

SUMMER 2004 SPECIAL TRAINING
CONCERNING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Lesson 2

***THE HISTORY AND RECOVERY OF THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY
CONCERNING THE CHILDREN***

Scripture reading:

- Deut. 6:7 And you shall repeat them to your children, and speak about them when you are in your house and when you journey on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.
- Psa. 78:5 Indeed He has established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children.
- Psa. 78:6-7 That the generation to come, the children to be born, may know them, who should arise and relate them to their children; that they might set their hope in God and not forget the deeds of God but observe His commandments.
- Joel 1:3 Tell your children about it, and *let* your children *tell* their children, and *let* their children *tell* the next generation.
- Acts 2:46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of their food with exultation and simplicity of heart.
- 2 Tim. 1:5 Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you.
- Eph. 6:4 And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord.

I. The God-ordained way concerning children in the Old Testament:

- A. God deals with His people according to households.
- B. Parents were responsible to pass on the word of salvation to the following generation:
 - 1. Adam and Eve preached the glad tidings to their children.
 - 2. Abel offered his sacrifice according to the words preached by his parents—Heb. 11:4
 - 3. Noah inherited the godly ways of his forefathers.
 - 4. Moses charged the parents to pass on the Lord's word to their children—Exo. 12:3-7; Deut. 6:7-9; 11:18-21

II. The God-ordained way concerning children in the New Testament:

- A. God pays much more attention to parents than to children.
- B. The parents in the New Testament should believe in God for household salvation and have a daily God-man living in one accord in their home and from house to house for the producing of the Body of Christ—Acts 16:31, 2:46; Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Thes. 2:7.
- C. Parents should nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them. Parents must exercise self-control and must not be loose in any way.
- D. Faith is to be transmitted to the children from the parents and relatives—2 Tim. 1:5; Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:11-12.

III. Degradation was brought in by the leaven of Judaism and picked up by Catholicism and Protestantism:

- A. Judaism emphasizes a special meeting place for worship:
 - 1. Judaism teaches there must be a sanctified place of divine worship.
 - 2. The first apostles did not put up special buildings, but seemed to ignore the whole subject intentionally.
 - B. It is a wrong concept for the parents to expect the church (instead of themselves) to build up their children.
 - 1. Development of “Sunday School”.
 - 2. Concentrating the care of the children into church buildings.
- IV. 1950: Watchman Nee gave a word concerning the parents:**
(See *Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, pp. 519-549)
- A. Parents are to bear the responsibility for their children.
 - B. Parents should have short daily times in their homes with their children.
- V. 1956+: Degradation—the churches became affected and thus unconsciously put aside the small meetings:** (April 30, 1983; Irving, Texas)
- A. Christianity’s way of Sunday school, along with its materials, teaching methods and activities entered into the recovery.
 - B. This was due to inexperience and not knowing how to educate the children.
- VI. 1967: The churches are given a warning word and a word of recovery:** (*Ministry of the Word Magazine*, Taipei, Taiwan 1967)
- A. Do not take the Sunday school way.
 - B. Sisters should open their homes for children’s meetings.
 - C. The benefits brought to the church through meeting in the homes with the children will be long term and will have unlimited impact on the expansion of the church.
 - D. The responsible ones in each locality need to see that the children’s work is a big gospel.
 - E. Every co-worker and the whole church need to cooperate in this work.
- VII. 1977: The churches are given a word of reminder and shame:** (*The Ultimate Significance of the Golden Lampstand*, pp. 55-56)
- A. Brother Lee reminded the churches in Taiwan of the word he gave them concerning the children in 1967.
 - B. Our eyes need to be opened and we should not be too busy outside but should work on the young people—junior high, high school and children.
 - C. There is no need to come to the meeting hall to take care of the children—do it in the saints’ homes.
 - D. It doesn’t have to be on the Lord’s Day.
 - E. Select some homes and practice—it is absolutely workable.
 - F. The churches would have ten thousand if they had practiced.
 - G. He told the churches that it was a shame that they hadn’t done what he said.

