

CHAPTER THREE

HOW TO MEET

There are several kinds of meetings, but we have to pay attention to two things with every meeting:

(1) *Come early.* Those who live upstairs in the meeting hall should not wait until the first hymn is sung downstairs before they come down for the meeting. Being late for a meeting is a very unkind thing because it means that others have to wait for you. First Corinthians 11:33 says, “So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.” Not many people practice this verse. Unfortunately, many do not come and wait for others; instead, they want the other brothers to wait for them. Sometimes we wait from 9:30 to 10:00, and some brothers still have not come. I will say a word especially to the brothers living in Wen-teh Lane. Those who live nearest to the meeting place are often the latest to arrive. Every one of us should try our best to be here early, so that others will not have to wait.

There are negative effects in coming late to the meetings. First, it causes a meeting to start late and end late. The sisters who bear the responsibility for their household are late in returning home, and this delays their cooking or care for their children. Second, during the bread-breaking meeting, another brother may have called a hymn already. Because you are late, you may come in and call the same hymn again, bringing in repetition. Third, sometimes the meeting begins before you arrive. When you come in late, you start the meeting all over again. This can happen four or five times in a meeting, with four or five different beginnings. Although we can learn to remember the Lord by following the leading of the Spirit and start the meeting for the remembrance of the Lord in different ways, sometimes with His suffering, sometimes with the forgiveness of sins, and sometimes with the Lord’s glory, a person who is late to the meeting will not know how the meeting has begun, and his prayer and hymn selection will not be in line with the meeting. Therefore, it is better to come earlier and wait for a while in the meeting place. This is always better than coming late.

(2) *Stand up to speak.* For the bread-breaking meeting and other general meetings, it is better for the brothers to stand up to speak. According to Chinese custom, it is impolite for one to speak while sitting down. Moreover, one who speaks while sitting down cannot be loud, and it is difficult for others to hear him. In addition, his voice can easily conflict with the voices of other brothers. If you are sitting down with your head bowed and call a hymn, you cannot see if another brother has stood up to pray or call a hymn at the same time. At any rate, our ears are not as sharp as our eyes. If you stand up first, you can avoid the confusion of two people opening their mouths simultaneously. If two people open their mouths simultaneously, it is because both of them have not stood up before they opened their mouths. Therefore, we would like the brothers to remember that whenever they want to say something, whether it is praying or calling a hymn, they should first look with their eyes to see if anyone else has stood up before them. If no one has stood up, then it is all right for them to speak. Although these are small points, they are nevertheless things that the brothers should pay attention to.

THE BREAD-BREAKING MEETING

The first point we should emphasize is that we are at the bread-breaking meeting to remember the Lord. Therefore, the Lord should be the center. It is unsuitable to offer prayers and supplications at the bread-breaking meeting. Of course, we can thank and praise the Lord through our prayers, but we should not remember our own needs during the bread-breaking meeting. The meeting on the Lord's Day evening is purely for thanksgiving and praise.

According to the light of the Bible, there should be two sections to the bread-breaking meeting. Before the breaking of bread, we have the Lord Jesus before us; after the breaking of bread, we have the Father before us. Before the breaking of bread, the Lord leads us to remember Himself. Therefore, all thanksgiving and praise should have the Lord as the center; everything should be centered upon the Lord. Before the breaking of bread, we see the Lord Jesus as the only begotten Son; He is the only Son. After the breaking of bread, we see the Lord Jesus as the firstborn Son; we have a share in the Son of God and have become God's many sons. Before the breaking of bread, the Lord Jesus is one grain of wheat; after the breaking of bread, He is the grain that has fallen to the ground and died and brought forth many grains. By discerning the Body of Christ, we see the Lord as the firstborn Son, as depicted in Hebrews 2. He is leading many sons into glory, and in the assembly He is leading them to sing praises to the Father. This is what is described in Hymn No. 183 in our *Little Flock Hymnal*. But this should not be legal; it does not mean that every time we meet we should act this way. If we are willing to learn and follow the Lord's leading, we will be very clear that this kind of spiritual guidance always leads us step by step, onward to the Father. The Lord Jesus first led the disciples to eat the Feast of the Passover. Then they sang a hymn and went to the Mount of Olives. The Songs of Ascents recorded in the Psalms (see the headings of some psalms) were songs the Israelites sang at the Feast of the Passover after they ate the Passover dinner. They sang these songs while they were ascending the stairs. Therefore, after we partake of the Lord's body, we should ascend to the mountain to praise God. We should allow the Lord to lead us and draw us to the Father. All of our hymns are hymns of ascent. Our hymns should climb higher and higher after the breaking of bread. This is not just the teaching of the book of Hebrews. The Lord's word, the teaching of the Psalms, and our experience all testify to this. After our salvation, we always thank the Lord first, then praise Him, and then worship God.

