and finally, it is the church through which Christ will head up all things. God's plan is for the church to gain His life in full! The sonship is not just the birth of life, but the growth of life unto maturity. This means that God has to work Himself into us and make us not only His sons, but His heirs to inherit all that He is and all that He has, that He might be expressed. Then through this life all things will be headed up under the headship of Christ.

First of all, there is the matter of life; then there is the building. The purpose of the building is to bring us all into the proper order in life under the headship of Christ. It is through our being built up in life that God can put His enemy to shame. Then God has the ground to make His multifarious wisdom known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies.

It is for this purpose that God created the universe with the heavens and the earth. In the center of His creation, God created man as the vessel to contain Himself. God's intention was to put Himself as life and everything into this man in order to have many sons. We all know that the son is one who inherits everything from the father. Whatever the Father is and has will be imparted into His sons. First, God created us, and then He begot us through regeneration. By creation He brought us into existence, and by begetting us He imparted Himself into us as our life.

For this purpose God created us with a human spirit. The human spirit is just like the element of a light bulb. Without the element in the bulb, the bulb cannot receive electricity. The bulb must have the element within to be the recipient or the receiver of the electricity, and it is also that same element which enables the bulb to express the electricity. The bulb also has an outward form just as the body is our outward form. Within our body there is the spirit, just as within the outward form of the bulb, there is the element for the bulb to receive, to contain, and to express the electricity.

We are the containers made by God; therefore, He purposely created a spirit within us in order to receive Him, to keep Him, and to express Him. God in Christ as the Holy Spirit spreads Himself outward from our spirit to all the parts of our being. God does not work from the outside, in an inward direction into man, but from man's spirit He spreads Himself outward in order to permeate and saturate all of man's inward parts. He will saturate the conscience, the mind, the emotion, the will, and eventually our whole being. When God came into our spirit, we received the birth of life; and by His spreading from our spirit through our whole being, we will obtain the growth of life to full maturity. Even the body will be transfigured at the time of the full sonship. It is through this that we all will be brought into order as a corporate man under the headship of Christ. Within this corporate man, God in Christ is the Head and, as sons, we are the Body brought into order under His headship. Then, through this Body, Christ as the Head will head up all things.

However, we must see the subtlety of the enemy in distracting man away from God's eternal purpose. Upon the earth today there are three classes of people—the Gentiles, who are the unbelievers; God's chosen people, the Jews; and the Christians, the members of the church. All three classes have been distracted from God's economy by the enemy, Satan.

In order for man to exist, God prepared many material things, including food, water, clothing, housing, and many other things. But today, all the unbelievers have been distracted by these material things. They pay their full attention

to food, shelter, and clothing, along with their material way of life. All the Gentiles are distracted from God's central mark by the material things; they are fully drawn to the material things. Whether they are poor or rich, high or low, all of them have been distracted to material things which God prepared for their existence only that they might fulfill His purpose. All of these material things should be simply a means for man to fulfill God's purpose, but Satan has utilized them to distract the unbelievers from God's purpose.

Then God gave the Jewish people certain spiritual knowledge in the Old Testament, revealing His law and will, with the intention that these Scriptures might be a help for them to know God's plan in Christ. But Satan has utilized even the Old Testament to distract the Jewish people from Christ. If we read the four Gospels carefully, there is a clear illustration of how the scribes and Pharisees were distracted from Christ by the Scripture. In John 5:39-40, the Lord told them, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me. Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." They were distracted to the Scriptures and away from Christ by the subtlety of the enemy. So not only have the Gentiles been distracted from God's eternal purpose, but even the Jews, the chosen people of God, have been distracted.

When we come to the New Testament, there is something more. Satan utilized even the doctrines of the New Testament and all the gifts given by God to distract people from Christ unto the so-called gifts and teachings. If we look at the whole situation, we will realize that everything prepared and given by God for the purpose of fulfilling His economy has been utilized by the enemy to distract people from God's economy.

The so-called Christian churches of today have the Old and New Testaments, and they claim to have so many gifts, but if we have the heavenly vision of God's eternal purpose for the church, we will weep over the situation. Not just the Gentiles and the Jews, but even Christian people are distracted from Christ and His Body unto something else. Even fundamental Christianity tells us only that God loves us and sent His Son to die on the cross in order to save us from hell.

