

**BUILDING UP THE CHURCH LIFE IN THE HOMES
TRAINING AND EXERCISE (1)**

From Gospel Contacts to Vital Companions

**Hosts' Training Reference
Material (2)**

Name: _____

Church: _____

Hosts' Training Reference Material (2)

A Word for the New Ones— Introduction to the Course

First of all, I want to present to you four questions: Do you wish to live a normal Christian life, freed from the disturbance of sin and the world? Do you wish to enter into the riches of the Bible? Do you wish to meet together with the saints and be built up with them for the Lord's testimony? Would like to learn how to preach the gospel effectively so that your family, relatives, and friends would be saved? I believe everyone will say, "Yes." If you said, "Yes," you should know that your believing into the Lord and receiving the divine life is only the beginning. This is like registering for college. What is the point of registering? The purpose you register for college is to go to school. Registration is only a procedure. You register only once, but the purpose is that you will be educated. Believing in the Lord is like registration. Having believed into the Lord, we need to receive spiritual education. After a person has received the life of God, he needs to receive spiritual education, so that the functions of the divine life in him can be developed.

This training course will last twelve weeks. In this training, you will get to know the salvation you received and some important basic truths. You will also learn how to live a normal Christian life. The majority of believers today live a subnormal Christian life. I hope that every believer can live a normal, not subnormal, nor abnormal Christian life. We are confident that this training is a very good investment for the rest of your life.

We should know that the God-created universe has two realms: one is the physical realm, and the other the spiritual realm. Before we received the Lord, our human life existed in only one realm; after we believed into the Lord, it now lives in two realms. Before we received the Lord, we had only a physical life. After we believed into the Lord, besides the physical life, another life was added to us. This life is the life of God. This divine life is just as real as the physical life, and just as functional. It too has its principles and laws of operation, just as does the physical life. In the Bible, there is an important verse, John 3:6, which says, firstly, "What is born of the flesh is flesh," and secondly, "What is born of the Spirit is spirit." We see that there are two realms here, and these two realms have many similarities. But one realm is physical, and the other spiritual. Actually, according to the Bible, the life 'born of the flesh', that is, the life that we obtained from our parents, is only a shadow of the life 'born of the Spirit'. When God created us, the main purpose was so that we would obtain the life of the Spirit. The life of the body He created for us is after the

likeness of the life of the Spirit, and it is but a reflection of the life of the Spirit. When you place a candle in front of a mirror, there also is a candle behind that mirror. The candle behind the mirror is just a reflection and an image of the candle in front of the mirror. The candle in front of the mirror is our spiritual life, and the candle behind the mirror is the physical life. Before we received the Lord, we were just like everyone else in the world; we had only the physical life. However, this physical life is but a reflection of the spiritual life. The second half of the verse says, "What is born of the Spirit is spirit." At the moment we received the Lord, we were born of the Spirit. Our fleshly life has a father and a mother, that is, an origin; our spiritual life, too, has a Father, and that Father is the Creator of the heaven and the earth, who is the life-giving Lord.

The physical life has its birth, and its process of growth. The spiritual life is the same. The birth of our physical life began with our parents, and it was not up to us. The birth of our spiritual life began with the moment of our receiving the Lord as our Savior. The life of the physical body began with our parents; but our life of the spirit originated with the Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit.

After we were born, we need to grow. This growth includes two matters: first, our knowledge and understanding, and second, our behavior. The totality of human learning is comprised of the development of these two aspects. First is our understanding, or the development of the intellect. The primary reason for us to go to school is to develop our intellect. How is this intellect developed? It primarily relies upon mankind's accumulation of learning and knowledge. Other primates or animals do not accumulate knowledge; they have only instinct. But mankind accumulates knowledge. When you go to school, you learn that one plus one equals two; this is the knowledge gradually accumulated by mankind over many years. All the other things mankind has learned make up the cumulative knowledge that has been accrued through the course of human history and culture. History and geography are both mankind's accumulated knowledge. Even though you have not travelled the whole world, some other members of humanity have travelled there before, and they produced a map, and thus their knowledge was preserved for you. Even though you were not alive a hundred years ago, but other members of humanity lived before, and they wrote history, and this recorded history became part of the knowledge of mankind. The education of the physical life first depends on the accumulation of human knowledge, and that is related to his intellect and understanding.

