

Outline Two

Using the Life-studies to Touch Life in the Bible, to Grow in Life, Bear Fruit, and Feed the Lord's Lambs

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:9; John 10:10; 14:6; 5:39-40; 21:15; Eph. 4:15; 1 Tim. 4:6

I. **Life is the main revelation in the Bible—Gen. 2:9; John 10:10; 14:6; Rev. 22:1-2:**¹

- A. In the Bible mainly life is revealed; life is the focus of the whole Bible.
- B. But we need to see what is life, or who is life; the answer is in the word of the Lord Jesus; He says, "I am life," and "I am come that you may have life"; the Bible is a revelation of Christ as life—John 11:25; 14:6; 10:10.
- C. Whenever we come to the Bible, we must realize that we are coming to contact Christ as our life—John 5:39-40:
 1. We should not repeat the pitiful history of the Jewish people who researched the Scriptures because they thought there was life in them, yet would not come to the Lord Jesus.
 2. We should not contact the Bible without contacting the Lord—*Hymns*, #816, #812.
- D. Whenever we open the Bible we have to say, "Lord Jesus, You have to be here. This is not merely a book, this is Your revelation. I don't like to read this book without contacting You. I don't like to hear something from this book without hearing You. I don't like to read this book without seeing You. I like to see Your face. I like to see what You are from the printed page. O Lord Jesus, enlighten Your Word and anoint every line that I may touch You."
- E. We need such a spirit to contact this living Word—v. 40; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17-18.
- F. After man was created, he was put in front of two trees in the garden of Eden: one was the tree of life and the other was the tree of knowledge—Gen. 2:9:
 1. If man had eaten the tree of life he would have received the divine life of God that was indicated by the tree of life.
 2. But man was tempted and took the tree of knowledge that denoted the source other than God, that is Satan; the issue of that was death—Gen. 2:17.
- G. The principle is the same in our contact with the Bible—cf. 2 Cor. 3:6:
 1. We may take the Bible as a book of life by contacting it with our spirit, by praying to the Lord that we may receive Him as life through His Word, or we may make the Bible a book of knowledge by contacting it merely with our mind, seeking knowledge in letters; this brings us death, not life—Eph. 6:17-18; *Hymns*, #811.
 2. Second Corinthians 3:6 warns us that "the letter [that is, the scripture in letters] kills, but the Spirit gives life"; we shouldn't make the Bible merely a book of letters to kill us.
 3. We have to take the Bible by contacting the Lord Spirit that it may be the Spirit and life to us—vv. 17-18.

II. **The Life-study messages lead people to touch life:**²

- A. One function of the Life-study messages is to bring people into life; the Life-study messages are not a set of philosophical or classical writings apart from the Bible.
- B. The Life-study messages do not merely expound the Bible and present the truth; rather, they also bring people into the truth to enjoy and experience its riches.
- C. Mere exposition of the Bible is just the impartation of knowledge, which causes people to know doctrines mentally.

¹ Life-study of Genesis, msg. 1, pp. 3-4.

² CWWL, 1984, vol. 5, "Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery," ch. 1, 364.

- D. The Life-study messages bring us into the depths of the Bible to touch and enjoy the life within—cf. John 5:39-40.
- E. Whenever we prayerfully read a Life-study message, we touch life and are enlivened and satisfied.³
 - 1. For example, after reading Exodus 12 many Christians only know that something happened on the night of the passover (v. 12); they do not know the meaning of what happened.
 - 2. However, today through the Life-study messages we can all understand the deep meaning of this matter and enter into the application of the precious blood, the enjoyment of the meat of the lamb, and the reality of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
 - 3. Therefore, the life-study of the Bible is a proper and accurate study of the Bible that ushers people into the Bible to obtain the life supply and enjoyment contained in it.
- F. Christ as life is the center of the Life-study messages, so when we read the Life-study messages, they help us to grow strong and healthy in life—Eph. 4:15:
 - 1. Nutritionists tell us that to eat healthily, we cannot eat just one kind of food; in order to eat healthily, we must eat all kinds of foods.
 - 2. For example, a salad contains not only one kind of vegetable but many kinds mixed together; thus, salads are rich and nutritious.
 - 3. The Life-study messages are like a salad that is made not with just one kind of vegetable but with all different kinds; however, we must have our staple food, our center—Christ as life.
- G. We should bring all the saints in the churches in the Lord’s recovery into the practice of carefully reading one or two Life-study messages each week; if we do this, over the long term—perhaps over ten, eight, or even just five years—the saints will make much progress in all areas, and the condition of the entire church will be reversed.

