

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 EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Week 1 1 Cor. 1:1-6:16

I. Key Verses:

- 1 Cor. 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- 1 Cor. 1:22 For indeed Jews require signs and Greeks seek wisdom,
- 1 Cor. 1:23 But we preach Christ crucified...
- 1 Cor. 2:9 But as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard and *which* have not come up in man's heart; things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
- 1 Cor. 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.
- 1 Cor. 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built upon *the foundation* remains, he will receive a reward;
- 1 Cor. 3:15 If anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
- 1 Cor. 5:7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened; for our Passover, Christ, also has been sacrificed.
- 1 Cor. 6:11 And these things were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT Rcv pp. 675-676)

III. The Light of the Truth:

CHRIST AND THE CROSS

—1 Cor 1:22-24, 18, 30; 1 Cor. 1:17 note 3; 18 note 1; 23 note 1; 24 note 2;

Further Reading: Life-Study of 1 Corinthians, Msg. 4, 5.

IV. Life Supply:

I am burdened that we all understand what the Lord's recovery really is. God's intention in His recovery is to recover Christ as everything. It is to recover Christ as the unique center of God's economy and as everything to us as our portion for our enjoyment.

We in the Lord's recovery need to consider our situation with respect to the enjoyment of Christ. How much do you enjoy Christ daily? Do you enjoy Him in all the nineteen aspects revealed in 1 Corinthians? I hope that more and more the saints will be able to declare, "Lord Jesus, I enjoy You and I am very happy in You. Lord, You are everything to me. You are God's power and wisdom. You are my righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and even glory for my glorification. Lord, you are the depths of God. I pray that You will bring me further into the enjoyment of Yourself as these depths."

Human life is filled with problems and entanglements. Simply to be alive is to encounter problems and troubles. This is true not only in the married life and family life, but also in the church life. According to the human way, negotiation is the means of solving problems or resolving entanglements. A brother and his wife may attempt to solve problems in this way. However, this is not the divine way. God's way is to supply you with Christ and terminate you by the cross. Whenever there is a problem in the family life or in the church life, the natural man may immediately try to negotiate and solve the problem through conversation. By the Lord's mercy I can testify that whenever I face this temptation, deep within I have the sense that there is no need for me to talk or negotiate. My only need is to go to the cross and be terminated. Then Christ comes in with the supply to solve every problem. This is God's way to solve all the problems in the church life.

We should pay our full attention to Christ. He is our unique preference and choice. Furthermore, we need to have a proper understanding concerning the cross, realizing that the purpose of the cross is to terminate whatever we are. We need to take this cross and enjoy Christ. This is the unique solution to all problems in the church. (Life-Study of 1 Corinthians, pp. 35, 45, 47-48)

Week 2 1 Cor. 6:17-12:11

I. Key Verses:

- 1 Cor. 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.
- 1 Cor. 7:40 But she is more blessed if she so remains, according to my opinion; but I think that I also have the Spirit of God.
- 1 Cor. 9:25 And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible.
- 1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has taken you except that which is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow that you be tempted beyond what you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make the way out, that you may be able to endure it.
- 1 Cor. 10:17 Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one Body; for we all partake of the one bread.
- 1 Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you declare the Lord's death until He comes.
- 1 Cor. 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says, Jesus *is* accursed; and no one can say, Jesus *is* Lord! except in the Holy Spirit.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT ReV pp. 767-677)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE MINGLED SPIRIT

—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:16; John 3:6, 4:24; 1 Cor. 6:17 note 1, note 2;
Rom. 8:16 note 2, John 3:6 note 2;

Further Reading: *Life-Study of 1 Corinthians*, Msg. 39.

IV. Life Supply:

In verse 17 Paul says, "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The word joined in this verse refers to the believers' organic union with the Lord through believing into Him (John 3:15-16). This union is illustrated by that of the branches with the vine (John 15:4-5). It is a matter not only of life, but also in life, the divine life. Such a union with the resurrected Lord can only be in our spirit.

