

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

From Gospel Contacts to Vital Companions

**Supplemental Reading
for Helpers**

Name: _____

Church: _____

SUPPLEMENTAL READING FOR HELPERS

General Subject:

Pasture Your Young Goats by the Shepherds' Tents

Message One

The Lord Pasturing His Flock for Its Satisfaction and Rest

Scripture Reading: S.S. 1:2-8; 2:16; 6:3; John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 5:2; 3:7; Acts 16:31; Josh. 24:15

I. "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where do you pasture your flock? Where do you make it lie down at noon?"—S.S. 1:7a:

- A. Song of Songs 1:2a says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" For the Lord to kiss us is for Him to show His love to us.
- B. After asking the Lord to show His love, the seeking one immediately realizes His love and says, "For your love is better than wine. / Your anointing oils have a pleasant fragrance; / Your name is like ointment poured forth; / Therefore the virgins love you"—S.S. 1:2b.
- C. If we ourselves are drawn by the Lord, then others also will run after Him—S.S. 1:4.
- D. She realizes that she needs feeding, satisfaction, and rest, and she wants to know where to find it:
 - 1. To follow the footsteps of the flock is to follow the church.
 - 2. If she follows the flock, the church, she will find the place where the Lord feeds His young goats.

II. "If you yourself do not know, you fairest among women, go forth on the footsteps of the flock, and pasture your young goats by the shepherds' tents"—S.S. 1:8:

- A. The "shepherd" is Christ, the "tents" are the churches, and the "young goats" are the new believers.
- B. Under the Lord as the Chief Shepherd there are many other shepherds; the many shepherds pasture their young by their tents, that is, where they live.
- C. To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in the divine life—S.S. 6:3:
 - 1. The Lord is pasturing all His seekers as lilies, taking care of them, feeding them, and shepherding them that they may grow—S.S. 2:16.
 - 2. While we seek to feed on the Lord, we have to feed others; we have to take care of our "young goats"—John 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 5:2.

III. "My beloved is mine, and I am his; He pastures his flock among the lilies" (2:16); "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; He pastures his flock among the lilies" (6:3); "I am my beloved's, and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages. Let us rise up early for the vineyards; let us see if the vine has budded, if the blossom is open, if the pomegranates are in bloom; there I will give you my love" (7:10-12):

- A. Where can we find the Lord's love? We can find it as we care for new ones.
- B. Caring for people helps us to get out of ourselves. If you are in yourself, you cannot care for others; caring for people helps us to get out of ourselves.

- C. The more we come out of ourselves, the more we see the Lord; the more we come out of ourselves, the more we see the Lord's need and even the needs of the whole earth.
- D. The more we shepherd people, the more our heart is enlarged; the more we shepherd people, the more we are able to love all kinds of people.
- E. As the Lord continues to work on us, and as we continue to come out of ourselves, we will be able to love people, whether they are younger or older than us; we will be able to love the students and even those with whom we couldn't communicate. We can love because the Lord's love has filled us.
- F. In the lover's working together with her Beloved, there is a mutual love giving forth its fragrance between them as a couple loving each other, signifying the bridal love between the lover of Christ and Christ, and in their working places there are plenty of fragrant and choice fruits, new and old, which she stores up for her Beloved in love.

Ministry Excerpts:

The Lord is working as the Shepherd to build up the church by shepherding His flock (21:15-17; 10:16). There are three aspects of the Lord as the Shepherd: the good Shepherd (10:11), the great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20), and the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4). Shepherding is not for individuals; it is for the flock. The flock is the church, and the church is the building. By reading John 21 and 1 Peter we can see that shepherding is for the building of the church.