The second point of emphasis is on learning to follow whatever has begun in the bread-breaking meeting. We are remembering the Lord, but there are many different beginnings for this kind of meeting. Some beginnings emphasize the Lord's sufferings, others emphasize the Lord's glory, and still others emphasize what the Lord has passed through. We have to pay attention to the way a meeting begins and follow the same line. No hymn or prayer should come up with another line of emphasis, but they should strengthen and advance the existing line until the end. There should not be three or four beginnings. Furthermore, we should never seek for an opportunity to squeeze into the bread-breaking meeting the interesting passages that we have come across during our morning Bible study time or the hymns that we like to sing at other times. These are things that are related to us personally and should not be things that we do as brothers. We are not in the meeting to take care of our personal relationship with the Lord but of the going on of the meeting in oneness. This is a precious thing. Therefore, the bread-breaking meeting tells us who the good brothers are. Do you care only for your own things, or do you care for the move of the meeting? Sometimes a meeting is about to end, and the thanksgivings and praises are adequate, but a brother suddenly stands up to pray or call another hymn. This becomes redundant.

In a meeting, you should cease from your personal activity and follow the move of the Body. If you are in a room by yourself, you can sing or pray at will. But in a meeting, you are not the only one who is present. Therefore, please do not bring feelings that are peculiarly your own into the meeting. Of course, all our thanksgivings and praises are personal; if they are not personal, they are not real and are a speaking before others only. However, even though the meetings are very personal, we should care for the feeling of the whole Body as well. This is why we have to follow a line of emphasis.

The same is true with our preaching at the bread-breaking meeting; we should have the Lord as the center. It is all right for a brother to read a passage of Scripture which leads others to the Lord or to remember the Lord. But there is no need to read other unrelated passages of Scripture. There is no meeting that is as important as the bread-breaking meeting. When we hear a message, we are merely listening to others speak about the Lord, and the goal is for our own benefit. But the bread-breaking meeting is the time when we meet the Lord and remember Him; it is a time reserved for the Lord Himself.

THE BIBLE STUDY MEETING

The brothers and sisters in Shanghai used to have a Bible study meeting. We studied the books of Romans, Ephesians, and 1 John. Unfortunately, this meeting has stopped for a few months. This kind of Bible study meeting is not for only one person to speak; it is for the brothers to study the Word together before God. Some brothers may open up a passage, while the other brothers may speak some, discuss some, ask questions, or supply explanations for that particular passage. In this way, verse by verse, a passage is covered, and the whole chapter is read and studied. Unfortunately, because no brother was particularly willing to take up the responsibility of the Bible study meeting, it stopped after a period of time. I feel that in the places where there is an assembly, it is a failure if we do not have a Bible study meeting. If there is to be a Bible study meeting, the brothers should be trained in this matter. The sisters should also do the same thing in the sisters' meeting according to the same principle.

There are no definite leaders in a Bible study meeting. Some brothers can read a passage, others can ask questions, while still others can answer or give interpretations. The principle of this meeting is that nothing is done for one's own benefit. No brother should involve his personal feelings in the meetings; they should all be left outside the door before entering the meeting. We have to take care of the expression of the Body life. This is true not only for the Bible study meeting but for all meetings. All the meetings are for the brothers. In the meetings, we are not expressing ourselves, and we should not wait passively for others to help us. In the meetings, we are here to *serve our brothers*. The Lord once said that the ones who are served are not great; rather, the ones who serve others are great. Every time we come to the meeting, we have to remember that we are here to be a servant to the brothers and sisters; we are here to serve the brothers and sisters and not just to listen to a message. Every time we come, we should consider ourselves as ones who serve and help the brothers. We should not have the proud thought that by doing this, we are greater and better than others. We do this because we ought to do this. Therefore, in this kind of meeting we should not wait for others to open their mouth. Perhaps we should open our mouth first to ask questions and show the

other brothers something and then leave time for others to answer. In this way, everyone will be able to go on along the same line. If we realize that a question is adequately covered, we can go to another question. We have to remember that the purpose of these kinds of questions is not for taking care of ourselves or understanding something for ourselves. We should strive to make sure that the other brothers receive the benefit. Therefore, when we ask questions, we should not ask only questions that we want to ask and skip other questions that we already know the answers to. Although we may know many answers already, the new brothers may not know them. If we know the answers, we should ask on their behalf and express what they want to know in their hearts.