The expression "one spirit" indicates the mingling of the Lord as the Spirit with our spirit. Our spirit has been regenerated by the Spirit of God (John 3:6), who is now in us (1 Cor. 6:19) and is one with our spirit (Rom. 8:16). This is the realization of the Lord who became the life-giving Spirit through resurrection (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17), and who is now with our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). This mingled spirit is often referred to in Paul's Epistles, as in Romans 8:4-6.

We the believers are joined to the Lord as one spirit. This is a great mystery, perhaps the most mysterious matter revealed in the Bible. Who can explain such a mystery? Can you explain how it is possible for us to be one spirit with the Lord? Although we cannot explain it, we can surely experience it. Often I pray in the morning, "Lord, thank You for another day in which to practice being one spirit with You." What a wonder that sinners such as we can be one spirit with the Lord! The more we consider this matter, the more we realize how wonderful it is.

We have seen that in chapter six Paul covers three vital matters. These matters are so great that it takes much exercise of the spirit for us to assimilate them adequately. How marvelous that our bodies are members of Christ, that we are one spirit with the Lord, and that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit! The vision concerning this is becoming so clear that sometimes I can hardly contain myself. Let us all look to the Lord for His mercy that we may see the vision shown to Paul. (*Life-Study of 1 Corinthians*, pp. 345-346, 349-350, 352)

Week 3 1 Cor. 12:12-16:24

I. Key Verses:

- 1 Cor. 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.
- 1 Cor. 14:1 Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.
- 1 Cor. 14:31 For you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
- 1 Cor. 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace unto me did not turn out to be in vain, but, on the contrary, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.
- 1 Cor. 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- 1 Cor. 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam *became* a life-giving Spirit.
- 1 Cor. 16:18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Acknowledge therefore such ones.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT ReV p. 677)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE PROPHESYING MEETING

—1 Cor. 14:26, 31; 1 Cor. 14:26 note 1, note 2; 31 note 1;

Further Reading: *Life-Study of 1 Corinthians*, Msg. 64.

IV. Life Supply:

In addition to calling on the name of the Lord, those in the early church did a great deal of speaking about the Lord Jesus. They spoke about Him to one another and to the unbelievers. Their speaking was a way of prophesying, the kind of prophesying emphasized in the New Testament. Unlike the prophets in the Old Testament, those who believe in Christ do not need to wait for the Spirit of the Lord to come upon them in order to prophesy. From the time we first called on the name of the Lord, Christ as the living Spirit has been in our spirit. For this reason, Paul could say, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (6:17). How marvelous that the Spirit is mingled with our spirit! Furthermore, this spirit is subject to us (14:32). Because our spirit is subject to us, there is no longer the need to wait for the Spirit to come upon us. Instead, we simply need to exercise our spirit. Surely the Christians in the beginning of the church life exercised their spirit to speak to one another and to unbelievers on behalf of the Lord.

Whenever we gather together in the meetings of the church, we should exhibit what we daily enjoy of the Lord. In an exhibition people manifest or display something they have or have produced. It is possible to exhibit only what we have, not what we do not have. The proper Christian meeting should be an exhibition of our Christian life. It should be a display of the riches of Christ we experience in our daily walk. If we exercise our spirit to contact the Lord daily, then in the church meetings we shall have something of Christ to share with the saints.

I have the full assurance that the Lord intends to recover our intimate daily contact with Himself and our living by Him. In particular, I expect the Lord to gain the young people in this regard because they are less under the influence of tradition. Let us all rise up to repudiate traditional Christianity. If we repudiate the religious traditions and care only for the living Christ, we shall have a proper spirit, a spirit of power, love, and a sober mind. Then in the meetings we shall bubble over with the Spirit. The more we speak of the Lord, the more we shall have to say. (*Life-Study of 1 Corinthians*, pp.576-577, 582)

Week 4 2 Cor. 1:1-19:27

I. Key Verses:

- 2 Cor. 1:4 Who comforts us in all our affliction that we may be able to comfort those who are in every affliction through the comforting with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- 2 Cor. 1:21 But the One who firmly attaches us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God.
- 2 Cor. 3:6 Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, *ministers* not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.
- 2 Cor. 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.
- 2 Cor. 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.
- 2 Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart; but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner *man* is being renewed day by day.
- 2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;
- 2 Cor. 5:15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT ReV p. 759)

III. The Light of the Truth:

CONSECRATION

—2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 5:14 note 2, note 4; 15 note 1, note 2;

Further Reading: *Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, Msg. 36.