Stirring Up the Disciples' Love toward Him

In 21:15 the Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" The Lord was here restoring Peter's love toward Him. Peter did have a heart to love the Lord, but he was too confident of his own strength, his natural strength. His love for the Lord was precious, but his natural strength had to be denied and dealt with. The Lord allowed him to utterly fail by denying Him to His face three times (18:17, 25, 27) so that his natural strength and his self-confidence might be dealt with. Furthermore, Peter had just taken the lead in backsliding from the Lord's call. His natural confidence in his love toward the Lord must also have been dealt with by this failure. Since he might have been somewhat disappointed, the Lord came to restore his love toward Him, to charge him with the shepherding of His church, and to prepare him for his martyrdom, so that he would not follow Him with any confidence in his natural strength.

In chapter twenty-one, Peter was humble and very low. Undoubtedly he was quite disappointed. Thus, the Lord came in to recover, strengthen, and restore him. It is quite meaningful that, in front of all the other disciples, the Lord asked Peter, "Do you love Me more than these?" The Lord seemed to be saying, "Simon, have you forgotten that a few days ago you said, in the presence of all the others, that although they would forsake Me, you would follow Me to death? That was your word. Now, Simon, I ask you if you love Me more than these do?" If I had been Peter, I would not have had the face to say anything. Peter simply replied, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You" (v. 15). Peter could not answer the Lord with a clear word, for he was in a very perplexing situation. He did not say, "Lord, I love You," or, "Lord, I don't love You." How would you have answered the Lord if you had been Peter? Would you have said, "Yes, Lord, I love You more than all of these"? Would you have said, "Lord, I'm sorry I don't love You," or, "Lord, I'm sorry that I boasted and was unable to fulfill

it”? Peter had lost his self-confidence and could say nothing except, “Lord, You know that I love You.” In other words, Peter seemed to be saying, “I don’t know whether I love You or not. Lord, You know. If I say that I love You, I know that this does not mean anything. Formerly, I told You that I loved You, but I failed. In fact, You told me that I would fail and deny You three times, and it was so. Now, Lord, it is up to You. You know—I don’t.” Here we see a man who had become a tested and broken person.

Charging Them with Lamb-feeding and Sheep-shepherding

After restoring Peter’s love toward Him, the Lord Jesus charged him, saying, “Feed My lambs,” “Shepherd My sheep,” and “Feed My sheep.” The first twenty chapters of the Gospel of John stress the matter of believing in the Son that we may have life (3:15). But in this chapter it is not a matter of believing but of loving. The fruit-bearing in chapter fifteen is the outflow of the riches of the inner life. Here the lamb-feeding is the nourishing with the riches of the inner life. In order to feed others we need to enjoy the riches of the Lord’s divine life. This requires that we love Him. To believe in the Lord is to receive Him, and to love the Lord is to enjoy Him. The Lord came as life and as the life supply to us. We need to have faith in Him and love toward Him. According to the Gospel of John, these are the two requirements for participating in the Lord.

Lamb-feeding is by the nourishing with the riches of the inner life, and sheep-shepherding is for the building of the church. Shepherding is for the “flock” (10:14, 16), which is the church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, it is related to God’s building (Matt. 16:18). Later, in his first Epistle, Peter indicated this by saying that growth, by feeding on the pure milk of the Word, is for the building of God’s house (1 Pet. 2:2-5) and by charging the elders to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1-4). The growth by nourishing is for the building. The Lord is still working with His disciples in this way. Today, by lamb-feeding and sheep-shepherding, the Lord is working with us for the building of the church.

By considering three chapters, John 10, and 1 Peter 2 and 5, we shall see that feeding the lambs and shepherding the sheep are for the building up of the church. According to John 10, the Lord laid down His soul for His sheep that His sheep might have His divine life and be brought together as one flock. To bring all His sheep together as one is truly the building. In 1 Peter 2, Peter says that we, as newborn babes, must be fed with the pure milk of the Word that we might grow up to be built up together as a spiritual house. Finally, in 1 Peter 5, Peter, as one of the elders, charges the elders to care for the sheep by feeding and shepherding them. Feeding the sheep is different from shepherding them. In 21:15 the Lord said, “Feed My lambs”; in 21:16, He said, “Shepherd My sheep”; and in 21:17, He said, “Feed My sheep.” To shepherd means to take care of the sheep, and to feed means to supply food to the sheep. While we are serving the Lord today, we must not only care for His sheep, but also feed them with spiritual food. It is not sufficient simply to care for and to look after the brothers and sisters; we must also feed them. In verse 15 the Lord said, “Feed My lambs,” and in verse 17 He said, “Feed My sheep.” By this we see that both the young believers and the more matured believers need the feeding. If the Lord has committed to us the burden of His flock, we must be sure to do two things—to feed them and to care for them. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 49)