The message meeting is for helping strong Christians, while the Bible study meeting is *for helping weak believers*. In the message meetings, only those who can receive the message receive help; those who cannot receive the message do not receive help. The message meeting can be considered as being mostly for the knowledgeable or intelligent ones. (Of course, knowledge or wisdom depends on God, not on man.) Those who are foolish, illiterate, slow, or dull can receive only forty to fifty percent of what is released in the message meetings. The Bible study meeting is designed to help the weak believers. In the Bible study meeting you will realize how much your brother understands. You may think that some brothers ask unrelated or meaningless questions. You may think that they are dull. Actually, this is exactly what they need to know. Through their questions, you will learn what is affecting them or touching them. It may be a small thing to you, but to them it may be something great. It may be an insignificant thing to you, but to them it may be as great as a mountain. Therefore, do not think that the Bible study meeting is too shallow and of no help to you. You are there to help the meeting; you are there as a servant. Even the sisters, who do not open their mouths in the meeting, are there to help the meeting; they are there to serve the brothers and be the servants also. Perhaps your absence will become a loss for others. If everyone skips these meetings, the meetings will become small in number, and it will be a loss to the meeting. For you to come is to agree with this meeting and support the meeting.

I do not know if you realize that it is wrong for us not to help or serve the brothers and sisters. We care only for our own spiritual growth and do not want to help or serve the brothers; we do not care for the brothers' benefit or for the advancement of the meetings. The sisters should not think that they do not need to come anymore because they do not open their mouths and since they already understand the things being covered. Actually, their sitting in the meeting is a help to the meeting. Moreover, if some brothers feel that they know and understand a certain subject, they can ask questions on behalf of others and answer on behalf of others. They should not think that they understand the subject, considering it to be repetitious because they have heard it several times. I hope that the brothers and sisters learn to behave as brothers and sisters in the meetings and learn to behave as human beings among human beings. I hope that the brothers and sisters can have a common progress together. Therefore, I expect to resume the Bible study meeting among us within a short time.

In the meeting, do not raise controversial questions. During the past year, in all of our meetings, we have made progress and seen God's blessing in many aspects. But one day

I saw a dreadful situation: two brothers were arguing about something to the extent that both were flushed with anger. They did not know how to behave as brothers among the brothers. The apostle said that we should not be involved with doubtful disputations. This is a very important principle. If you insist on arguing, you are doing wrong to your brother; you are not helping your brother but merely insisting on your own ideas. If you prevail in your own ideas yet have not rendered help to your brother, what good does that do? Therefore, in any kind of meeting, all of our flesh must be restrained and all of our self must be put to death. It is easy to say this at other times, but our flesh encounters the greatest test in the meetings. At other times we may see the gentleness, love, and patience of a brother, but in the meetings we learn whether a brother is raw, sour, or sweet. Therefore, in the meetings we should try our best to drop doubtful things and not argue about them. Unfortunately, almost every brother thinks that his ideas should be accepted by others.

The only principle in the Bible study meeting is to drop the self. Being prideful or withdrawing in a meeting is an undesirable situation. Pride is looking at one's virtues; withdrawing is looking at one's own weakness and uselessness. If a person appreciates his own virtues, he will open his mouth often. If a person is conscious of his own weakness and uselessness, he will not open his mouth. Actually, it is equally bad to open one's mouth or close one's mouth. Where there is self, there is pride; where there is self, there is withdrawal. Both of these are the flesh and should be dropped. All questions should be for the Lord to receive the glory. As long as He has the glory, there should not be any problem.

THE GOSPEL-PREACHING MEETING

There is a big misconception among the brothers and sisters about the gospel-preaching meeting. I ask you to pardon me for bringing this up. Brothers often call and ask whether there is a gospel meeting in the morning or afternoon. What they mean is that if there is a gospel meeting, they will not come, because they are saved. This is wrong. Whether or not it is a gospel meeting is not the question. The question is whether or not you should go to the meeting to strengthen the hand of the brothers so that the brothers will not have to fight alone. Helping the brothers and coming to the meeting are not for our personal gain. Please remember that even though there is not an exciting and new gospel for one to listen to in the meeting, the gospel that is preached every time is a glorious gospel. A saved person should never feel tired of hearing the gospel. As long as you are sitting in the meeting, you are helping and strengthening the hand of the preaching one. If you have never had the experience of preaching, you will not realize the importance of this matter. If you have ever preached before, you will realize the comfort of seeing a brother sitting there. Therefore, in the gospel meetings, we do not expect to hear exciting, new truths. You may be familiar and well acquainted with many truths, but your presence helps and strengthens your brother. You are rendering help to the meeting and working together with God.

Once I met a brother who asked me whether or not there would be a gospel meeting in the afternoon. I said, "Yes." Immediately he said, "Ah!" That "ah" tells us a great deal. In the gospel meeting, the main thing is not to satisfy ourselves; it is not for us to receive

the benefit. The main thing is for the brothers and sisters to receive the benefit and for the meeting to advance.

What is the expression on the faces of many brothers and sisters when they come to the gospel meeting? If there is some new truth concerning the gospel, their countenance is lifted up as they listen. But if there is nothing new, they may not say anything with their mouth, but they seem to be saying in their heart that they regret coming to the meeting, and their countenance is down. I am amazed that such a problem could exist in our gospel meeting. If it is God's gospel, we should feel that it is new even after hearing it the hundredth time. It is precious every time we mention God and His salvation! We should forever praise the gospel story.