IV. Life Supply:

In 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul goes on to say, “For the love of Christ constrains us.” Once again the word “for” indicates a connection, a continuation. We are ambitious to please the Lord, for His love is constraining us. The love of Christ in verse 14 is the love which was manifested on the cross through His death for us.

The Greek word rendered constrains literally means presses on from all sides, holding to one end, forcibly limiting, confining to one object within certain bounds, shutting up to one line and purpose, as in a narrow, walled road. The same Greek word is used in Luke 4:38; 12:50; Acts 18:5; and Philippians 1:23. In such a way the apostles were constrained by the love of Christ to live to Him and to be well-pleasing to Him.

We have seen that to be constrained means to be pressed from all sides and held to one end. When we are constrained, we are limited, as if walking on a narrow, walled road, and forced to go in a certain direction. Although we love the Lord, we are not always willing to take His way. Without being walled in by Him, we probably would have escaped from Christ and the church. But the love of Christ constrains us; it presses us from every side and holds us to one goal. We have no other way. There is no other way for us to take. Actually, this is not our choice. If the choice had truly been ours, we all would probably be somewhere else today. No, it is not up to us to make the choice; it is the love of Christ that constrains us.

According to 5:14 and 15, the love of Christ constrains us to live to Him. Verse 15 says, “And He died on behalf of all, that those who live may no longer live to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and has been raised.”

If we would live to the Lord, we must deny our outward man. The outward man is the flesh. When we live to Christ, we do not live by our outward man, by our flesh. This means that living to Christ requires that we live by our inward man, by our regenerated spirit. (*Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, pp.317-318,320)

Week 5 2 Cor. 6:1-13:14

I. Key Verses:

- 2 Cor. 6:14 Do not become dissimilarly yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?
- 2 Cor. 8:2 That in much proving of affliction the abundance of their joy and the depth of their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.
- 2 Cor. 9:10 Now He who bountifully supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and cause the fruits of your righteousness to increase.
- 2 Cor. 10:13 But we will not boast beyond *our* measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.
- 2 Cor. 11:2 For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you* as a pure virgin to Christ.
- 2 Cor. 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.
- 2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 759-760)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE DIVINE TRINITY

—2 Cor. 13:14; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14 note 1;

Further Reading: Life-Study of 2 Corinthians, Msg.59.

IV. Life Supply:

In 2 Corinthians 13:14 we have a threefold blessing: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." This threefold blessing involves the Triune God, for here we have the grace of Christ the Son, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

To speak of the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is actually to say that the love is God, that the grace is Christ, and that the fellowship is the Holy Spirit. Thus, we have God the Father as love, we have God the Son as grace, and we have God the Spirit as fellowship. This means that we have the Triune God in a direct way as our enjoyment. What we have is not merely a blessing from Him or by Him.

In the New Testament the real blessing is the Triune God Himself. As we have pointed out, this blessing is threefold, a blessing of grace, love, and fellowship. With love as the source, grace as the course, and fellowship as the transmission, the Triune God reaches us to be our life, our life supply, and our enjoyment. Now in a practical way we can enjoy the Triune God all day long. This is our unique New Testament blessing.

After His resurrection, Christ charged His disciples to disciple the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), that is, to bring the believing ones into the Triune God, into an organic union with the processed God, who has passed through incarnation, human living, and crucifixion and has entered into resurrection. It is based upon such an organic union that at the conclusion of his second Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle blesses the believers with the blessed Trinity in the participation of the Son's grace with the Father's love through the Spirit's fellowship.

Thus, it is evident that the divine revelation of the trinity of the Godhead in the Holy Word, from Genesis through Revelation, is not for the study of theology, but for the apprehension of how God in His mysterious and marvelous trinity dispenses Himself into His chosen people, that we as His chosen and redeemed people may, as indicated in the apostle's blessing to the Corinthian believers, participate in, experience, enjoy, and possess the processed Triune God now and for eternity. (*Life-Study of 2 Corinthians*, pp. 523-524, 527, 529)