

New Testament Recovery Version
Study Guide

For Vital Groups

Series II- Acts to Colossians

USING NEW TESTAMENT RECOVERY VERSION IN THE GROUP MEETING

The Small Group Gathering Being All-Inclusive in Nature

According to its function, the small group gathering includes nearly all of the church life. In the small groups, there can be teaching, which is related to the aspect of the truth, there can be shepherding, which is the aspect of life, and there can also be care and support, which is the aspect of practical living. In addition, in the small groups there can also be gospel preaching. If a church can thoroughly take care of all these aspects—the teaching of the truth, the shepherding in life, and the care and support in practical living— then this church can be said to be considerably established.

The Bible Being Needed In Order To Have Both Teaching and Shepherding

Teaching cannot be detached from the truth in the Bible, and shepherding and teaching are like two cords of one rope twisted together, actually being one. In Ephesians 4:11, we see that shepherds and teachers are the same group of people. If we desire to shepherd others, we need to know how to teach; if we would like our teaching to be effective, we must be shepherds. Therefore, shepherding and teaching are the two cords of one rope; if they are twisted together, there is strength. For this reason, the fellowship meeting in the small groups must use the Bible; otherwise, teaching is not done, and neither is shepherding. When teaching and shepherding are carried out in a good way, there will definitely be care and support. So the key here is how to use the Bible in the fellowship meeting of the small groups.

The Best Material Being the New Testament Recovery Version and the Life-studies

In the fellowship meeting of the small groups, we can use the New Testament Recovery Version and the Life-studies as material. Life-studies are written by taking life as the line, life as the focus, and life as the content. We all know that the Bible is a book of life, that the history of the Bible is to support the line of life, and that the characters in the Bible are to give us

examples to testify life. We can say that everything in the Bible centers on life. (*The Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones*, pp. 46-48, in Chinese)

Teaching in Mutuality

For the perfecting of the saints, there is the need of teaching in the group meetings, and in the group meetings all are teachers. There should not be a particular teacher. Even one who was saved two weeks ago can be a little teacher. ... This kind of teaching is rich and all-inclusive. Its many aspects are much better than a meeting where only one is speaking. If everyone speaks, all the saints will be happy, and all will learn. This is the way for all to be perfected. If there is someone there who is really high in spiritual knowledge and in the experience of life, he may give a conclusion of perhaps ten minutes. (*The Exercise and Practice of the God-Ordained Way*, pp. 232-233)

Being Filled in Spirit in the Meetings

I pray that in the meetings you will all be filled in spirit. Especially with those who have received grace, you must bear the responsibility to pray and be filled with a praying spirit. As soon as the meeting begins, your spirit will come forth. I often use playing in a basketball game as an illustration. When you are in the ball court, you cannot be so delicate and elegant when the ball comes. Rather, as soon as you start playing you should forget about your self-consciousness, your face, and everything else, and concentrate only on the ball and getting it into the hoop; your goal is to gain more points. It is the same in the small group meeting. As soon as we arrive at the meeting, we forget about everything else; we only remember the spirit. The spirit is our ball. We should also remember to release the light in the truth and to supply the riches of life. Our goal is that after every meeting all those in attendance, including ourselves, will feel enlightened and supplied.

Diligently Practicing and Preparing for the Material

I lay before you a simple and practical way. I hope that before every small group gathering you will simply and diligently read the verses and the footnotes in the [New Testament] Recovery Version, and you will also read the related portion in the Life-study messages. If you practice according to

what I said, marking the places that are useful and putting aside what will not be used, after six months or a year, you will become more experienced and proficient. You should realize that we are not giving an inspirational message, speaking by inspiration; rather, we are learning to apply the material we already have.

The Whole Church Pursuing And Entering Into The Material In this way

If every small group in the whole church would pursue and enter into the material in this way, it will be easier to lead the church as a whole, and the entire church will be in step as it marches forward. (*The Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones, pp 55, 58-59, in Chinese*)

The Acts Of the Apostles

Week 1 Acts 1:1-7:1

I. Key Verses:

- Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- Acts 2:21 And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- Acts 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent and each one of you be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and turn, that your sins may be wiped away,
- Acts 3:20 So that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...
- Acts 5:31 This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.
- Acts 6:7 And the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly; and a large number of the priests obeyed the faith.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT RcV pp. 469-470)

III. The Light of the Truth:

CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD

—*Actst. 2: 21; Act. 2:21 note 1, note 2, note 3;*

Further Reading: Life-Study of Acts, Msg. 9

IV. Life Supply:

Acts 2:21 speaks of calling on the name of the Lord. The name denotes the person. Jesus is the name of the Lord, and the Spirit is His Person. When we call, "Lord Jesus," we receive the Spirit.