SUPPLEMENTAL READING FOR HELPERS

General Subject:

Pasture Your Young Goats by the Shepherds' Tents

Message Two

The Father's Loving and Forgiving Heart, and the Savior's Shepherding and Seeking Spirit

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 34:4-5; 12-31; Eph. 5:29; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 1:7; John 10:10;
1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rev. 22:1; Psa. 36:8; Isa. 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19;
Matt. 9:9-13; Zech. 10:1; Psa. 23

- I. The lack of the Father's loving and forgiving heart and of the Savior's shepherding and seeking spirit is the reason for our barrenness—Ezek. 34:4-5:**
 - A. We need to have a change of concept through being disciplined to have the divine concept, the concept that is according to the Father's loving heart and the Son's shepherding spirit.
 - B. Our shepherding should be according to God's love toward the fallen human race; the fallen human race is joined with Satan to be his world in his system, but God has a heart of love toward these people—John 3:16.
 - C. We need to be shepherds having the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God in His divinity and the seeking, finding, shepherding spirit of our Savior Christ in His humanity.
- II. The content of God's entire New Testament Economy in His complete salvation is Christ as the Son of Man to cherish us and as the Son of God to nourish us—Eph. 5:29; 1 Tim. 1:15; Eph. 1:7; John 10:10; 1 Cor. 15:45b:**
 - A. We need to cherish people in the humanity of Jesus; to cherish people is to make them feel happy, pleasant, and comfortable—Matt. 9:10.
 - B. We need to nourish people in the divinity of Christ; to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry in three stages—Matt. 24:45-47.
- III. The Lord's shepherding in life brings us into the enjoyment of His blessing—Ezek. 34:11-31; Luke 15:3-10; Matt. 9:36; John 10:11; 21:15-17; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:3-4:**
 - A. The Lord brings His sheep to their own land and to the high mountains, the heights—Ezek.34:13-14.
 - B. The Lord brings His sheep back to the streams, and He feeds His flock by the streams—v. 13.
 - C. The Lord brings His sheep back to the good and rich pasture and causes them to lie down—34:14-15.
 - D. The Lord binds up the broken one and strengthens the sick one—34:16a.
 - E. The Lord exercises righteous judgments among God's recovered people—34:17-22.
- IV. In the matter of shepherding and caring for people, we need to practice persistently, regularly, ordinarily, and according to a specified time—Acts 2:46; 6:4.**

V. Through His shepherding the Lord brings us into the enjoyment of His blessing and causes us to become a source of blessing under the showers of blessing—vv. 26-27a, 29; Zech. 10:1:

- A. First, we ourselves enjoy the Lord's blessing, and then the Lord will cause us to become a source of blessing to others so that they may be supplied—Ezek. 34:26.
- B. The unique blessing is the Triune God, and this blessing comes to us through the dispensing of the divine Being into us in His Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—Eph. 1:3-14.
- C. Psalm 133 reveals that a living in which we, the brothers, dwell together in oneness causes God to come in to bless us with the anointing Spirit, the watering grace, and the eternal life.
- D. The day must come when we realize that in our work, in our Christian life, and in our church life everything depends on the Lord's blessing—Eph. 1:3.
- E. The normal life of a Christian is a life of blessing, and the normal work of a Christian is a work of blessing—Num. 6:23-27; Matt. 5:3-11; 24:46; John 20:29; Gal. 3:14; 2 Cor. 9:6; Rom. 15:29.