- VIII. 1978: The intention of Lord's Day children's meeting and responsibility for the children is clarified** (January 30, 1978, Anaheim, CA, LSM tape code 8A30PAN):
- A. We are not doing a children's work on the Lord's Day but we are doing something to help more sisters to come to the Lord's Day meeting.
 - B. The church or a kind of Sunday school type meeting is not going to build up the children. The mothers must build up their children.
- IX. 1985: A word is released concerning the children in the context of the God-ordained way** (February 6, 1985, Taipei, Taiwan; LSM tape code A5TPC32):
- A. The children's work has the function of planting, nurturing, and educating our children.
 - B. Children will grow up and serve in the church and bear important responsibilities and become functioning members of the Body.
 - C. The saved children become the gospel seeds in junior high, high school and college.
 - D. The children will bring in children and through the children bring in unbelieving families.
 - E. There is the need to be multifarious—to have the meetings in many places (not just at the meeting hall but rather in the homes), at many times (not just on the Lord's Day but during the week, after school, on Saturday, etc.) with many saints participating.
- X. 1988: A further word is shared concerning the children and the homes and one of the reasons Brother Lee was so strong to change the system:** (December 29, 1988, Irving, TX):
- A. The children will be gospel seeds from junior high:
 - 1. They will open the door to all the colleges.
 - 2. They will bring in the parents.
 - B. Brother Lee said that for 18 years all his words concerning this matter of the children have gone to the air.
 - C. This was one of the reasons Brother Lee was so strong to go back to Taiwan to change the system.
 - D. Children's meetings should not only be in the meeting hall and not only on the Lord's Day but in the saints' homes during the week.
 - E. There is the need for us to reconsider our ways and the need for a mild revolution.
- XI. 1992: A word is given in the summer training concerning the function and place of high schoolers in the church life** (July 2, 1992, Anaheim, CA, LSM tape code 2GMIN18A):
- A. High schoolers are the best ones to tell the stories to the children.
 - B. High schoolers should be used to raise up the children in the church.
 - C. High schoolers can function in the children's meetings—and it does not have to be on the Lord's Day, but on Saturdays and after school in the homes.
- XII. 1992: A word is given in the vital group training concerning the children** (October 19, 1992, Anaheim, CA, LSM tape code 2FANCT08)
- A. We should not talk to the children that much about God but rather talk to them about humanity, about what is a man.
 - B. Gradually we can lead them to know that there is a God.
 - C. The saints gradually dropped Brother Lee's opinion and everyone wrote their own set of lessons.
 - D. To care for the children is the fastest way of increase for the church.
 - E. We should not just care for the children in the meeting hall but everywhere.
 - F. We can care for them after school in the homes.
 - G. By taking the "freeway" to care for the children without a goal and strict control, the way with the children was spoiled.

Ministry excerpts:

THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

According to the Bible, faith comes from hearing the word that is preached (Rom. 10:17, 14). Since Abel had such faith, exercised this faith, and offered a sacrifice to God in accordance with this faith, he must have heard the preaching of the glad tidings from his parents. Out of that word he received faith... He presented his offering by faith according to the words preached by his parents....Adam and Eve were saved, and they passed on the word of salvation to the following generation. We also must share these things with our own children, telling them the sad story of man's fall and proclaiming to them the good news of God's salvation....Once again I say that I strongly believe that his parents preached the gospel to him and his brother, telling them of their need for coverings made from the skins of the sacrificial lambs. I believe that this accounts for Abel's desire to be a feeder of the sheep....We have seen that Adam and Eve must have told Cain and Abel about this [the sacrificial lamb] and that Abel receive their word and acted on it....Adam and Eve told their children about [God's promised salvation], declaring God's way of salvation....We have seen that Adam and Eve passed on this way [of salvation] to their children....Who told him (Abel) to offer the firstlings of the sheep? He undoubtedly did this according to the instruction of his parents. (*Life-study of Genesis*, pp. 289, 292-294, 303, 311)

How we need to see the kind of life that God can use to change the age! This life always inherits the godly ways of the forefathers. Thank God that Noah, the tenth generation from Adam, had many good forefathers....Noah inherited Adam's way of salvation....Noah also inherited Abel's way of offering... The third godly way that Noah inherited was Enosh's way of calling on the name of the Lord to enjoy all that He is....Noah also inherited the way of living and begetting....Noah also inherited the fifth way, the way of walking with God. (*Life-study of Genesis*, pp. 390-391)

THE GOD-ORDAINED WAY CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

"Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded dwells also in you." (2 Tim. 1:5)

Children live according to what has been infused into them by their parents. (*Life-study of Philippians*, p. 356)

Apart from the book of Proverbs, the Old Testament does not seem to give us much teaching concerning parenting. In the New Testament, however, Paul wrote something about being parents. Most books in the world teach children how to be children; not many books teach parents how to be parents. Most people pay attention to teachings for children. But the New Testament pays much attention to teachings for parents. It does not pay much attention to teachings about being children. Although it does teach us something about children, the emphasis is not on children. Both Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 put more emphasis on parents than on children. We should learn to be proper parents because God pays more attention to parents than to children.