III. We experience life by knowing the truth; all the truths in the Bible are food for our spiritual life—Hymns, #806:⁴

- A. The Lord has not left us in darkness; today all His truths are contained in the Bible, which He has given to us.
- B. We must realize that the Bible is a book of life; the reason the Bible is a book of life is that its entire content is truth.
- C. All experienced Christians confess that no one can enjoy Christ as life if he does not know the Bible or understand the truth in the Bible.
- D. We need to go to the supermarket to buy food for our physical body in order to be fed and sustained; in like manner, we must come to the Bible to receive the truth that is in it if we want to receive and enjoy the Lord as life.

IV. We need to be equipped in the truth and growing in life in order to feed the lambs—John 21:15:⁵

- A. In John 14:6 the Lord put life and truth together; then in chapter 15 the Lord spoke of the matter of fruit-bearing.
- B. This indicates that fruit-bearing has a great deal to do with life and truth.
- C. Experientially, our barrenness exposes our shortage in life; we are barren because we are not rich in life; if we have an abundance of life, we will spontaneously bear fruit.

³ CWWL, 1984, vol. 5, “Guidelines for the Propagation of the Lord’s Recovery,” ch. 1, p. 109.

⁴ CWWL, 1984, vol. 5, “Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord’s Recovery,” ch. 6, pp. 415-416.

⁵ CWWL, 1984, vol. 5, “Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord’s Recovery,” ch. 7, pp. 432-433.

- D. If we would pay attention to fruit-bearing, we surely must pay attention to the growth in life; if we would pay attention to the growth in life, we must also pay attention to pursuing the truth.
- E. Once we have the truth, we will be led into the experience of Christ; in this way we will be able to shepherd our lambs; otherwise, we will have nothing to feed our lambs with and no way to take care of them.
- F. The Lord's word is the bread of life (6:35, 63) and the spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2:2); if we know the truth in the Bible and the word of the Lord, we will be able to give our lambs much nourishment—1 Tim. 4:6.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE MAIN REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible mainly life is revealed. Life is the focus of the whole Bible. But what is life, or who is life? The answer is in the word of the Lord Jesus. He says, "I am life," and "I am come that you may have life." The Bible is a revelation of Christ as life. Whenever we come to the Bible, we must realize that we are coming to contact Christ as our life.

The whole Bible is a book of life, and this life is nothing less than the divine and living Person of Christ Jesus Himself, Who is our portion. When we come to the Bible, we must come to contact Him. We should not repeat the pitiful history of the Jewish people who researched the Scriptures because they thought there was life in them, yet would not come to the Lord Jesus (John 5:39-40). We should not contact the Bible without contacting the Lord. Whenever we open the Bible we have to say, "Lord Jesus, You have to be here. This is not merely a book, this is Your revelation. I don't like to read this book without contacting You. I don't like to hear something from this book without hearing You. I don't like to read this book without seeing You. I like to see Your face. I like to see what You are from the printed page. O Lord Jesus, enlighten Your Word and anoint every line that I may touch You." We need such a spirit to contact this living Word

After man was created, he was put in front of two trees in the garden of Eden: one was the tree of life and the other was the tree of knowledge. If man had eaten the tree of life he would have received the divine life of God that was indicated by the tree of life. But man was tempted and took the tree of knowledge that denoted the source other than God, that is Satan. The issue of that was death. The principle is the same in our contact with the Bible. We may take the Bible as a book of life by contacting it with our spirit, by praying to the Lord that we may receive Him as life through His Word, or we may make the Bible a book of knowledge by contacting it merely with our mind, seeking knowledge in letters. This brings us death, not life. Second Corinthians 3:6 warns us that "the letter [that is, the scripture in letters] kills, but the Spirit gives life." We shouldn't make the Bible merely a book of letters to kill us. We have to take the Bible by contacting the Lord Spirit that it may be the Spirit and life to us. (*Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 1, pp. 3-4)

THE LIFE-STUDY MESSAGES LEADING PEOPLE TO TOUCH LIFE

Another function of the Life-study messages is to bring people into life. The Life-study messages are not a set of philosophical or classical writings apart from the Bible. The Life-study messages do not merely expound the Bible and present the truth; rather, they also bring people into the truth to enjoy and experience its riches. Mere exposition of the Bible is just the impartation of knowledge, which causes people to know doctrines mentally. The Life-study messages bring us into the depths of the Bible to touch and enjoy the life within (cf. John 5:39-40).

