

BUILDING UP A MORE INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP BY CONTACTING ONE ANOTHER IN TWOS AND THREES OUTSIDE OF THE MEETINGS

- We need a breakthrough in practicing the one accord by learning to open to one another and to be grouped together
- We can contact one another during the week and meet together in twos and threes outside of the meeting to build up a more intimate fellowship with one another and shepherd one another in specific ways
- Building up the one accord through this kind of contact will be our impact in the gospel and cause those we shepherd to similarly practice to be blended together in groups

Our Needing a Breakthrough in Being Grouped Together

Among us there is a great need for a breakthrough to allow the Lord to carry out the grouping. From the very beginning in the four Gospels, when the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples, He did not send them one by one; rather, He always sent them two by two, grouping them together...According to the proper interpretation of the New Testament, the one accord is the one Body. We must practice the principle of the Body; then we will have the one accord. Although we may not fight with one another, we still may not have the one accord...It is difficult for us to open ourselves to one another, but it is even more difficult, after listening to one another's fellowship, to speak something in response in a way that is frank and full of love. After coming together in our groups, we should be free to tell the others concerning our inward situation with the Lord. Likewise, the others should be free to respond. Because we are afraid to expose ourselves and are afraid of offending others, we pretend with one another and are unwilling to let people know our real situation. We need the intimate and thorough fellowship. Of course, we need to be careful concerning what we open to one another...I do not mean that we should open ourselves in a careless way. Nevertheless, we need to find a way to be blended. Otherwise, the Lord has no way out of our present situation. We need to be blended until we have an intimate love for one another. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 10)

Learning to Open to One Another in Twos or Threes

[Besides meeting with one another in a larger group], you may have two or three [you can meet with outside the meeting]. You two or three should come together and pray and get to know each other. Although you may have met in the same church for years, you may not know how many children each

other has. Furthermore, you may not know that the wife of one of the brothers has been ill for a considerable time. If you had been practicing the proper grouping, within one hour after one of the group members became ill, you would have known it. In grouping together, the first thing to do is to know one another. Whenever you come together, you should ask concerning the present situation of each group member. We may say that we know each other, but actually we do not. When one of our family members is sick, we may avoid telling others. We may say that everyone in our family is well when actually some are not well. Instead of opening our situation to one another, we hide things from one another.

After opening to one another concerning our present situation, we should pray for one another and care for and help one another. This is a further step in the practice of the group meetings. Because we do not open ourselves to one another and do not have the mutual care for one another, we have lost our impact. If you will practice the new way, immediately you will have the impact. After forming a group, you should not go the next day to visit people by knocking on new doors. Rather, the group members should pray together...When we come together to fellowship, we still do not fully open ourselves to one another. Thus, there has been little result from our fellowship. It seems that the Lord is not with us, or that He is with us only partially. Yes, the Lord is gracious, and He is broad. He takes care of us, but that does not mean that He is happy with us. He is happy with us to the extent that we open ourselves to our fellow members. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 2)

Contacting One Another Outside of the Meetings to Build Up More Intimate Fellowship and Shepherd One Another Specifically

We need to build up an intimacy with all the members of our group. To do this, one sister may call another during the day for a few minutes of contact and fellowship. If we love one another, we will always feel that we miss one another. If we would contact one another in this way, we will see the difference. We will be enlivened and stirred up to love the Lord. Our hearts will also be softened toward one another, and we will be able to receive something from one another.

The way to have an intimate and thorough fellowship is to exercise our spirit. Whenever we speak something in fellowship, we need to exercise our spirit. According to my observation, a number of saints have the teaching concerning exercising the spirit, but in practice they do not have the reality. For the proper fellowship we need to exercise our spirit with much and

thorough prayer. In the vital groups we need to fellowship concerning our status, our spiritual condition, and our present situation in and with the Lord. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 10)

Let us have more specific fellowship concerning how to [contact one another outside of the meetings]. First, we must pray for [one another]. If we want to bring someone to God, we must first go to God on their behalf. We should mention them by name to God...and pray for them often. Such prayer is necessary and should be specific. We should no longer have general prayers, saying, "Lord, revive Your church. Remember the brothers and sisters." It is not that general prayers are not effective but that the effectiveness of our prayers depends on how specific they are...Instead of general prayers, we need to bring the believers by name to the Lord and bear their specific burdens practically in prayer. If we love [others], we need specific prayers for them.

After interceding, we need to contact [them] personally. We will know their true situation by contacting them. We will know their occupation, their family, their financial situation, any marital problems, their children's education, and their spiritual condition. We can be clear concerning others only after we have personal contact with them. Such contact will guide our prayers and deepen our burden. Knowing [one another's] actual situation is the base for intercession.

A brother may consecrate himself to the Lord but not know what he should do next. If we know his situation, we should pray specifically for him, asking the Lord to lead the brother in a definite way. Some may ask what the definite way should be. A consecrated person should know assuredly that he needs to forsake everything and that he has consecrated his strength, time, and energy to the Lord for His use. This is definite. Some believers make decisions concerning their finances immediately after their consecration. They say to the Lord, "From now on, I offer everything in my hand for Your use. Not only so, a portion of my income will be separated wholly unto You." This is a definite way. These believers did not say in a general way, "I am a consecrated person." Hence, if someone has consecrated himself but has not yet taken specific action, we need to pray for him and shepherd him in this regard.

We need to contact [one another] and also pray for [one another]. The more contact we have, the more we will pray, and this prayer will cause us to have even more contact. Our contact with [one another] should be spontaneous, not rigid. We can find opportunities to contact [one another]

before or after a meeting. This method is simple yet effective. At times we might need to [invite one another for a meal]. If we cannot invite eight people at once, we can invite them in smaller groups. A married brother who has children can invite a couple over for mutual fellowship.

After three months [of contacting one another in this way, we may feel we] are able to care for some others. [Then] spontaneously [we can contact another] two or three [saints]. Therefore, this fire of love spreads quickly. This is the practice of love. (*Service for the Building Up of the Church*, Chapter 2)

Because we have never opened ourselves to our fellow members, we have very little impact. When you go out to [contact people for the gospel], even the unbelievers can sense that between the two or three of you there are some problems. There is no need for you to tell them; they can sense that you have problems. That reduces your impact. But if you are really one, the unbelievers can sense this also. They may say to themselves, "How marvelous that these three people are one. In my whole life I have never seen such a thing." That is the impact. With such oneness and impact, surely the unbelievers will make the decision within themselves that they would like to join themselves to you. Perhaps they will not understand clearly what you preach to them, but after you leave, they may say to one another, "These people are sincere. They speak what they believe, and they speak what they are." After the day of Pentecost the believers...had everything in common (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32) in order to show the entire universe, including the demons, the angels, the Lord, and Satan, that they were truly one. Spontaneously, the impact was there (5:12-14). (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, Chapter 2)

Fellowship Questions:

1. In what ways do we need to learn to practice fellowship and opening ourselves to one another? What is the way to carry out this fellowship in a way that is spiritual and not natural?
2. How can we build up intimacy with the members of our group outside of the group meeting itself?
3. What experiences have we had of practicing fellowship, prayer, and shepherding in twos and threes that could be of help to one another?
4. Are there some members in the group that the Lord is burdening you to contact outside of the meeting?