If we believe in Him, we will be saved, our sins will be forgiven, and one day we will go to heaven. This is right in a sense, but have you ever heard a message telling how God's intention is to work Himself into us through Christ as the Spirit, that Christ might be expressed through His Body and head up the whole universe under His headship? Such a concept is not even found in fundamental Christianity. All most Christians know is that God loves us; and if we believe in Him, some day we will go to dwell with Him in heaven after we die. It is really pitiful! Some Christians who say that this is not enough are looking for the manifestations of gifts to prove that God is powerful. But they still neglect God's central thought. I do not believe that they have ever seen the vision of God's economy.

I realize that we need food, water, housing, jobs, and transportation, but we are not for these things. These things must be for us! If we seek God's kingdom and His righteousness, God will take care of all of these things (Matt. 6:31-33). All of these things must be for us, and we must be for God's purpose. We can testify after many years of experience that if we will take care of God's purpose, God will take care of our needs. He is so faithful in this matter. If we will take care of His interest, He will take care of us. Also, the Scriptures and the gifts are for God's economy. All the teachings and ministries must be for God's purpose.

In Ephesians, the major Epistle concerning the church, there is no mention of material things, knowledge, or gifts. In the fourth chapter, the gifts mentioned are the gifted persons, such as the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. Tongues, healing, and other so-called spiritual gifts are not mentioned. This book does not tell us of material things, knowledge, or gifts, but of the unsearchable riches of Christ, who is the Spirit. This is not an outward Christ but an inward Christ, because He must make His home in us.

Ephesians 3:17 says, "That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith." He has to be our life, and we must be His home. It is not our body that is to be His home, but our heart. The heart is composed of all the parts of the soul and one of the parts of the spirit, the conscience. Therefore, the

heart includes the mind, emotion, and will, plus the conscience. Christ is now in our spirit, but He is seeking to make His home in our heart. Then we will be filled unto all the fullness of God. It is not material things nor knowledge nor gifts nor any outward manifestations, but the fullness of God!

Chapter one of Ephesians mentions the sealing of the Holy Spirit (v. 13). The Holy Spirit has been put into us as a seal. This is not something outward but something inward. Then in chapter two, there is the new man created by Christ and in Christ (v. 15). Christ created in Himself one new man of the Jews and the Gentiles. The church is an entity which comes entirely out of Christ, just as Eve came out of Adam. She was a part of Adam and was taken out of Adam. The new man, which is the church, is a part of Christ and is taken out of Him. Chapter three tells us of the riches of the Christ who would make His home in our hearts. Then chapter four shows us how to grow on the basis of the experiences of the unsearchable riches of Christ mentioned in chapter three. By these experiences, we will arrive at the full stature of Christ. In this way we will not be carried away by the winds of doctrines or teachings. Please note that Paul does not say the wind of heresy, but the wind of teaching. We will not be carried away by the winds of different teachings, but we will grow into Christ in all things. Then we will receive something from Christ as the Head to share with others, and the church will be built up.

After I was saved, like so many other young Christians, I was hungry for scriptural knowledge. At that time I met a certain group of believers who stressed the knowledge of the Bible, so I spent a lot of time with them seeking the knowledge of the Scriptures. About six or seven years after this, in North China there was a movement called the Spiritual Grace movement. It was so prevailing that in just a few years it shook all of North China. Thousands of people were saved, and there were many tongues, miracles, and signs. I went to them and studied the situation, but eventually I was made clear by the Lord that they could never build up the Body of Christ in that way. Therefore, the Body of Christ cannot be built up by knowledge; neither can it be built up by the gifts,

or the so-called supernatural manifestations. I was not clear at that time about the book of Ephesians, but through experience I was made clear by the Lord that the church could be built only by Christ as our life. The church can be built up only by experiencing Christ, not by knowledge or gifts. Knowledge and gifts help somewhat, but the church can never be built up by these things. It has to be built by Christ.

In this book about the church, there is no mention of gifts or knowledge, but only of the unsearchable riches of Christ, who would make His home in our hearts. In the New Testament, there is some ground for gifts and knowledge, miracles and signs, but the main way for the Body of Christ to be built up is by Christ Himself as our life. In a certain sense, I will admit the need of the knowledge and the gifts, but so many Christians will not admit their need of the inner experience of Christ. This is the problem. I know they may need some medicine, but they will not admit that they need some solid food. How many messages about the inner experiences of Christ have you heard since you have been a Christian? Yet nearly every chapter in the book of Ephesians deals with this matter.