Some brothers and sisters never show any expression on their faces. They are quiet; they neither laugh nor smile, and they are always cool and quiet. This kind of attitude does not render any help to the preaching brothers. On the contrary, it makes them feel very ill at ease. They do not know whether they have said something wrong to make the other brothers feel this way. If you have ever preached before, you will feel all these things. Many times, when brothers come to the meetings, they just sit and spread death. Even the expression on their faces makes the meeting cold. When you come to the meeting, it will not hurt if you say "amen" once in a while to show your sympathy. You may also nod your head or smile a little to indicate that you have received help from the word. If you do this, you are rendering the speaker some spiritual help. You will make him feel that the brothers are holding up his hands, keeping them from becoming tired, and that he is not standing alone. These are very important matters. The kind of attitude you have while sitting in the meeting directly affects the one who is speaking. Presently, the situation among us has much improved.

When some word from the preaching one touches you, it is most appropriate to say an "amen." I will not object to an even louder response. It is not just human beings who are saying "amen" within the house; the angels are saying "amen" also. This is similar to what is described in Acts 2 when Peter stood up to preach. I like that portion of the Scripture because it not only shows Peter standing to preach to the crowd; it also shows the eleven apostles standing with him. Even though only Peter opened his mouth, the eleven stood with him and were one with him. Therefore, in the gospel meeting, it is not a question of whether one lives a good personal life but whether his meeting life is proper. Please remember that we should not consider whether we have received anything or whether we are good or bad. If our meeting life is proper, our personal life will also be proper.

THE PRAYER MEETING

The number attending our prayer meeting is not very many. Of course, we have to do our best to forgive the brothers and sisters. Some live far away, and some are busy with other things. We can forgive them for not coming. But if we want to accomplish anything, and if we want to have the maximum power, the prayer meeting is where we can receive considerable help. The prayer meeting is the best test of our spiritual power.

I hope that many brothers and sisters would attend this meeting and have the burden to pray.

The first thing we should take care of in the prayer meeting is to be punctual. The meeting life is a help to the spiritual life of a Christian; it is also an expression of the Body life of a Christian. If we do not pay attention to the meetings and do not care for the corporate life, we will surely fail.

In the prayer meeting, the things that are in need of prayer should be explained in simple and short words. One should not say too many words. This has been a failure of ours in the past. Every time we want to bring up a matter for prayer, we should ask ourselves whether or not we have prayed over the same matter at home. If we have not prayed over the matter at home, there is no need to bring it up in the meeting and deceive the brothers. If you have never prayed for something in your home, the need is not there, and there is no value in praying over it. This is a principle and even a law. Anything that has not been prayed over by you does not need to be prayed over at all. If you have prayed over a matter, yet feel inadequate when praying over it alone, it is worth mentioning in the prayer meeting; it is then a meaningful subject for prayer.

The prayers that God answers the most are the prayers that are offered at the prayer meetings. The prayers that God ignores the most are also the prayers that are offered at the prayer meetings. God often hears the prayers of individuals. As to the prayers in the prayer meeting, God hears them to a small degree as well as to a great degree. Men often use words in the prayer meeting which they do not use in their own room. They express sentiments which they do not express in their own room. One often does not have much to say or many things to cover. But when he comes to the prayer meeting, these words and things come. This is quite inappropriate. Anything that he does not have a burden to pray about in his room should not be brought up in the prayer meeting. All burdenless prayers are unnecessary prayers. All burdenless prayers are prayers that God never answers. If a prayer touches you, it touches God. If a prayer is accompanied by a burden within you, there is certainly a burden with God. If there is oneness and burden in our prayer during the prayer meeting, the power is surely greater than that of our individual prayers. Otherwise, there is no need for public prayer. All prayers that are unhindered, in oneness, and without barriers are effective prayers. God will surely listen to these prayers. This is why we call prayer a kind of work.

Prayers do not have to be long or numerous. We have to build a net in our prayers, but one person alone does not have to build the net. If you feel that something has not been covered in the prayers, you should privately ask God to raise up others to pray and cast the net. When I was in England, one brother told me one story about a prayer meeting. One brother was burdened to pray for many things. He felt that his prayer was too long and that he ought to stop. Yet he felt that there were still many things that he had not prayed for. If he stopped, he was afraid that no one would follow after him to pray. If he went on praying, he was afraid that he would take up too much time. Being considerate of others, he felt that he should allow some other brothers to pray. As a result, he prayed, "I have prayed too long by myself. Please raise up another one to continue with my prayer." After he prayed, another person continued on with his prayer and uttered all

the things that needed to be prayed about. Therefore, even if your mind is very strong, active, and sound, you should still ask God to raise up others to pray. God answers this prayer because He is a living God. In the prayer meeting, we should allow others to have a chance to pray. If we do this, there will be living prayers and prayers offered in one accord.