The second aspect of human education relates to the skills of the body, that is, the acquisition of physical skills for survival. For instance, after a person is born, he needs to learn how to breathe immediately. If he doesn't breathe, the doctor will slap his behind in the operating room to teach him to breathe. Although he had lungs while still in the mother's belly, he did not know how to breathe. Thus, he

must first learn to breathe. The second skill that he needs to learn is how to eat, first liquid food and then solid food. After he starts eating, he uses his stomach, his mouth begins to function, and his teeth begin to come out, and he also starts to use his teeth. These are skills for his growth. If a person has neurological problems, and has difficulty with these skills, he will not be able to grow.

The third set of skills that he needs to learn as he grows a little bit older is how to live together with others in groups. Some animals do not have such skills but almost every other kind of animals has the skills of living together corporately. The first skill of corporate living that he learns is how to live with his parents. Thereafter, he learns how to live together with his siblings. Then he learns how to cope with his relatives. When he is old enough to go to school, he learns how to cope with other people. These are the survival skills.

The fourth set of skills is the skills for maintaining health. For example, physical exercise is for the development of physiological functions. A person could be very tall and big, but unless he exercises the members of his body, his development would not be healthy. People today want not only to live, but to live properly, live healthily, that is to say, have a good quality of life. For a person to develop and grow normally, not only does he need the first three kinds of skills, but he also needs the skills to keep himself healthy. The reason for today's young people to learn Tai-Kwon Do, go swimming, exercise their bodies, or practice Tai-Chi is to help develop a life of health. The human life needs exercise and the functions of the physical body need to be developed. Not only do the functions of the physical body need to be developed, but the psychological functions do, too. For example, the ability to appreciate music, to sing, or to speak, all need to be exercised and developed. Only this way could the human life be healthy and full.

I spent a little time to relate to you how the physical life can be developed. Now, the spiritual life is the reality of the physical life. As there is a pattern of growth to the physical life, so also is there a pattern of growth to the spiritual life. In the Bible, there are four places that mention the term "growth." This growth refers not to the growth of the physical life but rather to the growth of the spiritual life. 2 Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation." Col 2:19 speaks of "grow[ing] with the growth of God." 1 Cor. 3:6 speaks of "God caus[ing] the growth" of the believers. This growth is spiritual growth. The growth of our physical body depends on the life of the physical body, but spiritual growth depends on God. Eph 4:13 tells us that the goal of our believing into the Lord Jesus is that we would arrive "at a full-grown man." Being saved and receiving the Lord is like being newly born in the hospital. That is a start, but that is not the goal. The goal is to reach a full-grown man. But in order to reach full maturity, one must pass through a process, just like the body also needs to pass through a process of growth.

First, we need to have understanding and knowledge. The development of the intellect, which belongs to the physical life, is according to mankind's accumulated knowledge. Spiritual understanding and knowledge on the other hand, is according to revelation. Our spirit has an understanding, and this is according to revelation. God's revelation to man is in two areas: first, what is the proper relationship between God and man? The most important question for people who study the Bible is: What relationship does God have with me? The Bible is God's revelation to man. It is not about alien planets or about things that do not matter to man. The main revelation of the Bible is about the things that matter to mankind, and that is the revelation concerning the relationship between God and man. This is one major topic. In the Bible this is included in the subject of God's salvation, that is, how man can start from his initial stage to reach the goal that God has purposed for him. Besides this, the Bible also reveals God Himself. It reveals to us what kind of God He is, and what kind of work He has done. These are God's basic revelations to man. These are the necessary and basic knowledge for the progress of man's spiritual life.

Second, just as the life of the physical body has four sets of skills, the spiritual life also has four basic skills. Firstly, after we are born, we need to have spiritual breathing. Physical breathing uses the lungs; spiritual breathing uses our spirit. This breathing is calling on the name of the Lord and prayer. Secondly, we need to have spiritual eating and drinking. Eating and drinking are more intense, more concrete, and of greater quantity than breathing. This is our contacting God's word. The word of life feeds us. The third item is our spiritual corporate living. No one can live alone in his physical life; for no man is an island, as that is impossible. Man is made to live in groups. The physical life is this way. Much more so is the spiritual life. Some people have the mistaken concept that the Christian life can be lived out in isolation. But that is nonsense. The physical life is corporate, so is the spiritual life. However, many people do not know how to live this kind of corporate life, so they need to learn this skill. The fourth item is the skill towards health. The life of the physical body has a large set of skills for health. The spiritual life also has a set of skills to develop the spiritual functions. These skills help us to thoroughly release the spiritual function and potential within us. That release is our service. Just as the life of the body needs to receive all these trainings and exercises, so does the spiritual life.