Today, so many Christians say that the book of Ephesians is the book for the church, yet they neglect the key, which is the inner experience of Christ. If we do not have the inner experience of Christ, we cannot have the reality of the church.

The book of Ephesians is the heart of the Scriptures, and the heart of this book is in chapter three, verses 16-19. Let us look into these verses again, beginning from verse 14 in order that we may have a clearer vision. The apostle begins by saying, "For this cause...." What is the "cause"? Of course, it is the very cause which he has already mentioned in the previous verses and chapters—that God planned and predestinated the church to have the sonship in order to have God expressed, to make God's wisdom known to the enemy, and to head up all things in Christ. Paul says that it is "for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner

man" (KJV). Paul bows his knees for the cause of God's eternal purpose that God would grant the saints to be strengthened in the inner man. The inner man, our human spirit which has been regenerated and indwelt by Christ, must be strengthened.

We know that God has created man with three parts—the spirit, the soul, and the body. If I were to ask, "According to your own understanding, which part is the strongest?" I believe that everyone who is honest would say that the soul is the strongest, because the soul is the very self. The soul also is of three parts—the mind, the emotion, and the will. Now of the three parts of the soul, which is the strongest? I think we all would agree that the strongest part is the mind. We are very strong in the mind, and our spirit is very, very weak. It is easy to prove this. If we were to have a time of discussion, everyone would talk, because our minds are so strong and active. But if someone says, "Let us pray," everyone will be silent. Immediately the room will become as silent as a cemetery. The reason for our silence is that we are weak in the inner man—that is, we are weak in the spirit.

For this reason the apostle Paul does not pray lightly. For the cause of God's purpose and for the cause of the church, he bowed his knees that the Father would grant us to be strengthened in the inner man. Our spirit must be strengthened. There is no need for discussion. The more we talk and argue, the more we exercise our mind. Our mind has been overdeveloped, yet we still continue to develop it. When any cell of the body is overdeveloped, it becomes a cancer, which brings in death. It would be so profitable if we changed our talking and discussion into prayer! We need to forget about our thoughts, imaginations, understandings, and concepts, and bow our knees before the Father to exercise our spirit to pray—not just once, but constantly!

In order to exercise our spirit to pray, we must repent. The word *repentance* in Greek means "to turn the mind." When we repent by turning our mind away from other things to the Lord, our conscience will be exercised to bear witness where we are wrong and concerning what we specifically need to confess. By repentance we turn our mind to the Lord,

and by confession we exercise our conscience. The mind and the conscience are the two main parts of the heart. And since the heart surrounds the spirit, it is the very gateway of the spirit. It is by repentance and confession that the two main parts of the heart, the mind and the conscience, are opened. Then the gateway to the spirit is opened so that the Lord may come in more and more in order to fill and strengthen our spirit. When we repent and confess in this way, our emotion will follow with love to the Lord, and our will then will choose to seek the Lord. This means that the whole heart is exercised and opened so that the spirit is free to receive more of Christ. Then the Lord, as the living Spirit, will infill and strengthen our spirit; and spontaneously, Christ will make His home in our heart.

When our spirit is strengthened, Christ will increasingly make His home in all the parts of our heart. Christ is now in our spirit, but He is imprisoned there because our mind is set on other things and our conscience is not exercised. Because Christ is imprisoned in our spirit, we need to repent by turning our mind to Him. Then we must confess our sins and tell the Lord how much we love Him and choose to seek Him. By doing this, our whole heart is opened for Christ to fill and strengthen our spirit. Then from our spirit, He will spread Himself to make His home in our heart. This means our whole being will be His dwelling place and His home.

The apostle then goes on to say, "That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are and to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God" (vv. 17-19). In verse 17 the words *rooted* and *grounded* are very meaningful. To be rooted means to grow in life, and to be grounded means to be built. So these two words mean that we have to grow and to be built up. We are to be rooted and grounded in love that we may be strong to apprehend, not by ourselves but with all the saints corporately, what the breadth and length and height and depth are. This means that when we have Christ making His home in our hearts, we

will be joined with all the saints. We can never be built together by knowledge. The more knowledge we have, the more arguments and divisions we will have. But when we have Christ making His home in us, we will forget about the knowledge, the divisions, and all other things. We will only say, "O Lord, be merciful to me; I am just short of You. I am filled with knowledge, but I am short of You. I may even have a lot of gifts, but I lack You."