Ministry Excerpts:

Being Steadfast in Practicing

We should not carry out the home meetings sporadically; rather, we should do it steadily and continually, fifty-two times a year. Even though there may be conferences, trainings, and joint meetings, we should try not to interrupt the time of our home meeting. If one thousand homes in the church in Taipei maintain such a practice, the long-term impact and benefit will be immeasurable. I hope the elders will have a clear vision. (*Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 1: The Vision and Definite Steps for the Practice of the New Way*, ch. 6)

In order for the gospel teams to carry out a successful work, they must go out in a regular and consistent way. All school teachers know that students must attend school regularly. If the school term is four and a half months long, the students must go to their classes daily and weekly. Occasionally within one school semester students may need to ask for a leave of absence or remain home due to sickness. That is common and excusable. However, if the attendance of a class often ranges from a high of sixty to a low of thirty, it will be difficult for any proper lessons to be taught to that class. If our gospel team attendance is not regular, we may have results, but those results will not be satisfactory.

According to my own experience, only one place where I labored had satisfactory results—Chefoo, my hometown. I also worked for a while in the nearby town of Tsingtao and had a great part in the work in that church. After spending time in Shanghai for quite a long time, I went to Taiwan. From 1950 on, I labored in Manila in the Philippines every year for at least three or four months. Then I came to the United States. In conclusion, I realized that the situation was the same everywhere. Generally speaking, although the teachings we gave were not so adequate, the saints were very responsive. They accepted the teachings and did something to put them into practice. However, the results were not satisfactory. This was due to the fact that our kind of service was not carried out in a regular way. Every class that achieves satisfactory results must be regularly attended. A class of forty-five today and thirty-five tomorrow could not be successful. (*Talks concerning the Church Service*, Part Two,

ch. 8)

Being steadfast and regular

All of us know that students at school must learn to study in a regular way. No student can successfully finish his schooling by studying one night until midnight and not studying at all for the next few days. He needs to receive the proper instruction. Therefore, he must faithfully do his homework for two hours each day. By studying a few hours a day in a regular way, he will surely be a top student.

Those who go out to visit people should go in a regular way, according to their vow to the Lord. We should make this a kind of habit. As the descendants of Adam, we are all the same. One day our wife may make us very happy. Due to this we are more than excited to go out. We pray and become filled with the Spirit and go our rejoicing. Another day we decide to go out visiting, but a few minutes before we go, our wife does something to make us unhappy. So we decide not to go. Whether we are happy or unhappy, up or down, we must endeavor to keep our vow to the Lord. No appointment, friends, telephone calls, or even weather should stop us from going out. If we are not consistent in our going out, our labor will never be successful. We must have an attitude that we will not be disappointed. If we do not gain anyone this week, then we will go out next week just the same. A carpenter who does his carpentry work in a regular way will soon produce a coffee table or a chair. However, with many of the dear saints, their good reports and testimonies are like pieces of wood piled up, but where is the furniture? (ch. 10)

Practice regularly, ordinarily, and according to a specific time

Strictly speaking, we do not need everyone to serve the Lord with their full time. According to the natural law in God's creation, we cannot work continuously for twenty-four hours a day. Throughout the course of development in history, human beings have come to the conclusion that the most suitable way for our human life is to have eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, and eight hours for eating, resting, taking a walk, exercising, or engaging in other activities, which consist mostly of recreation and amusements. Without recreation or amusements it is difficult for human beings to feel pleasant, but most recreation and amusements lead people to commit sins and do evil. As Christians and as those who love the Lord, we also need to have a part of our time in our living for recreation and amusement. Our recreation, our amusement, is our church life. What a joy it is to come to the meetings to have mutual fellowship with the brothers and sisters, singing, praying, and testifying! When there is no meeting, we can go to preach the gospel to lead people to salvation, or we can visit the new ones to nourish them in their homes, bring them to the small group meetings to perfect them, and bring them to the Lord's Day meeting, teaching them how to prophesy in the meeting. This is our most noble "amusement."