Sometimes God will use one of us to speak for the brothers and sisters. All those who are experienced in prayer know how difficult it is to find suitable utterance to express the needs. Although five or eight brothers pray for the same thing, the burden may not be released. Therefore, we have to ask the Lord to grant us the words to pray and express the thoughts in our burden. We should pray that God would raise up some to express His thoughts. Sometimes there can be as many as ten brothers praying for something, and all ten prayers can be good and up to standard, yet there is still the feeling that none of the prayers has hit the point, and the burden is not released. All of a sudden a brother may start praying and, as soon as he opens his mouth, the burden is released. Everyone feels right and says amen to it. This is a prayer in the Holy Spirit. In a prayer meeting, if no one expresses the inner need on behalf of everyone, that meeting is a failure. If we pray from 7:00 to 7:30 and successfully hit the point, we can go home; there is no need to go on praying, because we have reached the goal. The utterance of the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit's expression of God's desire through man's prayer. Only this kind of prayer can be considered a thorough prayer.

In the prayer meeting, there should be some brothers who act as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes five or six people may be praying for a certain matter, and they still cannot get through. But when someone opens his mouth, he touches the point. Then everyone feels that he has touched something real, and the blockage is gone. This is what we should pay attention to in the prayer meetings.

In 1926, I was seriously ill in Foochow. My whole body turned purple. Three brothers and a sister came to my room to pray for me. The first one prayed in tears, but I did not feel that he had hit the point. The second one also prayed earnestly for me, but I did not feel anything. The third one was supposedly famous for his prayers, but his prayer was still ineffective. The fourth one was the sister. When she opened her mouth, she said, "O God, no one can praise You in Hades. You have no pleasure in men praising You in Hades." Immediately I felt that something had broken through. I did not have to wait for the prayer to be finished before I felt that the sickness was gone. When the burden was lifted, I knew the sickness was gone. In the afternoon, I rose from my bed, and the next day I went to Ma-wei. From there I traveled to Amoy for my work. We have to ask God to use us to be a mouthpiece in the prayer meeting so that the burden and need of the brothers and sisters can be uttered through us with the language of the Holy Spirit.

Let me mention something concerning our last conference. Our conference was scheduled to begin on the Lord's Day, January 20. On Thursday evening, the seventeenth, we prayed during the prayer meeting for the needs of the conference. Many brothers did their best to pray for many things, and I did my best to say amen. Still there was a feeling that some kind of need or burden was not yet covered. Later one brother opened his mouth and said, "God, give us good weather which is not too cold, and do not

let it snow or rain so that we can meet peaceably.” Everyone there felt that his prayer received more amens than all the other prayers. The weather was not too good during those few days. The day when we had the prayer meeting, it was snowing. But by Friday, both the rain and snow stopped. It did not start raining again until the Thursday after the conference. During the whole period of the conference, there was no rain. Furthermore, in Wen-teh Lane, where we were meeting, another household was having a funeral. The Saturday before the conference began, the funeral ceremony was creating considerable noise and commotion. Yet the next day, it stopped. When the conference ended, the noise of chanting and music began again. If that had happened during the conference, we would not have been able to meet peaceably.

In the prayer meeting, there is the need for someone to be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. If someone can be the mouthpiece, all problems will be gone. Our problem is that we do not know the needs. But God knows. Therefore, every brother and sister should strive to be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit. Whenever the prayers are thorough, the burden is released, and we know that there is no further need to pray.

THE BROTHERS' MEETING AND THE SISTERS' MEETING

Since Shanghai is so large, the brothers and sisters are all scattered, and there is little fellowship between them. Therefore, there is a special need for the brothers' meeting and the sisters' meeting. Every Saturday afternoon at 4:30, we have the sisters' meeting. In the evening at 7:30, we have the brothers' meeting. During this kind of meeting, the emphasis is on mutual fellowship and on discussing ordinary affairs. We may talk about how the brothers ought to behave as brothers, and we may also cover something related to the meetings. In these meetings, we bring up problems of brothers and sisters who are out-of-town, problems of those who are unemployed, and other needs of the brothers and sisters, spiritual or material. This is very important. Through these meetings, we can avoid many mistakes and make many corrections. We cannot be individual believers before God; we have to learn to bear the responsibility of other brothers and sisters. A pew member in the denominations can remain a member for twenty years without knowing anyone. Some can be a pew member for five years without acknowledging anyone even once. Many people are only concerned about their personal salvation; they are concerned only about their Christian life and do not care for the other brothers and sisters. They do not care for the corporate life. But God has not made a heaven for each one of us and put us into our own heaven. Rather, He has put us in a corporate body so that we can help one another and fellowship with one another.