According to the context, 2:21 is the conclusion of the quotation of Joel's prophecy, which began in verse 17. The fact that verse 21 is the conclusion of the quotation indicates that the issue of God's pouring out of His Spirit upon all flesh is their salvation through calling on the name of the Lord. God's outpouring of His Spirit is the application of the Lord's salvation unto His chosen people. To be saved is to receive this Spirit, which is the blessing of the gospel in God's New Testament economy (Gal. 3:2, 5, 14). This Spirit is the Lord Himself as the breath (John 20:22) and the living water (John 4:10, 14) to us. To breathe Him in as our breath and drink Him as our living water, we need to call upon Him. Lamentations 3:55-56 indicates that calling upon the Lord is breathing, and Isaiah 12:3 and 4 indicate that calling upon the Lord is drinking. After we believe in the Lord, we need to call upon Him so that we may not only be saved but also enjoy His riches (Rom. 10:12-13). His riches are enjoyed through our calling upon Him by exercising our spirit. This is the real worship of God (John 4:24).

When we preach the gospel and help others to be saved, we need to encourage them to call on the name of the Lord and say, "O Lord Jesus!" From experience we know that the stronger a person calls on the name of the Lord Jesus, the stronger will be his experience of salvation.

Let us suppose that someone who has heard the preaching of the gospel and who wants to be saved prays softly and weakly, "Lord Jesus, You love me, and You died for me. I believe in You." It may be difficult to recognize that one who prays in such a weak manner is saved. However, suppose someone strongly calls on the name of the Lord Jesus and says, "Lord Jesus! O Lord Jesus! I'm a sinner, Lord, but You died for me! O Lord Jesus, I love You!" No doubt, anyone who prays like this, calling strongly on the name of the Lord, is saved. He may even be beside himself with joy in the Lord for His salvation. (*Life-Study of Acts, pp. 71-72*)

Week 2 Acts 7:2-13:52

I. Key Verses:

- Acts 7:55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he looked intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;
- Acts 8:31 And he said, How could I unless someone guides me? And he entreated Philip to come up and sit with him.
- Acts 9:4 And he fell on the ground and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 9:5 And he said, Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.
- Acts 10:43 To this One all the prophets testify that through His name -everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins.
- Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those hearing the word.
- Acts 10:45 And the believers who were of the circumcision, as many as had accompanied Peter, were amazed, because on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out.
- Acts 13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.
- Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have set you as a light of the Gentiles, that you would be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth."

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 470-471)

III. The Light of the Truth:

BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

—Acts 10:44-45, 47-48; Acts. 10:44 note 1, 46 note 1, 47 note 1;

Further Reading: Life-Study of Acts, Msg. 31.

IV. Life Supply:

The principle is the same with Christ's incarnation, resurrection, ascension, breathing of the Spirit into His disciples, and the pouring out of the Spirit upon His disciples. It is not the case that whenever someone believes in the Lord Jesus, it is necessary for Him to breathe the Spirit into that one, or pour out the Spirit upon him. On the contrary, the breathing of the Spirit into the believers has been accomplished once for all in John 20. In the same principle, Christ, the Head of the Body, has baptized all His believers, every member of the Body, into the Spirit once for all in two steps. The first step was on the day of Pentecost, when the Jewish believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit. The second step was in the house of Cornelius, when the Gentile believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Let us use the making and eating of a sandwich to illustrate how the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the breathing of the essential Spirit, the ascension, and the pouring out of the economical Spirit apply to us today. In preparing a sandwich we may take two slices of bread. We then may apply mayonnaise to the bread and put on turkey, cheese, tomato, and lettuce. In the preparation of such a sandwich we go step by step. But in the eating of the sandwich, we do not take first the bread, then the turkey, and then the other elements of the sandwich. Instead, we take all the ingredients of the sandwich at once. In like manner, the six matters of Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, breathing of the Spirit, ascension, and outpouring of the Spirit are applied to us at the same time. They were accomplished step by step, but they are applied to us simultaneously. Using the illustration of the sandwich, we may say that the incarnation is the bread, that the crucifixion is the turkey, and the resurrection, the breathing of the Spirit, the ascension, and the pouring out of the Spirit are yet other ingredients. When we come to eat this all-inclusive "sandwich," we do not first "eat" the "bread" of the incarnation and then the "turkey" of the crucifixion. Rather, we take the whole sandwich at one time. We do not consider which item comes first and which comes last.

