

## CHURCH FELLOWSHIP – October 6, 2019

### Announcements

- A property for a meeting hall has been identified in Fiji, but Fiji is a poor country and the saints there will have difficulty raising the total amount needed. Fiji is strategic and the Lord has used the church there to spread to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Tonga.
- A meeting for all college students has been started on every Monday night and help is needed for meal preparation. Please sign up to help in the rotation. All expenses will be borne by the church.
- The next meeting to gather and fellowship about the Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life will be Saturday, October 12th at 10:00 am here at the Bellevue meeting hall.
- We are reading chapter 13 of the Practical Lessons on the Experience of Life this week.
- The final deadline for high school retreat registration is today.
- The children's meeting serving ones will gather for prayer and fellowship (with lunch) after the Lord's day meeting on October 13th.
- Registration for the winter training has opened and ends at the end of the month. Please register with the bookroom.
- There will be a prayer and coordination time for all the saints serving with the business office (including announcements) on Saturday morning (10/26) at 10:00 am.
- We are covering week 22 (Vol. 4) in the Holy Word for Morning Revival on Numbers. Copies are available in the bookroom.
- The Wednesday night ministry meeting webcast starts at 7:30 pm and will be shown at the following locations:
  - Smith - South Bellevue, (206) 914-3447, in English
  - Chang - Overlake, (425) 830-3900, in Korean
  - Wang - South Bellevue, (425) 653-2249, in Chinese

### Burdens for Prayer

- Germany
- Meeting hall modifications - finding contractor
- District meeting
- Beginning of the new school year
- Children and YP meetings
- College work coordination-
- Retreats

<b>This Week: October 7 – October 13</b>		
<b>Morning Revival:</b> <i>Crystallization Study of Numbers</i> , week 22		
<b>Hall Cleaning:</b> Downstairs – Issaquah & Sammamish Upstairs – Eastgate		
<b>Tuesday</b>	7:30pm	Prayer meeting
<b>Saturday</b>	8:30am	Breakfast
<b>Lord’s Day</b>	9:30am	Lord’s Table
<b>October</b>		
<b>11-13</b>	JH Boys’ Retreat, Double K (Easton, WA)	
<b>18-20</b>	High School Retreat, Lakeside Bible Camp	
<b>25-27</b>	JH Girls’ Retreat, Double K (Easton, WA)	
<b>November</b>		
<b>15-17</b>	Puget Sound Conference	

**THE EXCELLING GIFT FOR THE BUILDING UP  
OF THE CHURCH**

**CHAPTER TWO**

**DESIRING TO PROPHECY**

In chapter 1 we saw that 1 Corinthians is a book on the enjoyment of Christ and that the enjoyment of Christ does three things. First, it solves the problems in the church through the work of the cross. Second, the enjoyment of Christ issues in the growth in life, which produces precious materials—gold, silver, and precious stones—for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ. Third, the enjoyment of Christ develops the believers’ spiritual gifts through the growth in life. The more we grow in life, the more our spiritual gifts by our spiritual birth are developed. The enjoyment of Christ is in chapters 1 and 2 of 1 Corinthians, the growth in life is in chapter 3, and the gifts begin in chapter 12. The development of the gifts comes out of the growth in life, and the growth in life issues from the enjoyment of Christ.

Among all the gifts that are developed in the growth in life through the enjoyment of Christ, the top gift is prophesying. This is the excelling gift because it builds up the church (14:4b-5). In the last verse of 1 Corinthians 12, a chapter on the gifts, Paul tells us to earnestly desire the greater gifts. There are many gifts. Some are greater, and others are lower. As far as the building up of the church is concerned, miraculous gifts such as speaking in tongues and healings are low. The greater gifts are the ones that are most profitable for the building up of the church.

Chapter 13 reveals that the way to apply our gifts is by love. We are not qualified to desire the gifts without love. Only love in life can qualify us for the seeking of the gifts. If we do not have a life of love, we may abuse the

gifts, using them wrongly to damage people rather than build them up. If we want the gifts, we must have a qualifying life, and that qualifying life is a life of love. We all have to pursue love.

The first verse of chapter 14 tells us to “pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” In verse 39 at the end of chapter 14 Paul says, “So then, my brothers, desire earnestly the prophesying.” The Greek word for desire earnestly is used three times in 1 Corinthians—in 12:31; 14:1; and 14:39. Paul was burdened that we all would desire earnestly to prophesy. Paul also says that we must seek that we may excel for the building up of the church (v. 12). Merely to speak in tongues is to remain in a low state, but to prophesy is to excel.