Many poor brothers dare not go into the houses of rich brothers. Many rich brothers do not like to go to the houses of poor brothers. In the world, there are distinctions between the rich and the poor, and in a family, there are distinctions between the master and the servants. But in the meeting, these distinctions should be removed. All differences in our position in the flesh should go through the cross. This is what the cross has done. We should not bring to the meeting what the cross has removed and put in the grave. The cross has not only removed the middle wall of partition between Jews and Greeks, barbarians and cultured ones, but it has also removed the separating wall between slaves and free men. In other words, all classes, ideologies, and systems that exist in

society should be removed. In the family, there is a distinction between the master and the servants. But in the church there is no such distinction. If a brother is the servant of another brother, he is, of course, a servant at home and should be obedient to his master in everything. The brother who is the master should, of course, be a master at home. But in the brothers' meeting or the bread-breaking meeting, there is no distinction between master and servant. Both sides should avoid going to extremes. A servant should not think that just because he is a brother, he can tell others what to do at home. On the other hand, a master should not think that just because he is a brother, he should not rule over his servant in a proper way. In the family, there are differences of position. A Christian should still be a proper human being. For example, a father and a son may be Christians together. In the family, they are father and son. In the meeting, the son can call the father a brother. But in the family, the son cannot call his father a brother. Therefore, in the brothers' meeting, when brothers meet together, we should help the brothers understand that in the Lord there should be no question of being rich or poor, educated or uneducated, with status or without status. These distinctions should be removed. Therefore, the brothers and sisters should make an effort to come to the brothers' meeting and the sisters' meeting. These meetings are for fellowship, for helping the brothers and sisters solve their problems, and for living the corporate life. This is not a time for listening to sermons. Although there may be messages in these meetings, one does not meet for the sake of listening to messages. Otherwise, the meeting would be disbanded if the speaker went to sleep. The danger with many revival campaigns is that as soon as the revivalist is gone, the people are gone. God's way is to save individuals and put them into the church so that they can be blended together and help each other.

Since this is a matter of practice, I have to say a few words that may not be so nice to some. First, there should be more communication between the brothers not only for mutual care but for mutual oversight. Some matters should, of course, be handled individually. But with other matters, there is a need for us to know our brothers' problems. Suppose a brother has lost his job. We should find out how he lost his job and the reason for it. If it was a proper and honest layoff, we should bring this matter up in the brothers' meeting and help the brother according to the teaching of James 2. The main thing is to do something and not just to believe. It is useless to believe as the one in James 2. If a brother has lost his job through dishonesty, we should help this brother, exhort him, and deal with him. If he is truly unemployed, we should try to support him. Things like this cannot be brought up in the prayer meeting, the bread-breaking meeting, or the gospel meeting. We can bring them up only in the brothers' meeting. If there is anything that is related to personal reputation, which does not need to be announced in the brothers' meeting, then it should not be announced in the meeting.

It is wrong for us to be ignorant of the weaknesses and problems of the brothers, to not know whether a family has encountered difficulties, to be ignorant of the spiritual problems, needs, and sicknesses of others, and to fail to care for these ones. The denominations have hired pastors to do this work. But we do not have this class of people; every one of us has to take up this work. Poor brothers should not purposely try to avoid rich brothers, and rich brothers should not ignore the need of poor brothers. None of us can give up being a brother just because we do not want to communicate

with certain ones. The brothers should express the assembly life through the communal life, and they should express the proper life of brothers. All those who do not see this are bound to fail, because this is what God wants us to do today.

QUESTIONS

Question: What does the meeting in 1 Corinthians 14 refer to?

Answer: The meeting in 1 Corinthians 14 is a meeting for the exercise of spiritual gifts. Our Saturday meeting is somewhat similar in nature to this kind of meeting. Today we do not have the kind of spiritual gifts that were present in the early days. We are merely meeting according to that principle.

Question: Hebrews 10 mentions not forsaking our assembling together. What kind of meeting does this refer to?

Answer: It refers to all kinds of meetings, including the brothers' and sisters' meetings.

Question: When should we break the bread during the bread-breaking meeting?

Answer: The breaking of bread is for the remembrance of the Lord. Therefore, we should break the bread as soon as possible. We do not have to always wait for Eutychus to fall down before breaking the bread. During the bread-breaking meeting, we should look for the high point of the meeting. Since everyone has different circumstances, family backgrounds, and environments and because everyone has different problems, failures, and weaknesses, bringing these things to the meetings is unavoidable. Therefore, concerning the bread-breaking meeting, some should begin the meeting by calling a hymn or by praying; this helps bring everyone out of their distractions and helps them forget about all the things that have happened during the past six days. The high point of the meeting is when someone prays and brings everyone up to a certain point, and everyone is released and says amen. That is the time to break the bread. We cannot break the bread immediately after we come together, because we are weak. It is common for us to bring our circumstances, family, and other things to the meeting, which frustrates our oneness. Therefore, we cannot break the bread immediately. There is a need for someone to bring us to a certain point, a climax, before we can break the bread. If we delay breaking the bread then, we will recede from that high point. Therefore, we have to take care to break the bread as soon as the high point is reached.