If we try to summarize the words in the Bible concerning parenting, the main thing parents should do is nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them. This means that parents must exercise self-control and must not be loose in any way. This is Paul's teaching concerning the subject.

As difficult as it is to be a husband or a wife, I hope you will realize that there is something more difficult—being a parent. Being a husband or a wife involves only two people; being a parent involves more. Being a husband or a wife is a matter of personal happiness; being a parent is something that affects the well-being of the children of the next generation. The responsibility over the future of the children of the next generation is on the shoulders of the parents.

We have to realize how serious this responsibility is. God has placed a person's body, soul, and spirit, even his whole life and future, into our hands. No individual influences another individual's future as much as parents. No one controls a person's future as much as parents. Parents almost have a say in whether their children will go to hell or to heaven. We must learn to be good husbands and good wives,

but above all we must learn also to be good parents. I believe that the responsibility of being a parent is more than that of being a husband or a wife. (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, pp. 519-520)

Parents must learn to channel the ambitions of their children in the proper direction. They should aspire to be a lover of the Lord. They should not aspire to love the world. You should cultivate such an ambition within them while they are young. Show them that it is an honorable thing to die for the Lord, that it is a precious thing to be a martyr for the Lord. You have to be an example to them, and you have to tell them your ambitions. Tell them what you want to be if you are given the opportunity. Tell them what kind of Christian you want to be. In this way, you will channel their ambitions in the proper direction. Their goals will change, and they will know what is noble and what is precious. (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, p. 537)

DEGRADATION WAS BROUGHT IN BY THE LEAVEN OF JUDAISM AND PICKED UP BY CATHOLICISM AND PROTESTANTISM

From church history we see that Christianity has been very frustrated by Judaism. Once Christianity lets down its guard, Judaism creeps into the church. (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 60, pp. 473-474)

The Jews always had their special meeting places, and wherever they went they made a point of building a synagogue in which to worship God. The first apostles were Jews, and the Jewish tendency to build special places of worship was natural to them. Had Christianity required that places be set apart for the specific purpose of worshiping the Lord, the early apostles, with their Jewish background and natural tendencies, would have been ready enough to build them. The amazing thing is that, not only did they not put up special buildings, but they seem to have ignored the whole subject intentionally. It is Judaism, not Christianity, which teaches that there must be sanctified places for divine worship. The temple of the New Testament is not a material edifice; it consists of living persons, all believers in the Lord. (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 167)

To bring the meetings to the homes is the very heart of the God-ordained way. It is a great failure in the Lord's recovery if we cannot bring the meetings to the homes. For the past twenty years in the Lord's recovery, we have been bringing people to the meeting halls. The more we work in this way, the fewer people we have, and the worse the condition of the homes becomes. More and more our meetings have become a kind of Sunday morning service. In Christianity, many people "go to church" to listen to the music, the hymns, and to attend the "service," but their homes are deplorable....In the morning the family attends the service, but in the afternoon the mah-jongg game goes on in the homes. In order to overturn this degraded situation, we must bring the meetings to the homes. (April 1986 in Taipei, Taiwan in *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 3, No. 3; March 1999, pp. 14-15)

APRIL 1967—TAIWAN

According to the statistics, 45% of the population in Taiwan is children. The number is close to six million people. Many children are of our brothers and sisters. Now there are 72 localities in Taiwan. To estimate conservatively, [there are] 10,000 children of the church in Taipei plus 10,000 children of all the other localities are 20,000 children in total. If we work on these 20,000 children now, after 6 years, they will become the young brothers and sisters (with the average increase of 3,000 or 4,000 persons each year) Now you know how crucial the children's work is for the increase of the church...Ask the sisters to try their best to open their families for the children's group meetings. (*From an unpublished message by Witness Lee in Taiwan Co-workers Conference, April 1967, Copyright, Living Stream Ministry*)

OCTOBER 1977—TAIWAN

Starting from 1966 and 1967 I have been talking about this very matter (taking care of the children and young people) and have been expecting the church to practice it, because we do have the basic strength to work it out. If we had worked from that time until now, 1977, ten thousand children would have become high schoolers of sixteen to seventeen years of age...It is a pity that you did not practice what I said!