Chapter 14 also gives much evidence that to prophesy is not to predict. When you prophesy, you speak building up, encouragement, and consolation to men (v. 3). If all prophesy in a meeting, those who attend will be convicted and examined, and the secrets of their heart will become manifest (vv. 24-25). To prophesy here is not to predict but to build up, encourage, console, convict, examine, and make manifest the secrets of the heart. Among all the gifts, the top one, the excelling one, is prophesying because it builds up the church.

### **TAKING THE LORD’S NEW WAY FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

I returned to Taiwan from the United States in October of 1984 because we needed to have a breakthrough in our practice for the Lord’s interest. I realized that by October of 1984 the Lord’s recovery had nearly come to a standstill. The statistics of the major denominations in Christianity showed that many of them were decreasing in number. It is not easy to bring the gospel to a typical sinner who lives in the United States because the people have been complicated and occupied with religion, philosophy, or logic. The little increase that some of the denominations had was mostly from people who were already Christians and who had joined them. I realized from this situation that we had to have a new way to go on.

In 1937 in Shanghai, Brother Nee spoke to us the messages that are now in *The Normal Christian Church Life*. In that fellowship Brother Nee pointed out the way to meet according to 1 Corinthians 14:26. This verse says that when the whole church comes together, each one has something. The word *has* is used five times in this verse: “Each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.” When speaking of this verse, Brother Nee used the word *mutuality*. A church meeting is not a meeting where only one speaks and the others listen. This is only one-way traffic without mutuality. The church meeting described in 1 Corinthians 14:26 is full of mutuality. It is a meeting in which all the saints participate by speaking and listening to one another. Even though Brother Nee saw this, we did not find a way to carry it out.

In the fall of 1948 Brother Nee had a long training for four months. One series of messages that he gave is in the book *Church Affairs*. In this book he stressed more strongly that there was no need for us to maintain the practice of one man speaking and the rest listening in the church meetings. He said that since the pressure of tradition is very strong, we all need to push against it day after day until it is pushed out of the way. After Brother Nee shared

these things in his training, I was sent out of mainland China to Taiwan in the spring of 1949 due to the Communist takeover. From 1949 to 1984 we still did not find a way to practice the meeting of mutuality revealed in 1 Corinthians 14:26. The conclusion of my four-year study in Taipei beginning in 1984 is that we must cooperate with the Lord to fulfill 1 Corinthians 14:26.

We may think that we have had mutuality in the past since the saints shared and testified after a brother gave a message. This is better than what is practiced in Christianity, but very few of our testimonies in these meetings could have been considered as prophesying. To prophesy is to speak for the Lord, to speak forth the Lord, and to speak the Lord into others, that is, to minister Christ into people's being. This is the dispensing of Christ. Thus, to prophesy, in the New Testament sense, is to dispense Christ into people's inner man. To prophesy is not to speak an ordinary word. Prophesying is a divine oracle. In the past we considered that speaking in tongues, prophesying, and healing were miraculous gifts, but we did not realize that prophesying requires learning. We have to desire, seek, and learn to prophesy. When we prophesy, it is so that others may learn (v. 31). This indicates that we, the ones who prophesy, have to learn first. If we did not learn something, we would not be able to speak something for others to learn.

After much study and consideration I was led to the conclusion that prophesying is not absolutely miraculous, but it is a miraculous normality. On the one hand, it is normal. On the other hand, it is miraculous because it is speaking with the divine element. To prophesy is to speak for God, to have God's oracle. Some of us may feel that only certain ones can have the oracle of God, but Paul does not agree with this. Paul says that we can all prophesy one by one (v. 31). He also says that if we all prophesy, a new one who comes to our meeting will be convicted and examined by all, and the secrets of his heart will become manifest. He will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that indeed God is among us (vv. 24-25).

Watchman Nee, *The Excelling Gift for the Building Up of the Church*.

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<b>Bible Reading Schedule with Footnotes</b>	
Lord's Day, October 6 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 2:12-14
Monday, October 7 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 2:15-19
Tuesday, October 8 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 2:20-23
Wednesday, October 9 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 2:24-27
Thursday, October 10 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 2:28-29
Friday, October 11 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 3:1-5
Saturday, October 12 <sup>th</sup>	1 John 3:6-10