It is when Christ is able to make His home in our hearts, which means He will occupy every inward part of our being, that we will be able to be built up with all the saints. We are no longer individuals, but we are built up corporately with all the saints to realize how immeasurable Christ is. How broad is the breadth? How long is the length? How high is the height? How deep is the depth? These are the dimensions of Christ! Christ is the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth; He is immeasurable and unlimited. We must realize the unsearchable riches of Christ and be filled unto all the fullness of God. We are not to be filled with material things, scriptural knowledge, nor the so-called spiritual gifts, but with God Himself. It is only by Him that the Body can be realized. Otherwise, we may talk about the Body life, but there will be no reality. The reality of the Body life is the inner experience of the indwelling Christ.

We all need to kneel and pray-read these very verses until the heavenly vision is revealed into us. I say again that it is not something outward like knowledge, gifts, and signs; it is wholly the inner experience of the indwelling Christ. The inner man must be strengthened in order that Christ may make His home in our hearts, that we may be filled inwardly unto all the fullness of God Himself. It is by these inner experiences of the indwelling Christ that we can be built up with all the saints.

As we go on to chapter four, the first verse uses the word *therefore*. This means that the writer is going to say something based on what he has already said. We all know that chapter four deals with the Body life and the building up of the Body. We are clearly told that Christ as the Head never builds His Body directly but through the gifted ones such as

the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers. And even they themselves do not build up the church directly, but they perfect all the saints by ministering Christ, that the saints may grow to realize the inner experience of the indwelling Christ and grow up into Him in all things. On the one hand, Christ will make His home in their heart by occupying their whole being; and on the other hand, they will grow into Christ in all things. Then they will receive something from Christ and share Him with one another, thereby making an increase of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. It is by this experience of Christ that they will be built up as a Body.

So, the key factor of how the church will be built up is the inner experience of the indwelling Christ. The gifted persons do not minister gifts to the saints; they only minister the unsearchable riches of Christ which they have experienced, that the saints might be perfected in Christ and grow up into Him. If we read these two chapters carefully and pray-read them before the Lord, I believe He will give us the vision to see that this is the only way for the church to be built up.

I must repeat again that the church is not built up by knowledge and gifts. The more knowledge we have, the more divisions we will have; and the more gifts we have, the more trouble we will have. It is only by the inner experience of Christ as life that we can have the reality of the church life. The inner man must be strengthened so that Christ will make His home in our hearts and we will grow up into Him in all things. Then we will be filled unto all the fullness of God, by whom we will be built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

CHAPTER THREE

PRAY-READING THE WORD

When a baby is born, his most immediate need is to take some milk for nourishment. Without nourishment the new babe will not only fail to grow properly, but will soon become very weak and eventually even die. After we are saved and born again, our most immediate need also is that we learn how to take in the Lord as our spiritual milk and nourishment. Without this spiritual nourishment, we also have no way to grow properly and will in a short time be spiritually dead.

In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus presents Himself as a feast for us to drink and eat. He says in John 4 that He is the living water for us to drink. In the sixth chapter of the same book, He says that He is the bread of life to be eaten. Then the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we “were all given to drink one Spirit.” We drink Him, we eat Him, and thereby enjoy Him and receive Him as our spiritual nourishment. We have to praise the Lord that Jesus Christ has presented Himself to us as a feast to meet all our need and to be all our supply. We all know that His name is the great I AM, which means I AM whatever My people need.

THE WORD OF GOD BEING FOOD TO US

In 1 Peter 2:2-3 we have a most important passage. “As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation, if you have tasted that the Lord is good.” These verses are important to us because they tell us clearly how to taste the Lord: drink “the guileless [pure] milk of the Word.” If we would taste Christ, we must take into us the milk of the word. Then we

will be nourished for spiritual growth. Praise the Lord, the Bible says *tasted!* It does not say that we *know* this aspect or that aspect about the Lord, but that we *taste* the Lord. When we drink the milk of the Word, we are actually tasting the Lord. Therefore, the way for us to taste the Lord is simply by drinking the milk of the Word. The Word is not only for us to study or learn, but even more for us to taste. The way the Lord nourishes His Body is by His Word. If we desire to enjoy the Lord and be nourished by the Lord, we must come to the Word to taste the Lord.