When they asked me concerning a place for the children to meet, I said, "There is no need to go to the meeting hall, and it is not necessary to meet on the Lord's Day. You can meet on Saturdays or in the

evenings. You can simply meet in the homes of the brothers and sisters. Out of the eight thousand families, you can choose three to four hundred homes to be the places for the children's meetings, with each home holding thirty children." (*The Ultimate Significance of the Golden Lampstand*, pp. 55-56)

JANUARY 1978—ANAHEIM

Of course, basically, none of the saints should depend upon others to build up their children. Every mother has to depend upon herself to build up the children. I would say this strongly that any mothers who would depend upon others for the building up of her children then she is not a good mother. She could never get a success. The children could never be built up by others, by anyone other than the mother. Encourage all the mothers to learn to even to discipline herself to know how to take care of the children. To depend upon others for a kind of Sunday school for a kind of other meeting to build up your children for you is altogether not healthy. From the beginning we have torn down this concept...The church is not going to build up your children...No meeting, no work is going to build up your children. As a mother you must bear the burden to build up the children by yourself. If you do not [know how] you have to learn. You have to get yourself disciplined for this work otherwise you could never be a successful mother and you could never be successful in building up your children. So forget about the thought, the concept that you would depend upon the church to have certain kind of meeting to build up your children. You have to drop this thought. This is a wrong thought.

So all the years, over 40 years, everywhere I was, I would propose to the children meeting just to give them a little bit knowledge of the Bible. Not too heavy. And a little bit knowledge of God. And a little bit knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And a little knowledge of the Lord's redemption. And a little bit knowledge of the fall of man, of the Lord's salvation. We have to spend most of the time to give them the impression how to be a human being.... But tell you the truth, even up to now, not one church has ever done the thing according to what I proposed! (*From an unpublished message by Witness Lee in Anaheim, January 30, 1978, Copyright, Living Stream Ministry*)

JANUARY 1985—TAIWAN

As for Taipei, when I came back in 1965, I saw many children. According to the brothers, the number in the children's meeting was 4,000 during 1966 and 1967. But now, the actual attendance of the children is a little over 500 in the 21 halls in Taipei. This situation is like the sun setting down! For this, I often reminded the brothers a few years ago to pay attention to the children.

Since children's work is so crucial, how should we do it? There is no definite way of doing it. According to my past experiences, in a large local church like Taipei, with three to four thousand meeting, the children's work cannot be in a single aspect, but rather it must be in many aspects. The place, time and date, all must be multi-faceted. The goal is multi-faceted. Even the material should also be multi-faceted and not uniform. Take the place as an example, if the children's meetings must be concentrated in the meeting hall, this way will kill half of the meeting. The work following also could not be carried out. Why? Firstly, the children cannot make it. Secondly, there is not enough room in the meeting hall. In the church in Anaheim, there are more than ten rooms for children's meetings, yet they still cannot meet the need. But these rooms are also only occupied for a few hours a week, and are costly to build, yet the rest of the time they are vacant. This way is rather foolish. Even if we can provide that many rooms, to require all of the children to come to the meeting hall at the same time is not that easy. Therefore, the meeting place must be multi-faceted.

In my fellowship with the brothers here, I found out a most profitable advantage. It is to do like the way we have for widely preaching the gospel. That is every brother and sister must open their home to have children's meeting. If you do not have children at home, it will be up to you whether you open your home or not, but I feel it is good for you to have a burden to open. I surely know that generally the older sisters do have the burden for the children. If, in the case of you older sisters, your children are all abroad, and only the old husband and wife remain at home, and the environment also allows it, why don't you joyfully do it? Open your living room, invite five or six children from the neighborhood, and you will have a children's meeting at your house. You do not have to worry how to teach them. We will prepare the material. (*From an unpublished message by Witness Lee in Taipei, Taiwan, January 1985, Copyright, Living Stream Ministry*)