There are three characteristics to physical exercise. First, it requires regulation. A child does not require regulation when he is young. When a baby is born, it does not need regulation. But when he is three or four years old, when he starts attending school, he needs to learn that there are regulations. As the physical life, so is the spiritual life. For the spiritual life to be perfected, it needs to be regulated. Second, it is an 'exercise', whether psychological or physical. Spiritual training is also a kind of exercise, but it is not an exercise of the body, nor is it an exercise of the mind, but

an exercise of the spirit. 1 Tim 4:8 says that bodily exercise is profitable only for a little. Only the exercise of godliness, that is, the exercise of our spirit, is beneficial in all things. Third, we need training. Titus 2:11-12, "For the grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, has appeared, **training us** that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in the present age." Training is required for the release of the spiritual function; in order for the spiritual life to grow, just as it is for the physical life to grow, training is required. A child's going to school is a training, learning to play the piano is a training, practicing Tai-Kwon Do is a training. The human life is a process of training. Those who are professors, when they were still students needed training, and even after they graduated, they still needed to continue training. Live and learn. As it is the case for the physical life, so it is for the spiritual life. Every spiritual life needs training, so that they can reach the stage of maturity. The physical life requires education, and the spiritual life, too, requires education. The physical life requires training, and the spiritual life also requires training. These are the basis for our training.

Now I will take some time to describe this course for new believers. This course is very compact. The first twenty to thirty minutes will be used for studying and lecture. Then the next part is for practice and questions, and then we will have a time of testimonies. The objectives of the course are measurable. After twelve weeks, we will test to see whether we have reached the objectives. Just like learning Tai-Kwon Do, swimming, etc, all have a syllabus. After we covered the syllabus, we need to measure whether we have met the objectives. This is just like when you take a course in carpentry, after the course ends, you need to know how to use the planer, the saw, and the nails to make the simplest chair, which is the objective of the course.

This course also has two objectives. According to what we just talked about, there are two requirements as pertaining to the needs of the spiritual life. First, concerning the need for knowledge, or the need for revelation. We have two kinds of revelations. 1) What is the relationship between God and man? What does salvation include? This revelation includes God's creation of man, the fall of man, the salvation of man, the redemption of man, all the way to God's ultimate purpose for man and the consummation of man; this is the whole process of man. This is number one.

Second, what is the basic revelation concerning God Himself? In the Bible this revelation can be classified as six or seven basic items of truth. They are revelations concerning the triune God, concerning Christ, concerning the Spirit, concerning God's economy, which is His plan, concerning the church, and concerning the kingdom and New Jerusalem.

In addition to these truths, this training also emphasizes practice. Practice is to change your habits. Healthy habits support a healthy spiritual life. In the physical realm, we need to change our bad habits in order to have a healthy body. Once the bad habits are changed, the new habits can support a healthy living. For example, if you do not exercise, you cannot have a healthy living. But if you exercise, it takes a period of time before you see the effects. Every time you exercise the improvement is only a little. Sometimes we cannot see the growth immediately, but if one's living and habits are slowly changed, he will gradually see a change in his living. Once a certain degree of change has been achieved, then the new habits support a healthy living.

Every week there will be some reading materials. You need to speak according to these materials. They will also provide you with something to pursue throughout the week. Besides this, we will have a website. The materials you have can also be downloaded from this website.

Our course has twelve topics, six of which relate to practice, and six of which relate to revelation. One, three, five, seven, nine, that is, the odd numbers, relate to practice; and two, four, six, eight, ten, and twelve, that is, the even numbers, relate to revelation. The first topic is the mingled spirit and calling upon the name of the Lord. The second topic is God's redemption and salvation. The third topic is the word of life and pray-reading God's word. The fourth is the revelation concerning the triune God and His move. Number five is God's economy and consecration to love the Lord. Number six is the revelation of Christ. Number seven is the Body of Christ and the meeting life. Number eight is the revelation of the Spirit. Number nine is service to the Lord and the preaching of the gospel. Number ten is the truth and history of the church. Number eleven is vital groups and prophesying. Number twelve is the knowledge of the kingdom.