

MUTUAL PERFECTING IN THE GROUPS IN THE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE

- We need to practice having definite teaching and perfecting of one another in the experiences of life in our group meetings
- To have this fellowship and perfecting, we need to be able to share our real and up-to-date learning in the experiences of life
- We need to put the teachings that we have heard into practice in order to grow in life

Too often we help the brothers in the church only in a general way. In the church we may have message after message every week, but some brothers have been listening to messages for fifty years without learning much because the teaching is too general. It is right to take a certain period of time in a local church to deal with the stages of spiritual experience. We may need six months to deal with the real experience of regeneration, helping people to be clear what regeneration is and how they can know its experience. We need another period of time to deal with consecration. We need period after period in this way for a number of years. Then we will see a local church built up with a group of believers who have the real experiences. They know what regeneration is, they have experienced it, and they know how to help people with it. Likewise, they know what consecration is, they have this experience, they live in it, and they know how to help new converts to go on. The believers will have not merely a certain desire or love but the experience of life, the genuine learning, the discipline, and the practice. Such a church is a proper church.

An Illustration of Meeting in Small Groups for Fellowship and Practice

It is better to divide our meeting into groups of ten or fifteen and let one or two who have some progress in the growth of life take care of each group. Then the ones in the group can share and fellowship with one another, not about other things but about the instruction the church has received from the Lord. Week after week there should be... meetings for the saints to come together in this way. This will be very practical and very helpful. There may be ten or twelve people in a group, but after three months there may be eighteen or twenty. Then more leading ones will be produced. After five or six months we may have to divide a group into two

groups of ten, each with some leading ones. In this way the saints will constantly learn to grow, and there will be the continual increase of numbers.

I say again, it is in this way that the saints will grow in life, our numbers will be increased, and the useful ones, the leading ones, will be produced. Then spontaneously all the members will be functioning members. Everyone will learn to function by growth. It will not be like today's Christianity, in which everyone sits while one person speaks. A brother once incorrectly called me a "pastor." I told him, "Brother, if I am a pastor, you must be the pastor of the pastor." We are all functioning brothers. I have my function, and you have yours. I have my ministry, and you have yours. I have my responsibility, and you have yours.

To say this is easy, but we must put it into practice. The proper way to practice this is what I have shared with you in this message...We can come together one or two times a week for practice meetings. In this meeting there are no messages or teachings. We simply practice all the instruction we have received from the messages.

Many of you have studied in college or in graduate school. In college many students spend more time in the lab than in the classroom. Without the lab the classroom does not mean much. We need to put what we have been instructed with into practice. In addition, we also will help others and practice the outreach to unbelievers or believers. This is very practical. Do not have the expectation of coming only to listen to more and more doctrines. You have been listening to many doctrines, but what help is it? We have to put all the things that we have heard, the things that are necessary for the experience of Christ, into practice, and we should forget about the things that are not necessary.

Examples of Meeting Together to Testify of Our Experience

In order to put this into practice, we need to have the meetings. The most profitable and proper way to meet is to fellowship with one another according to the instruction we have received. Someone may ask a brother, "Do you realize that we have to exercise our spirit to contact Christ, walk in

the spirit, and take Christ as our life in a practical way?" Then the brother can testify how he has experienced Christ as the life-giving Spirit by exercising his spirit. This should not be a testimony about what happened twenty years ago. It should be a testimony of the brother's recent experience. Moreover, it should be something real, not mere knowledge. Simply to repeat the points of a message means nothing. We may compare the speaking of knowledge to teaching someone to drive a car. If we tell a person only how to turn the steering wheel, he still will not know how to drive; rather, he needs practice.

We also have seen that in order to experience Christ in a living way, we have to deal with our conscience. Our conscience must be pure, purged, good, and without offenses. This is the instruction of dealing with our conscience. It is brief, because even the apostles did not give long messages in the New Testament. To put this into practice, we can ask a brother, "Would you please tell us what your experience is of dealing with your conscience?" It is all right to put the brothers on a little test. Some may say that this will scare people away. This is not a problem because whoever does come will come with a sincere heart and not just listen as a "pew member." What is the good of listening like this even for twenty years?

I am not without the experience of these things. I experienced the vanity of the mere teachings in Christianity, so I know that today we need the real practice and the real experience of Christ. When we say that we need to deal with our conscience, the church [groups] must immediately help the saints to put this instruction into practice, and everyone should practice dealing with his conscience. Then we may ask a brother to give a testimony of dealing with his conscience. This is the proper way. If by the Lord's grace we take this way, then week after week and month after month the saints will grow in life.

We have said that the inner anointing is the heavenly, spiritual, divine "painting." Through this strange language we have received the instruction; however, I am concerned that even after five months not many of us have practiced the inner anointing. This is another example of how the leading ones need the experience to take the right way. It is easy simply to read a

certain chapter and a certain verse and speak about a certain subject. To help the brothers and sisters to go on in a practical way, however, requires that we have the real experience. I hope that the church will take this way. (*Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life*, Ch. 3 & 18)

Fellowship Questions:

1. Why may a group meeting be a better setting for practical learning than in a large ministry meeting?
2. How do we know if we have definite learning and experience related to a certain experience of life?
3. How may we create a setting in our group so that mutual teaching and asking can take place? What prevents us from having such an atmosphere in our group meetings?
4. Why is it important for some of our testimonies related to experience of life to be recent, and not "from twenty years ago?"