I believe that according to God's arrangement, every brother and sister can afford at least two nights every week either to visit people for gospel preaching, to nourish the new believers, to bring them to the small group meetings, or to help them to learn to prophesy. If we can do this every week, we will have a normal Christian life. If we live in this way, we can bring at least two people to the Lord every year and equip them to be perfected...We must do this regularly, ordinarily, and according to a specified time; we should neither be overly zealous nor indifferent. This is to live the normal Christian life, which is the church life in the Lord's recovery today. (*The Church Life in the Lord's Recovery Today*, ch. 5)

SUPPLEMENTAL READING FOR HELPERS

General Subject:

Pasture Your Young Goats by the Shepherds' Tents

Message Three

Pasture Your Young Goats by the Shepherds' Tents

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:16a; John 21:15-17; Matt. 18:19-20; John 15:16-17;
Eccl. 4:12; S.S. 1:7-8

I. In order to minister life to others and maintain our victory for the building up of the church, we must have a revived living and a labor in shepherding that flow out from our love for the Lord—1 John 5:16a; John 21:15-17:

- A. Day by day we need a fresh consecration and direct touch with the Lord by which we speak to Him and He speaks to us; every morning we should allow the Lord Jesus, our Sun, to rise up in us so that we can be renewed—Lev. 6:12-13; Mal. 4:2; Psa. 119:147-148; Prov. 4:18.
- B. We need to be dealt with thoroughly by the Lord under His light, having a thorough repentance and confession in His presence; if we listen to the Lord in His dealings with us, we will have a timely word to rescue others and sustain the weary ones—Eph. 5:14; 1 John 1:7, 9; Isa. 50:4-5; Exo. 21:5-6.
- C. We must pick up a burden to care for unbelievers, young believers, new believers, and weaker believers—Matt. 4:19; John 21:15-17; S.S. 1:7-8.
- D. We must have a genuine heart of love and care for others as a nursing mother and an exhorting father; the disposition of our new birth is one that sacrifices our self, our soul, and even our lives for the care of others—John 3:16; Mark 10:45; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11; 2 Cor. 12:14-15; 1 Cor. 9:22.

II. Love, interest, burden, and prayer are the crucial and basic elements of normal shepherding—Matt. 5:43-48; 1 Cor. 13:1-2, 13; Col. 1:9:

- A. If we do not have love, interest, burden, and sufficient prayer for people, our shepherding would not be effective.
- B. According to our inborn nature, most of us are uninterested in people. We do not like people, nor hope to be bothered, invited, or visited by them; rather, we prefer to live on the mountaintop. This is our natural inclination. But, if we remain in this condition, we are finished as far as God's building is concerned—1 Cor. 3:12, 15.
- C. We need to love the new ones as the Lord loves them, being interested in them and caring for them; then, we need to be burdened for them and have sufficient prayer—John 3:16; 21:16; 1 Sam. 12:23; Col. 1:3

III. Whether it is in a church, a district, a group, or a particular service, a nucleus of serving ones is always indispensable; this nucleus is the fishing boat—Matt. 18:19-20; John 15:16-17; Eccl. 4:12:

- A. Prayer is the first thing that we should care for—Matt. 18:18-20.
 - 1. If the core members can gather once a week just for prayer, this will be very good.
 - 2. They should pray and fellowship with one another and decide whom should they contact.