However, the concept which most of us have of the Bible is that it is a kind of teaching, a book full of doctrines. Thus, we come to the Word with the intention of understanding and knowing something. In all of our Christian life, how much of the Word have we taken in as food to our spirit? We must answer honestly that most of us have taken in very little. We must not come to the Bible only to learn and to understand. The Bible is not the tree of knowledge; it is the tree of life! If we take the Word of God as the tree of knowledge, we misuse the Bible, because 2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us that the letter kills. We must never take the Bible as a book of letters, but as a book of life.

All Christians know that the function of the Word of God is to reveal God to us. Although this is true, this is not its main function. The main function of the Bible is to *impart God into us as life* and as the nourishment of life. It is not only to give us knowledge about God and His love, but to impart God Himself into us. Whenever we read the Bible, we should not merely try to know or understand it, but take something of God's essence into us just as we take our food. Then, like food, this substance will be assimilated into our very being.

First Timothy 4:6 says that we are "nourished with the words of the faith." No doubt we have read this verse many times, but have we noticed the word "nourished"? Praise the Lord! The concept of the apostle Paul was that God's Word is food to nourish God's children. We too must have the same realization regarding the Word of God. We should not consider it only as knowledge, but as food to nourish and supply us all the time.

First Timothy 1:10 speaks of things that are “opposed to the healthy teaching.” The King James Version uses the word “sound” instead of “healthy.” God’s Word is not just sound doctrine for the mind, but healthy doctrine for life. This word “healthy” in Greek is equivalent to the English word “hygiene.” Hygiene is very much related to health. We must have more than a sound word; we must have a healthy word which nourishes and supplies us.

The Scriptures contain at least three examples of those who ate the Word of God. The first is Jeremiah, who said, “Your words were found and I ate them...” (Jer. 15:16a). To eat something is not merely to receive it, but to assimilate it. To assimilate is to receive something *into you*, digest it, and make it a part of yourself. The second example of someone eating the Word of God is recorded in the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet Ezekiel ate the Word of God (3:1-3). Then in Revelation 10 we read that the apostle John also ate the Word of God.

Jeremiah said, “Your word became to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16b). This is a kind of enjoyment. The Word, after being eaten, became a joy and also a rejoicing. God’s Word is an enjoyment; after it is taken into us and assimilated into our very being, it becomes joy within us and rejoicing without. David said, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Psa. 119:103). The Word is indeed an enjoyment; it is even sweeter and more pleasant than honey to our taste.

From these verses we realize that the Word of God is not only for us to learn, but even more for us to taste, to eat, to enjoy, and to digest. The Lord Jesus even speaks of God’s Word as spiritual food: “It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God is spiritual food to nourish us. This is the food by which we must live.

THE ESSENCE OF GOD’S WORD

What is the substance, the essence, of God’s Word? The answer is found in 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is

God-breathed....” The King James Version says “given by inspiration of God,” but the meaning in the original language is *God-breathed*. All Scripture is God’s breath. We know that God is Spirit (John 4:24); the Spirit is God’s essence and nature. God is Spirit (just as a table is wood). Since the Word is the breath of God, and God is Spirit, whatever is breathed out of God must be Spirit! So the essence of nature of the Word of God is Spirit. It is not just a thought, revelation, teaching, or doctrine, but Spirit. The Spirit is the very substance of the Word of God. Now we see why the Lord Jesus told us that the words which He spoke are *spirit* and life (John 6:63). A revelation, thought, or teaching could never be life, but because the Word is Spirit, it is life. The nature of this book is the very essence of God Himself. Whenever we deal with this book, we must realize that we are touching God and dealing with Him!

TAKING IN THE WORD BY PRAYER

Having seen that the Word of God is the very essence of God Himself and that it is for our spiritual enjoyment and nourishment, we must now see the proper way to come to the Word. What is it? We must look at the Word of God as recorded in Ephesians 6:17-18: “Receive...the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the Word of God.” It is the Spirit that is the Word of God. Then verse 18 continues: “By means of all prayer and petition.” The verses then together are: “Receive...the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition.” In what way are we to take the Word of God according to this passage? By means of all prayer and petition. This is what we call *pray-reading*! Again, we must repeat—the Word of God must be taken by means of all prayer.

HOW TO PRAY-READ

Simply pick up the Word and *pray-read* a few verses in the morning and in the evening. There is no need for you to exercise your mind in order to squeeze out some utterance, and it is unnecessary to think over what you read. Just pray *with*

the same words you read. On every page and in every verse there is a living prayer.

