

**New Testament Recovery Version
Study Guide**

For Vital Groups

Series I- Acts to Colossians

(The Proper Aggressiveness of the Lord's Serving Ones, pp. 46-48, in Chinese)

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.

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
GALATIANS-COLOSSIANS

Week 1 Gal. 1:1-5:23

I. Key Verses:

- Gal. 1:4 Who gave Himself for our sins that He might rescue us out of the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.
- Gal. 1:16a To reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles,
- Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ; and *it is* no longer I *who* live, but *it is* Christ *who* lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- Gal. 3:14 In order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
- Gal. 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!
- Gal. 4:19 My children, with whom I travail again in birth until Christ is formed in you,
- Gal. 5:16 But I say, Walk by the Spirit and you shall by no means fulfill the lust of the flesh.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT RcV p.812)

III. The Light of the Truth:

NO LONGER I , BUT CHRIST

—Gal. 2:20; Gal. 2:20 note 2, note 3, note 5, note 8

Further Reading: Life-Study of Galatians, Msg. 10

IV. Life Supply:

In [Galatians 2:20] Paul says, on the one hand, “no longer I” and, on the other hand, “I live.” How can we reconcile this? Once again I wish to point out that this is not an exchange of life. The way to interpret the Bible properly is by the Bible itself. This means that other verses are needed if we are to understand this verse. Romans 6:6 tells us that our old man has been crucified with Christ. This verse helps us to see that the very I who has been crucified with Christ is the old “I,” the old man. As regenerated people, we have both an old “I” and a new “I.” The old “I” has been terminated, but the new “I” lives. In Galatians 2:20 we have both the old “I” and the new “I.” The old “I” has been crucified with Christ, terminated. Therefore, Paul can say, “no longer I.” However, the new “I” still lives. For this reason, Paul can say, “I live.”

Once again the illustration of grafting helps our understanding. After a branch has been grafted into a productive tree, the branch continues to live. However, it lives not by itself, but by the tree into which it has been grafted. Furthermore, the tree lives in the branch which has been grafted into it. The branch now lives a grafted life. This means that it lives, not by itself, but by the life of the tree into which it has been grafted. Furthermore, this other life, the life of the productive tree, does not live by itself, but through the branch grafted into it. The life of the tree lives in the branch. Eventually, the branch and the tree have one life with one living. In the same principle, we and Christ also have one life and one living.

It is the same in our relationship with Christ today. We and Christ do not have two lives. Rather, we have one life and one living. We live by Him, and He lives in us. If we do not live, He does not live; and if He does not live, we cannot live. On the one hand, we are terminated; on the other hand, we continue to exist, but we do not live without Him. Christ lives within us, and we live with Him. Therefore, we and He have one life and one living. (*Life-Study of Galatians, pp. 86, 88-89*)

Week 2 Gal. 5:24- Eph. 2:19

I. Key Verses:

- Gal. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- Gal. 6:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.
- Eph. 1:4 Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,
- Eph. 1:10 Unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him;
- Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church,
- Eph. 1:23 Which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all.
- Eph. 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.
- Eph. 2:15 Abolishing in His flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that He might create the two in Himself into one new man, *so* making peace.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 812, 845)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE SEVEN ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

—*Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 1:1 note 1, 22 note 3; 2:15 note 8; 19 note 3, note 4; 22 note 4; 5:27 note 2; 6:11 note 1*

Further Reading: Life-Study of Ephesians, Msg. 1

IV. Life Supply:

If we put together all these seven aspects of the church, we see a wonderful picture of the church as the Body to express Christ, as the new man taking Christ as the person, as the kingdom with rights and responsibilities, as the family with life and enjoyment, as God's dwelling place for God to live in, as the bride for Christ's satisfaction, and as the warrior for fighting the battle and defeating the enemy so that God can accomplish His eternal purpose. This is the church.

