

SHEPHERDING AND BEARING OUR OWN CHILDREN AS REMAINING FRUIT WITHIN THE GROUPS

- We need to enrich the church by gaining half of our increase from among our own children, and the other half from the world
- We should not depend on large meetings to care for the young people, but prioritize personal contact in the homes
- Caring for the young people should not be a matter of stirring them up temporarily, but of shepherding them by life according to burden

Being Balanced in Our Way of Increase to Enrich the Church

I believe if the Lord is gracious to us, we will gain half of our increase from among our own children and the other half from the “sea” (i.e., the world). If all the increase is from the sea and none is from among our own children, we will not have a strong church. Paul’s generation could be saved directly from the world, but the generation after Paul, men like Timothy, came in through their families. We cannot expect our increase to always come from the world. We have to expect the second generation, men like Timothy, to come from our own families. God’s gospel does save men from the world, but we also need to bring in men like Timothy. Before the church will be rich, there must be grandmothers like Lois and mothers like Eunice who raise, edify, and nurture their children in the discipline of the Lord. If there are no such people, the church will never be rich. (*Raising Up the Next Generation for the Church Life*, Chapter 8)

Shepherding Our Young People by Personal Contact and through the Groups

If we are faithful to keep the Lord's present testimony, we must do our best to build up the small groups....People who slip in through the big meetings also slip out of the big meetings. In comparison, the effort spent on saving people in the small groups produces more dependable results than the effort spent in the big meetings. We do not plan to drop the big meetings. On the Lord's Day, when everyone has a day off, we should use the big meetings to preach the truth, spread the gospel, and seize the opportunity to propagate the work of the Lord. However, if we totally depend on the big meetings as we have in the past, we will give up the future of the Lord's recovery.

From now on we must turn and pay attention to the small group meetings. This is the foundation of the church meetings. On this solid foundation we can expand. The big meetings are useful but not dependable, whereas the small groups are dependable. I hope that this kind of fellowship will get into us. Please receive this vision and revelation. Let us spare no effort, but with one heart work in coordination to strengthen and enrich the small group meetings. Then the Lord will have a way. I know that if the Lord speaks these words into our being, the blessing will be upon us, and our horizon will be glorious and full of expectation. (*On Home Meetings*, Chapter 2)

[All] those who care for the work among the young people must pay attention to doing a personal work. The power and effect of doing a personal work with the young people are many times greater than the meetings. Big meetings do not have much effect on young people; individual contact is most effective. When you gather them together, usually all you can do is give them a message and at most a little work of revival. The emphasis of a genuine work with the young people is individual contact. If you ask me, “How would you do the young people’s work?” I would answer you by saying, “I can do it without holding any big meetings from the beginning to the end of the year but just absolutely working with them individually by personal contact.” It seems this way is fragmentary and wastes a lot of time. You may be able to contact only one person in an hour, and sometimes you may not be able to contact even one person after half a day. It seems time is pitifully wasted. Seemingly, this way is less effective than holding big meetings where you can speak to hundreds of people at once...Please remember, however, if you pay attention to individual contact, although you may not gain one person in a month or may gain only one person in two months, each one who is gained through your personal contact counts.

I hope that all the ones doing the young people’s work, whether it is bringing them to salvation, helping them to be spiritual, or leading them to preach the gospel, will pay attention to individual contact. From 1946 to 1948, when we were in the regions of Shanghai and Nanking, we did not actually have any students’ meetings or young people’s meetings. Most of our work was carried out by individual contact, yet the result was quite good. If the brothers neglect individual contact and pay attention only to

young people's meetings, I can say with certainty that after having so many meetings, the young people's work will end up with something that is only on the surface, like loose sand without foundation. It will not be able to produce any solid ones. If you want to produce solid ones, you must have personal contact. You must not be disappointed with anyone; rather, you would spend time to contact everyone individually. (*How to Lead the Young People*)

Any Work Produced by Incitement Being Without Eternal Value

As we lead the church and the work, we should not rely too much upon organization. This does not mean that we should not have any arrangement. No matter what we do or what kind of move we have, there is a need for some arrangement. Without a certain amount of arrangement, it is difficult to move; hence, there is a need for some arrangement. However, to work merely by organization is the way of degraded Christianity. Moreover, we need to pay attention to never incite or stir people up. While this may have some impact at the beginning, in the long run and in reality, inciting people has no eternal value of life. Any work done out of incitement does not last. For example, after the international high-school and junior-high students' meeting in 1987, the result in all the localities seemed quite good, but things changed with the passage of time, and now we may say that the positive situation was only momentary and that not much fruit remains.

At the very beginning of the Lord's recovery, whether in the work related to the church, the gospel, or the students, we always tried to avoid inciting people. From the time we were raised up by the Lord, we have had much experience in this regard and have seen that whatever comes out of incitement does not have the value of life. We have learned many lessons in this matter. Currently, the move of the work in many places depends too much on incitement, especially the work of the high-school and junior-high students. Besides having organization, there is arrangement and incitement. It seems that locality after locality has not paid attention to the testimony of the genuine work of life. Consequently, we need to spend some time to pray before the Lord not only for an open door in all the colleges and high schools but also for some among us to be raised up to bear the burden in life.

Crying out to the Lord and Asking Him to Raise Up Burdened Ones

We love the Lord, fellowship with the Lord, and receive the Lord's dealing. In the Lord's dealing, we receive His burden. After receiving a burden, we need to pay a price. Everyone who receives a burden needs to pay a price. Upon receiving a burden, we need to pay the price to labor, sow, cultivate, water, and take care of the new ones. Then at a certain time we will reap the harvest. This is the way to lead the church, and this is also the way to carry out the work with the junior-high and high-school students. Actually, this is the way to carry out every work. There are secondary schools all over Taiwan; I hope that the brothers and sisters will receive a burden related to the students. This applies also to the children.

We need to come together to pray specifically for the students' work that the Lord would open the door for us and raise up burdened ones to carry out this work. This is a desperate need. As for the way, the brothers' houses and sisters' houses are quite good. Moreover, if there are saints who are willing to open their homes as "support stations," it will be a proper and effective way to labor on the students. Sometimes we do need to borrow some ways, but more fundamentally, we need burdened ones. We all need to cry out to the Lord and ask Him to raise up more burdened ones. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2: Leading the Saints to Practice the New Way Ordained by the Lord, Chapter 14*)

Fellowship Questions:

1. How does the particular experience of people like Timothy enrich the church?
2. What has been your experience of personal shepherding as described in this reading? What impressions did it leave with you? If you have not experienced this personally, what have you observed in others who have been shepherded this way?
3. What specific children and young people are the members of your group burdened for? This may include children and young people whose parents do not meet with your group.
4. How can your group support this burden through prayer and shepherding?