There is no need to close your eyes when you are pray-reading. Keep your eyes on the Word as you pray. In all sixty-six books of the Bible, we cannot find one verse which says that we must close our eyes to pray, but there is a verse telling us that Jesus *lifted up His eyes* to heaven, saying, "Father..." (John 17:1). He was looking toward heaven while He was praying. We would not argue in a doctrinal way, but we must realize that there is no need for us to close our eyes when we pray. It is better for us to close our mind! For example, in pray-reading Galatians 2:20 simply look at the printed page, which says, "I am crucified with Christ." Then with your eyes upon the Word and *praying from deep within*, say: "Praise the Lord, 'I am crucified with Christ.' Hallelujah! 'Crucified with Christ.' Amen! 'I am.' O Lord, 'I am crucified.' Praise the Lord! 'Crucified with Christ.' Amen! 'I am crucified with Christ.' Hallelujah! Amen! 'And it is no longer.' Amen. 'No longer.' Amen. 'I who live.' O Lord. 'I who live.' Hallelujah! Amen! 'But it is Christ who lives in me,' etc." Then perhaps you will turn to John 10:10 and read, "I have come that they may have life." Then with your eyes still on the Bible you can pray: "I have come." Amen! "I have come." Hallelujah! "I have come that they may have life." Praise the Lord! "May have life." Hallelujah! "Life." Amen! "Life." O Lord, "Life."

There is no need for you to compose any sentences or create a prayer. Just pray-read the Word. Pray the words of the Bible exactly as they read. Eventually, you will see that the whole Bible is a prayer book! You can open to any page of the Bible and start to pray with any portion of the Word. The Bible is *the Book*, the Holy Book. Every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God is different from anything else, even the best of the world. The world has only the words of human beings, but the Bible has the Word of God! Every word in this Book *is* the Word of God. Although you may not understand a certain passage, still you are nourished while pray-reading it, because there is really something of God in His Word; the Word of God is His very breath. There is no need to explain or expound the Word; simply pray *with* the

Word. Forget about reading, researching, understanding, and learning the Word. You must pray-read the Word. Then eventually you will *really* understand it. If you will practice this you will receive something so nourishing and strengthening within which will empower you and give you life all the time.

Perhaps you are quite familiar with the entire book of Romans. But even today, you still need to pray-read one or two verses of it. Though we may know all about food, yet we still must partake of some food daily. Regardless of how much we know about it, we still must eat it! To know is one thing, but to eat is another. We must not only know food, we must eat it. How many times have you read the Gospel of John? Perhaps you have read it more than fifty times. But how much of that book has been taken into you as your nourishment and enjoyment? To know, to understand, and even to recite the Gospel of John is one thing. But to take it in, to eat it or to enjoy it bit by bit, is another thing. You may have been a Christian for many years, but regardless of how long you have been a Christian and regardless of how many times you have read this book, you must not only read it, but pray-read it! You must eat it, partake of it, and enjoy it day by day.

PRAY-READ WITH OTHERS

For more enjoyment and nourishment and to pray-read the Word properly and adequately, we need the Body, the church. We may enjoy pray-reading the Word privately, but if we try it with a group of other Christians, we will be in the third heavens! The explanation of this is that food is for the whole Body, not merely for one member alone. We do not eat food simply for the sake of our arm; neither should we think that the hand can eat food by itself. No, the food is to be eaten by the Body, and the food is for the Body. The principle is that eating is for the Body, not just for the members. Therefore, the best way to pray-read is with other members of the Body. You will profit by pray-reading alone, but you will see the difference when you come together with other brothers and sisters.

When we come together to pray-read with other brothers

and sisters, there are four words we must remember: quick, short, real, and fresh. First we need to pray quickly, without hesitating. When we are quick to pray, we have no time to use our mind and to consider. Then our prayers must be short, because long prayers need some composition. We must forget about composing a long prayer and just utter a phrase or a sentence. Do it in a quick and short way. And we also need to be real, not pretending. Say something in a real way. Finally, our prayers must be fresh, not old. The best way to be fresh is not to pray with our own words, but with the words of the Bible. Every part and every line of this book can be used as a prayer, and it will be the freshest prayer!