The subject of the book of Ephesians is the church. Ephesians covers seven aspects of the church, the first of which is the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. In order for a living person to be complete, he must have a body as his expression. The Body of Christ is the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The riches of Christ may be likened to all the rich foodstuffs produced in America. These riches are not for exhibition; they are for eating. As we eat of the rich American foodstuffs, these riches seem to disappear into us. When these riches are digested and assimilated by us, they become part of us. As a result, they are no longer the riches, but the fullness. Thus, the husky young American men, who assimilate so much of the rich American foodstuffs, are the fullness of America. By means of this illustration we can differentiate between the riches and the fullness. The riches are the food which has not yet been taken into us. But when the food is eaten, digested, and assimilated, it becomes the fullness. The riches of Christ are all the items of what Christ is. When we digest and assimilate into our being the riches of Christ, these riches become part of us, and we become the fullness of Christ.

What the church does is not as important as what the church is. The church is the Body, the new man, the kingdom, the family, the dwelling place, the wife, and the warrior. What we do does not mean very much, but what we are means a great deal. In such a church as described in Ephesians Christ is expressed. Through such a church Christ, the Person, is lived out. In such a church there is the kingdom of God with rights and responsibilities and the family of God with life and enjoyment. This church is also God's dwelling place, Christ's satisfaction, and God's warrior fighting the battle for His eternal purpose. What a church this is! (*Life-Study of Ephesians pp. 1-2, 5-6*)

Week 3 Eph. 2:20-5:33

I. Key Verses:

- Eph. 3:8 To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel
- Eph. 3:17 That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- Eph. 4:3 Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.
- Eph. 4:16 Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.
- Eph. 4:24 And put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality.
- Eph. 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissoluteness, but be filled in spirit,
- Eph. 5:19 Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming with your heart to the Lord.
- Eph. 5:27 That He might present the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that she would be holy and without blemish.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline.(NT RcV pp. 845-846)

III. The Light of the Truth:

THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY

—*Eph. 4:11-16; 2:20-22; Eph. 4:12 note 3, note 4; 16 note 9; 2:20 note 2*

Further Reading: Life-Study of Ephesians, Msg. 90

IV. Life Supply:

Ephesians 2:22 speaks of the building up of the church, but it gives only the principles; it does not give the details. However, the details are found in 4:16. “Out from Whom all the Body, fitted and knit together through every joint of the supply, according to the operation in measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.” By growing up into the Head, the members of the Body have something to share with one another. Furthermore, there will be the operation in the measure of each part, and the result will be the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. In order to have the reality of this verse, we must be perfected by the gifts given to the Body by the Head. The saints are not perfected merely by learning doctrine. On the contrary, they are perfected through being fed. This feeding causes them to grow. For example, an infant does not need anything to be added on to his body to perfect him. As he grows, the members of his body develop and begin to function normally. A mother does not perfect her baby by teaching him to use the various parts of his body; she perfects him by feeding him. The more a child grows through receiving proper nourishment, the more the members of his body will come into their function. In the same principle, the members of the Body are perfected not by teaching, but through the feeding that causes them to grow.

Through the growth of life, we shall also arrive at a full-grown man and at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The fullness of Christ is the Body of Christ, Christ’s expression. With this Body there is a stature with a measure. When the Lord’s work in His recovery began in this country a number of years ago, we could see very little of the measure of this stature. Praise the Lord that over the years the measure of the stature has increased! This increase is the result of the perfecting of the saints through the ministry of Christ. However, as we all admit, we are still in the process of growth. The more we grow, the more we shall be able to function and to have the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love. This is our need today. (*Life-Study of Ephesians, pp. 753-754, 758*)

Week 4 Eph. 6:1- Phil. 3:16

I. Key Verses:

- Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil,
- Eph. 6:17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which *Spirit* is the word of God,
- Eph. 6:18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints,
- Phil. 1:19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and *the* bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
- Phil. 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ...
- Phil. 2:13 For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for *His* good pleasure.
- Phil. 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ.
- Phil. 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT ReV pp. 846, 894)

III. The Light of the Truth:

PURSUING CHRIST

—*Phil. 3:7-11; Phil. 3:8 note 3, note 6; 10 note 1, note 2, note 3*

Further Reading: Life-Study of Philippians, Msg. 21

IV. Life Supply:

After we receive the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we shall be willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. As a result, we shall know Christ experientially. Therefore, verse 9 comes out of verse 8, and verse 10 comes out of verse 9. If we do not have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (v. 8), we shall not be found in Christ, for it is having the excellency of the knowledge of Christ which makes us willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Then, once we have gained Christ and are found in Him, we shall know Him; that is, we shall enjoy Him and experience Him.