Hence, if you are asked whether you have received the Holy Spirit, you should boldly reply, "Yes, I definitely have received the Holy Spirit!" In giving such an answer we need to realize that actually we received the Holy Spirit more than nineteen hundred years ago and that now day by day we are enjoying Him by faith. (*Life-Study of Acts pp.255, 260, 262*)

Week 3 Acts 14:1-20:38

I. Key Verses:

- Acts 14:22 Establishing the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.
- Acts 16:5 And so the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.
- Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.
- Acts 17:16 And while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld that the city was full of idols.
- Acts 18:26 And this man began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him to themselves and expounded the way of God to him more accurately.
- Acts 19:20 Thus, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.
- Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears.
- Acts 20:32 And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp.471-472)

III. The Light of the Truth:

SHEPHERDING

—Acts 20:28-32; Acts 20:28 note 4, note 5; 30 note 1; John 21:16 note 1; 1 Pet. 5:2 note 1;

Further Reading: Life-Study of Acts, Msg. 53.

IV. Life Supply:

Paul's word in Acts 20:28 is very important: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood."

In Acts 20:28 Paul speaks of the elders shepherding the flock. The main responsibility of the elders as overseers is not to rule over the flock but to shepherd the flock, to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock, the church of God. The elders are not placed in the church by the Holy Spirit as rulers but as shepherds. Shepherding the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ as Christ did (Col. 1:24). This kind of shepherding with suffering will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4).

According to 1 Peter 5:1-3, the elders are not to lord it over the flock; that is, they are not to exercise lordship over the ruled (Matt. 20:25). Among the believers, besides Christ there should be no other lord; all should be servants, even slaves (Matt. 20:26-27; 23:10-11). The elders in the church can take only the leadership (not the lordship), which all the believers should honor and follow (1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17).

In Acts 20:28 Paul says that the church of God has been obtained "through His own blood." This indicates the precious love of God for the church and the preciousness, the exceeding worth of the church in the eyes of God. Here the apostle does not touch the divine life and nature of the church as in Ephesians 5:23-32, but the value of the church as a treasure to God, a treasure which He acquired with His own precious blood. Paul expected that the elders as overseers would also treasure the church as God did.

Both the Holy Spirit and God's own blood are divine provisions for the church He treasures. The Holy Spirit denotes God's Person, and His own blood, God's work. God's redemptive work acquired the church; now God's Person, the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), cares for the church through the overseers. (*Life-Study of Acts pp. 463, 465*)

Week 4 Acts 21:1-28:31

I. Key Verses:

- Acts 21:19 And having greeted them, he related one by one the things which God did among the Gentiles through his ministry.
- Acts 22:7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?
- Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you persecute.
- Acts 23:11 But in the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, Take courage, for as you have solemnly testified to the things concerning Me in Jerusalem, so also you must testify in Rome.
- Acts 24:16 Because of this I also exercise myself to always have a conscience without offense toward God and men.
- Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.
- Acts 26:19 Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
- Acts 27:25 Therefore, cheer up, men, for I believe God that it shall be so, even in the way in which it has been spoken to me.
- Acts 28:31 Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unhindered.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 472-473)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE HEAVENLY VISION

—Acts 26:12-20; Acts 26:18 note 1, note 6, note 7; 19 note 1;

Further Reading: Life-Study of Matthew, Msg. 68, 69.

IV. Life Supply:

In Acts 26:16 the Lord Jesus said to Paul, “I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me, and the things in which I will appear to you.” Notice that here the phrase “in which” is used twice. Here Paul is saying that the Lord had appointed him a minister and a witness of the things He revealed to Paul and of the things He would reveal to him. Although this is Paul’s meaning, this is not the way he presented the matter. Rather, this verse speaks of the things in which Paul had seen the Lord and of the things in which the Lord would yet appear to him.

Acts 26:16 indicates that Paul did not receive the revelation of things without seeing Christ. Instead, he received the things in which he saw Christ. In other words, Christ did not reveal things to Paul without Himself as the content of those things. This is the reason that Paul would be a witness of the things in which he had seen the Lord. In all the visions Paul saw he saw Christ. Furthermore, he would be a witness of the things in which the Lord was yet to appear to him. Here the Lord seemed to be saying to Paul, “In all the visions and revelations you will receive, I shall appear to you.” This indicates that if we only see visions and revelations and do not see the Lord, then what we see is vanity.

In principle, our experience today should be the same as that of Paul and John. Suppose that in your study of the New Testament you claim to have some understanding of Ephesians 5. However, the crucial question is this: Do you see Christ in Ephesians 5? If you see only the matter of husbands loving their wives and wives submitting to their husbands but do not see Christ, then your understanding of Ephesians 5 is very poor, even vain. You may know certain teachings in the Bible, but in those teachings you do not see Christ.... May we all learn the importance of seeing Christ in the things that we claim to see and know in the Word. (*Life-Study of Acts pp. 593-594, 596, 603-604*)