Thousands have proven that this is the right way to come to the Word of God. It has revolutionized their lives. It may seem awkward at first, but with practice and a sincere heart, you will touch the living Spirit. If you will try this both privately and corporately, you will be able to testify of the riches of Christ that have been imparted to you by pray-reading the Word of God. You will see blessing and growth in your spiritual life. There will be a great change. By contacting the Word in this way to enjoy Christ and be nourished by Him, you will be a person growing to maturity, full of life and saturated with this living One.

ABOUT TWO SERVANTS OF THE LORD

We thank the Lord that the ministry of Watchman Nee and his co-worker Witness Lee to the Body of Christ has been a blessing to the Lord's children on all of the continents on the earth for more than 80 years. Their writings have been translated into many languages. Our readers have asked us many questions about Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. In answer to their questions we present this brief sketch of the life and work of these two brothers.

Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee received Christ at the age of seventeen. His ministry is well known among seeking believers all over the world. Many have received help from his writings concerning the spiritual life and the relationship between Christ and His believers. However, not many people know about another equally crucial aspect of his ministry, which stressed the practice of the church life and the building up of the Body of Christ. Brother Nee wrote many books concerning both the Christian life and the church life. Until the end of his life Watchman Nee was a gift given by the Lord for the unveiling of the revelation in God's Word. After suffering twenty years in prison for the Lord in mainland China, he died in 1972 as a faithful witness of Jesus Christ.

Witness Lee

Witness Lee was the closest and most trusted co-worker of Watchman Nee. In 1925, at the age of nineteen, he experienced a dynamic spiritual regeneration and consecrated himself to the living God in order to serve Him. From that

time he began to study the Bible intensively. During the first seven years of his Christian life he was greatly influenced by the Plymouth Brethren. Then he met Watchman Nee, and for the next 17 years, until 1949, he was a co-worker of Brother Nee in China. During the Second World War, when China was occupied by Japan, he was imprisoned by the Japanese and suffered for his faithful service to the Lord. The ministry and work of these two servants of God brought in a great revival among the Christians in China, which resulted in the spreading of the gospel throughout the country and in the building up of hundreds of churches.

In 1949 Watchman Nee called together all his co-workers who were serving the Lord in China and commissioned Witness Lee to continue the ministry outside the mainland, on the island of Taiwan. During the following years, due to the blessing of God in Taiwan and in Southeast Asia, more than one hundred churches were established.

In the early 1960s Witness Lee was led by the Lord to move to the U.S.A., where he ministered and worked for the benefit of the Lord's children for more than 35 years. He lived in the city of Anaheim, California, from 1974 until he went to be with the Lord in June 1997. Through the years of his work in the U.S.A. he published more than 300 books.

The ministry of Witness Lee is especially helpful to seeking Christians who desire a deeper knowledge and experience of the unsearchable riches of Christ. By opening the divine revelation in the entire Scriptures, Brother Lee's ministry reveals to us how to know Christ for the building up of the church, which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all. All the believers should participate in this ministry of building up the Body of Christ so that the Body can build itself up in love. Only the accomplishing of this building can fulfill the Lord's purpose and satisfy His heart.

The main characteristic of the ministry of these two brothers is that they taught the truth according to the pure word of the Bible.

The following is a brief description of the major beliefs of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee:

1. The Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation, infallible and God-breathed, verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.
2. God is the only one Triune God—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—equally co-existing and mutually coinhering from eternity to eternity.
3. The Son of God, even God Himself, was incarnated to be a man by the name of Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, that He might be our Redeemer and Savior.
4. Jesus, a genuine Man, lived on the earth for thirty-three and a half years to make God the Father known to men.
5. Jesus, the Christ anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, died on the cross for our sins and shed His blood for the accomplishing of our redemption.
6. Jesus Christ, after being buried for three days, was raised from the dead, and forty days later He ascended into heaven, where God made Him the Lord of all.
7. After His ascension Christ poured out the Spirit of God to baptize His chosen members into one Body. Today this Spirit moves on the earth to convict sinners, to regenerate God's chosen people by imparting into them the divine life, to dwell in the believers of Christ for their growth in life, and to build up the Body of Christ for His full expression.
8. At the end of this age Christ will come back to take up His believers, to judge the world, to take possession of the earth, and to establish His eternal Kingdom.
9. The overcoming saints will reign with Christ in the millennium, and all the believers in Christ will participate in the divine blessings in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth for eternity.

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