To gain Christ is one thing, and to experience Him is another. We may illustrate this difference by the difference between buying groceries and eating food which has been purchased and prepared. Gaining Christ may be compared to buying groceries, and the experience of Christ may be compared to the eating of the food we have first purchased and cooked. However, before we buy any groceries, we must first have the excellency of the knowledge of groceries. Before we purchase anything, we are first attracted by the excellency of the knowledge of that thing. Thus, first we have the excellency of the knowledge of the groceries, then we gain them by buying them, and finally we enjoy the food by eating it. In like manner, Paul first received the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, then he paid the price to gain Christ and be found in Him, and finally he experienced Christ and enjoyed Him. Paul realized that to gain Christ and be found in Him always results in knowing Him, in enjoying and experiencing Him.

You may know that Christ is joy, peace, and rest. Before you were saved, you did not have the peace. But now that you have received the Lord, you have peace and joy. By no means do I belittle these aspects of the knowledge of Christ. I certainly enjoy the Lord Jesus as my peace, rest, and joy. Nevertheless, we should not be content with such a limited knowledge of Christ, but should advance in our knowledge of Him. Oh, how we need the excellency of knowing Christ! (*Life-Study of Philippians, pp. 172-173*)

Week 5 Phil. 3:17- Col. 4:18

I. Key Verses:

- Phil. 4:6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
- Phil. 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses every *man's* understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.
- Phil. 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.
- Col. 1:12 Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light.
- Col. 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- Col. 2:6 As therefore you have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him,
- Col. 2:7 Having been rooted and being built up in Him, and being established in the faith even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
- Col. 3:11 Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.
- Col. 3:15 And let the peace of Christ arbitrate in your hearts, to which also you were called in one Body; and be thankful.

II. Central Lane:

Please read the corresponding outline. (NT RcV pp. 894, 920)

III. The Light of the Truth:

A LIVING IN UNION WITH CHRIST

—Col. 3:15-17; 4:2; Col. 3:15 note 1, note 2, note 3; 16 note 1

Further Reading: Life-Study of Colossians, Msg. 29, 63

IV. Life Supply:

In Colossians 3:12—4:6 Paul turns to the matter of the living of the saints in union with Christ. In 3:12-15 he speaks of the necessity of being ruled by the peace of Christ, and in verses 16 and 17, of the word of Christ dwelling in us richly. To live in union with Christ means that in our living we are not apart from Christ.

It is very easy in the church life to offend one another or to make one another unhappy. In the matter of arranging chairs in the meeting hall, a brother may be unhappy if the arrangement is not according to his opinion. But if we open to the Lord when we are offended and tell Him that we love Him, something heavenly will be transmitted into us. Then spontaneously we shall be happy with the one who offended us. This is an example of the peace of Christ arbitrating in our heart. This arbitrating peace preserves the oneness in the church life.

I can testify that often, when I have been unhappy with someone in the church life, I have contacted the Lord and called on His name. Many times I say, “Lord Jesus, I thank You for Your presence, for Your anointing, and for everything You have been to me.” When I give thanks to the Lord in this way, the divine transmission begins to work. After a few minutes, I may be so full that I am beside myself with joy. Then spontaneously I begin to count the one who made me unhappy better than myself. When I see him the next time, I have no problem with him. Because I experience the Lord’s transmission and arbitration, I do not have problems with any of the saints in the Lord’s recovery.

When a local church is first established, the saints may experience a church-life honeymoon. But just as there is no permanent honeymoon in married life, there is no permanent honeymoon in the church life. Friction develops eventually between the saints. This friction causes the wrinkles Paul speaks of in Ephesians 5. If we do not have the peace of Christ arbitrating in us, wrinkles will continue to develop. But if the heavenly transmission supplies us with the divine element, the wrinkles will be removed metabolically. Then instead of friction there will be the arbitrating peace of Christ. (Life-Study of Colossians, pp. 239, 564)