Question: Should offerings be made during the Lord's Day bread-breaking meeting?

Answer: It does not matter very much one way or the other. Of course, it is the Lord's commandment that we offer our money on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week, all the brothers and sisters, including all the workers, should offer. If they do not, they have disobeyed the Lord's command. Both the breaking of bread and the offering of money should be done on this day, but they do not have to be done in the same meeting.

Question: Should the bread-breaking meeting be in the morning, afternoon, or evening?

Answer: The teaching of the New Testament is that it should be in the evening. The Lord's supper should be eaten in the evening. Generally speaking, we eat breakfast quickly because we are in a hurry to go to work. Lunch is a meal eaten in the middle of our labor. This is why many people eat lunch at their place of work and do not go home for lunch. Only dinner is the family meal, in which the whole family gathers together to eat in peace and joy. For the sake of the brothers who are responsible for preaching, it is also better for the bread-breaking meeting to be in the evening. If the bread-breaking meeting is in the morning, those brothers will try to eat in a hurry because they have many burdens they have to release through their message. If we break bread in the evening, they can sit comfortably at the Lord's table.

Personally, I feel that it is better to break the bread in the evening, particularly in China. Of course, this will present some inconvenience to the sisters. In all the denominations in China, the services are conducted in the morning or afternoon. The members have developed the habit of attending services in the morning or afternoon. If our bread-breaking meeting is in the morning or afternoon, it is difficult to deal with these ones; if we allow them to partake of the bread, we are not sure whether they are saved. But if we do not allow them to partake of the bread, we may offend them. If we break the bread in the evening, there will not be such an inconvenience. If they come, they will find that there is no message. Moreover, the distance it takes to come to the meeting is great, and it will be late by the time they return home. As a result, they will not come. This is why we say that the bread-breaking meeting in Shanghai is best conducted in the evening.

Question: When we break the bread, do we have to lift the cup to bless it as it says in 1 Corinthians 11?

Answer: The matter of lifting the cup is a Catholic tradition. Catholic priests claim to bless the cup on behalf of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, when they lift up the cup, they speak in place of the Lord: "This is My body, which is broken for you. This is My blood, which is shed for you." Some Protestant denominations such as the Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church, and Methodist Church also do the same thing. Our present practice tells us that we cannot bless on behalf of the Lord. We believe that the Lord is among us and that He is still blessing the cup. When we bless, we are merely speaking on behalf of the brothers and sisters to the Lord: "Thank You, Lord." We believe that this is scriptural (1 Cor. 10:16). If any brother stands on behalf of the Lord Jesus, this usurps the Lord's position too much. The brothers among us merely serve as the spokesmen of the other brothers, thanking and praising the Lord this way. Since this is the case, there is no need to lift up the bread and the cup. Any brother who is in fellowship with us and who is not hindered by any evil, can stand up and give thanks for the bread on behalf of the other brothers.

Question: Should we stand up, sit down, or kneel down when we pray? If we do not kneel down when we pray, does this mean that we are being disrespectful?

Answer: There are many different ways to pray. The reason we do not kneel down is that the place is too small and would present a problem if we all knelt down. Moreover, the Bible never tells us whether we should pray by sitting down, kneeling down, or standing up. The Bible does not consider it disrespectful to pray without kneeling down, and it does not consider kneeling as the sole condition for praying. The worshippers of Buddha in China are the only ones who have to kneel down when they worship. The Bible records the Ephesian believers sending Paul off by kneeling to pray at the seashore. However, in Matthew, the Lord teaches men to pray by shutting their doors (6:6); He did not say to kneel down. The Bible often mentions praying by covering up one's face, and a few times it mentions praying by sitting before the Lord. The Bible also mentions praying by lifting up one's hands. For example, Moses lifted up his hands on the mountain. In fact, the Bible often mentions praying with uplifted hands. Lifting up one's hands is a sign of beseeching God. Therefore, when one lifts up his hands, it means he is invoking God's attention. This is why Paul told Timothy to "pray in every place, lifting up holy hands" (1 Tim. 2:8). One can pray in every place. But it is not easy to pray in every place by kneeling down. It is not difficult to lift up one's hands in prayer. But it is impossible to kneel down everywhere because, in some places, one cannot kneel down. Personally, I think this matter should be left to each person's own conscience. If a brother feels in his conscience that he should pray by kneeling down, he should do so. But there is no need to consider kneeling as a law.

Question: Can we forbid "outside" brothers from preaching at will in our meetings?

Answer: We should pray and ask God to stop the disenchanted ones in the denominations from coming into our midst. We are not for numbers. We should deal seriously with this matter so that the disenchanted ones in the denominations will not come and express anything in our meetings.

Question: Who should prepare the bread for the bread-breaking meeting?