B. The nucleus needs to have a clear goal—to save people and make them part of their nucleus—Acts 2:42, 46-47.

IV. *The Twelve-Week New Believers' Training Lessons* helps the new believers to grow and advance in life, truth, and the gospel—Eph. 4:13; 1 Tim. 2:4; John 15:16:

A. The Mingled Spirit and Calling on the Name of the Lord.

B. Judicial Redemption and Organic Salvation

C. The Word of Life and Pray-reading the Word

D. The Triune God's Revelation and His Move

E. God's Economy and Consecrating to the Lord in Love

F. The Revelation and Experience of Christ

G. The Body of Christ and the Meeting Life

H. Knowing the Holy Spirit and Being Filled with the Spirit

I. Serving the Lord and Preaching the Gospel

J. The Truth and Practice of the Church

K. The God-ordained Way and Being Revived Every Morning

L. The Truth of the Kingdom and Christ's Second Coming

V. At the manifestation of the Chief Shepherd, those who shepherd willingly and faithfully will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory; Christ as the Chief Shepherd is taking care of the shepherding of His churches. When He comes back, He will reward the faithful ones who cooperate with Him—1 Pet. 5:14.

Ministry Excerpts:

The whole plan of redemption involves the uplifting and glorification of man. When we really come to understand the Word of God, we will realize that the term children of God is not so weighty as the term man, and we also will realize that God's plan, selection, and predestination have a glorified man as their objective. When we see the place that man occupies in the purpose of God, when we see man as the focus of all His plans, and when we see how the Lord humbled Himself to become a man, we will learn to appreciate all men. When our Lord was on earth, He said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The Lord's word is clear. The Son of Man came to serve many. Many does not refer to the church or to God's children, but to all men. Furthermore, He did not say that the Son of God came to serve, but the Son of Man. Here we see the Lord's attitude toward man.

A serious problem with many who are engaged in God's work is their total lack of love and respect for man, and their total failure to realize the value of man in God's sight. Today we feel as if we have attained great heights when we begin to love God's children. Formerly we did not love anyone. Now that we can love the brothers a little, we feel as if we have done a tremendous thing. But, brothers and sisters, this is not enough. We need to be enlarged by God; we need to see that all men are precious to God. Whether or not we will build up a good

spiritual work depends on how much we love man and how much interest we have in man. What I want to know is not whether we are interested in a few particularly intelligent men, a few who in one way or another are outstanding, but whether we are interested in man in general. This is a matter of great importance. The Son of Man's coming firstly implies that the Lord was intensely interested in man; He was so interested in man that He became a man. The Lord was very interested in man, but what is the extent of our interest? We may not think much of this or that individual. But how does our Lord look on those people? The Lord said that the Son of Man came. This means that He came into the midst of men as the Son of Man. It also means that He is interested in man, that He has a feeling for man, and that He has a high regard for man. He so values man that He took the place of a man in order to serve men. It is amazing that many of God's children have little concern for men. We cannot help but be somewhat indignant about this apathy. Brothers and sisters, do we know the meaning of the phrase the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve? We should ponder these words before the Lord. They tell us that Christ cared for man. Brothers and sisters, it is absolutely wrong for anyone to say, "I am among men, yet I have no interest in them whatsoever."

An interest in man is a basic requirement in the life of every worker. This does not mean that one picks out certain individuals and develops an interest only in them. It does not mean that one can be exclusively interested in and affectionate towards certain men. It means an interest in all men. We must pay attention to the Lord Jesus, whose outstanding characteristic is a feeling and a love for all men. He was so interested in man that He could say, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve." If we go to a certain place and insist on not being served by the men there but instead serve them, we are not far from the attitude we are talking about. This would put us on the right track with the right stand. Brothers and sisters, God's servants cannot reserve their love just for their brothers. A worker of the Lord is a total failure if he selfishly reserves his love for his brothers. Brotherly love is not the first thing on our list. It is something in addition to our love for all men. We have to have a love for all men. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world." What does the world refer to? It refers to everyone in this world, including unsaved ones and those who have no knowledge of God. God loves the world; He loves everyone in this world. This is the meaning of God so loved the world. If God loves everyone yet you do not, or if you extend your love only after a person has become a brother, your heart is different than the Lord's, and you are not qualified to serve God. Your heart must be broadened to the extent that you love everyone and are interested in every man. As long as someone is a man, you should be interested in him. This is the only way to serve God. (*The Character of the Lord's Worker*, ch. 2)