NOVEMBER 1987--TAIWAN

In the past the children's meetings was always held in the meeting hall....I hope that more people will receive the burden to open their homes to take care of the children. **Twenty years ago I said that we should have ten thousand children in Taipei, and then ten years later we would have ten thousand young brothers and sisters. If the saints had taken this word and practiced it, we would have twenty to thirty thousand young people today.** Moreover, gaining people in this way is every safe, because they are taught by us and received the gospel from us from their youth. Thus, they should be very solid. If this were the case, many young saints would not need to put aside their gospel work at school to do the children's work. I hope that from now on the elderly saints would pick up the burden and take the lead to do this in their homes. The effect will be very promising in the long run. (*Being Up-to-Date for the Rebuilding of the Temple*, pp. 46-47)

DECEMBER 1988—IRVING

In 1966 I charged some leading ones there in Taipei. Now, just in Taipei the church has at least one or two thousand families with more than five thousand active members. It is easy for the church to have a church children's meeting. It is very quick there. **You could have ten thousand children. From the age of seven, after six years, up to the age of twelve or thirteen, at that time it is good for all these to believe in the Lord Jesus and be baptized. Then in six years ten thousand young believers become the gospel seed in the junior high. Then in high school the numbers will be doubled. After six years they graduate from high school and double again. These become the seed of the gospel in the colleges. This will open the door to all the colleges and this will bring in the parents. This is at most sixteen years. You will get at least forty to fifty thousand new members through this. But my word just went to the air.** From 1966 to 1984 eighteen years have passed. Now less than one thousand are in the children's meeting. **This is one reason I became so strong to change the way.**

I myself never did any children's meeting work. But for years I have been watching over this. 1) To my observation the children's meeting should not only be in one of the halls and not only on Sunday morning it should be taken care of in the saints' homes. (*From an unpublished message by Witness Lee in Irving, Texas, December 29, 1988, Copyright, Living Stream Ministry*)

FEBRUARY 1989—SACRAMENTO

Question: How could we bring the children and the young people into the church life?

Answer: We need to study the children and the young people's situation. **Thus far the way to take care of the children should be absolutely improved. The way to take care of the children is too natural. This is very important. In 1966 I told the church in Taipei to take care of the children. After a time they would have had 10,000 young believers, but they did not do it.** They did not have the way. Now we charged the older sisters to hold children's meetings in their homes. (*From an unpublished message by Witness Lee in Sacramento, California, February 14, 1989, Copyright, Living Stream Ministry*)

JULY 1992—ANAHEIM

I do believe the high schoolers can tell stories in the best way....But by the way I like to say a word to all the churches. We have children, we have children. We must study how to work on the children. 1965 and '66, this was about quarter century ago, I went back to Taiwan. I noticed that the church in Taipei has a great membership. Among the great membership, too many families, too many families. Suppose each family in the average would have two children, the church in Taipei would have a children's meeting at least over 4000. So I said to them, you can easily get 10,000 children in your children's meeting. You work on them. From the age of 4 or 5 you work on them -for twelve years or for ten years, up to their 6th grade. By that time they are qualified to take the Lord Jesus and to be baptized. Then you will have 10,000 young believers within just about seven years. And you have to realize, through these children, they can contact their neighbors for the church. So the church can contact their parents for the gospel preaching. Not only so, when they will be baptized, then they enter into the junior high. They will be the seed of the gospel to sow the gospel in the junior high schools. Could you see this? Then there will be a big multiplication. But to do this you have to study a lot. You need the persons to do this. Well, the high schoolers are good helps. All of

you could be used as helpers. Even some of you, after one or half a year practice, you can be a teacher. So the church should be doing this and this is a big increase of our gospel preaching. You think about it, how many here? And it is so easy to get the children, and through the children to get the neighborhood and so forth....

Then I would say to the churches in Orange County. We must use the high schoolers to teach the children. To raise up the children in the church we use the high schoolers to do it. It doesn't need to...[be done] on the Lord's Day. You can have children's meeting on Saturday, you can have the children's meeting in the afternoons, later afternoons when the children just come back home you can have it. Try. This is one of the best ways to preach the gospel. Very effective. *(From an unpublished message by Witness Lee in Anaheim, California, July 1, 1992, Copyright, Living Stream Ministry)*

See outline for audiotapes and their reference codes that are available from LSM which contain Brother Lee's unpublished comments through the years about the children.

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