Answer: According to the Bible, the preparation of the bread should be done by the deacons. There is no difference between a deacon and a deaconess; either a deacon or a deaconess can prepare the bread.

Question: Should the bread and the cup used in the bread-breaking meeting be covered with a piece of cloth, and should the table also be covered with a tablecloth?

Answer: The practice of covering the cup and the bread with a piece of cloth is a Catholic tradition. The Catholics think that if they do not cover them, they will not be holy. But according to 1 Corinthians 11, it is wrong to cover them. The breaking of bread is a display of the Lord's death; it is for *exhibiting* the Lord's death, and it is a testimony. Why then should it be covered? As to the tablecloth, there is complete liberty as to what one wants to do. If the table is not too clean, it is all right to cover it with a tablecloth.

Question: If it is a biblical teaching for the sisters to cover their head, why do we not practice kissing each other with a holy kiss since the latter is also a biblical command?

Answer: The Bible says that we should kiss each other with a holy kiss (1 Cor. 16:20); it does not charge believers to merely kiss each other. The command of the Bible is that if anyone greets another with a kiss, the kiss should be holy. God's command is that when we kiss, we have to be holy. He has not charged us merely to kiss. Neither have the apostles charged everyone to kiss. Kissing can very easily become unholy; therefore, there is the charge to kiss with a holy kiss. If anyone were to ask me whether we should kiss, I would say we should. But the Bible also tells us that if we kiss, we have to be holy. The emphasis of this command is to be holy and not just to kiss. If one kisses, he should be holy. Provided we are holy, I believe it is right for us to practice this biblical command—to kiss each other.

As to the sisters covering their heads, there are many benefits to the practice. In the meetings, the sisters should have the sign of submission to authority for the sake of the angels (11:10). In the original language, the word *authority* in 1 Corinthians 11:10 refers to a positional authority. It is a positional authority because Satan was also an angel. The first sin of Satan was his "self"; that was the cause of his fall. When his self was expressed, he overturned God's authority and rebelled against God. The most amazing thing in the universe is authority. We must see that God works through authority. He upholds the universe with His word. The name of Christ is authority. God has placed Satan under His own authority, yet Satan overturned this authority. The great dragon mentioned in Revelation is the old serpent; he dragged along with him one third of the stars of heaven (12:4). This means that Satan led one third of the angels in heaven to rebel against God and overturn God's sovereign rule. This is known throughout the universe. This is the story of the first introduction of sin into the universe.

How did sin come into the world the second time? It came in through Eve. God created Eve and ordained that Adam should be the head of Eve. Paul said in 1 Timothy that it was not Adam who was deceived, but Eve (2:14). Therefore, the sin in the garden of Eden was the same sin that Satan committed. This sin came in when the woman rebelled against Adam, the head, and did something before she was approved by Adam. Therefore, sin comes from insubordination to authority; sin is lawlessness.

Because both Satan and Eve fell this way, God ordained that there should be a sign on the head of the woman as a symbol of submission for the sake of the angels. This is a testimony before the angels, showing the angels that we will not do what Eve did at the beginning. Of course, many sisters cannot take this. This is the greatest test to the sisters. If the flesh is willing to be judged, everything is all right. Today, we will mention the head covering only in relationship to authority. There are other aspects of head covering which we will not cover today. In the garden of Eden, the woman refused to remain in her position. Today in the church, our sisters should be faithful to remain in their own position.

Question: Should we tell the sisters who have cut their hair to cover their head?

Answer: These minor questions are a great test to our conscience. First, we should exhort the sisters who want to cut their hair to keep their hair. If they intend to cut it, we do not have to advise them to cover their head anymore because they have clearly given

up the glory which God gives to them. There are two coverings for the sisters: One is a natural covering, and the other is a symbolic covering. If a woman gives up her natural covering, the symbolic covering will be completely useless to her. The symbol on the head must be put on willingly.

Question: When a brother prays or preaches on the street, should he take off his hat?

Answer: According to my personal experience, every time I pray, I take off my hat. I feel that if I do not take off my hat, I am shaming my head. But this does not mean that God will not hear us if our brothers pray with their heads covered and our sisters pray with their heads uncovered. Our prayer and prophesying are particularly related to the angels and the spiritual realm. Therefore, personally, I feel that the brothers should not cover their head. Even when we are preaching to someone on the street, it is related to the spiritual realm; as such, it is not that proper to keep our hat on.

Question: What is the difference between preaching and prophesying?

Answer: All those who can preach edifying messages may not be prophets. A prophet is able not only to edify others, but also to foretell. A prophet is able not only to declare God's will, but also to foretell.

Question: What should we do with the bread and grape juice after the bread-breaking meeting?

Answer: They can be consumed by one or two brothers, or they can be burned in the fire.

Question: In breaking the bread, should we break some off from the whole piece, or can we eat from the crumbs on the plate?

Answer: Both are all right; there is no difference between the two. They are all from the same piece of bread.