After reading Exodus 12 many Christians only know that something happened on the night of the passover (v. 12); they do not know the meaning of what happened. However, today through the Life-study messages we can all understand the deep meaning of this matter and enter into the application of the precious blood, the enjoyment of the meat of the lamb, and the reality of the unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Therefore, the life-study of the Bible is a proper and accurate study of the Bible that ushers people into the Bible to obtain the life supply and enjoyment contained in it.

THE FACTOR FOR RICH MEETINGS

Today pastors and preachers in Christianity must search everywhere to find a good word for their sermons. Some pastors do not have anything to talk about, so they speak about things such as sanitary practices and personal hygiene. Some are a little better and speak about matters such as redemption, the washing away of sins, and justification. There are some who are even deeper and

speak about things such as how to fellowship with the Lord and how to enjoy the peace given to us by the Lord. But even this is not enough. We have seen from our experience and our research that the richest meetings are those with the Life-study messages as their content. If every Lord's Day we would take two Life-study messages as the content of our fellowship, the meeting would be very rich.

I have spent eleven years laboring to carry out the summer and winter life-study trainings. This year I have completed the life-study of the entire New Testament, and next year I will begin another eleven years to complete the study of the entire Bible. We should bring all the saints in the churches in the Lord's recovery into the practice of carefully reading one or two Life-study messages each week. If we do this, over the long term—perhaps over ten, eight, or even just five years—the saints will make much progress in all areas, and the condition of the entire church will be reversed.

Nutritionists tell us that to eat healthily, we cannot eat just one kind of food. Fish is very nutritious, but if we ate only fish for three meals a day without eating anything else, we definitely would not be healthy. In order to eat healthily, we must eat all kinds of foods. For example, a salad contains not only one kind of vegetable but many kinds mixed together; thus, salads are rich and nutritious. The Life-study messages are like a salad that is made not with just one kind of vegetable but with all different kinds. However, we must have our staple food, our center. Christ as life is the center of the Life-study messages, so when we read the Life-study messages, they help us to grow strong and healthy in life.

Before 1974 we mainly emphasized releasing messages on one topic at a time through conferences. Later, we realized that we should dig out the matter of life because life is the center. So from that time on, we began to dig out life from the Bible, book by book through the Life-study messages. At present we have dug out life from each book of the New Testament and even the Old Testament books of Genesis and Exodus. Although the Bible was written comprehensively, speaking much on many topics, it always has life as its center to clearly point out the way.

Even the book of Ephesians with only six chapters is composed in a comprehensive way, speaking on many topics. For example, the book of Ephesians speaks of very high matters—matters that could not be any higher—such as God's selection in eternity and His predestinating us (1:4-5). It also speaks of very low matters—matters that could not be any lower—as in the word that those who steal should steal no more (4:28). If today we were to choose a topic and speak of God's calling and predestination, we would not also speak of such things as stealing. However, after the book of Ephesians speaks of such high matters, it suddenly inserts just such a sentence, telling those who steal to steal no more. It also tells the husbands to love their wives and tells the wives to be subject to their husbands (5:25, 22). This proves that the Bible's way of speaking is comprehensive. Nevertheless, the Bible still has its center. When we use the Life-study messages, we must firmly grasp this point and see that the Bible has an intrinsic central lane and also speaks comprehensively on many matters. (*CWWL*, 1984, vol. 5, "Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery," ch. 1, pp. 364-366)

EXPERIENCING LIFE BY KNOWING THE TRUTH

The Lord has not left us in darkness. Today all His truths are contained in the Bible, which He has given to us. We must realize that the Bible is a book of life. The reason the Bible is a book of life is that its entire content is truth. All experienced Christians confess that no one can enjoy Christ as life if he does not know the Bible or understand the truth in the Bible. We need to go to the supermarket to buy food for our physical body in order to be fed and sustained. In like manner, we must come to the Bible to receive the truth that is in it if we want to receive and enjoy the Lord as life. All the truths in the Bible are food for our spiritual life.

The Bible is not merely a book of knowledge. All the knowledge contained in the Bible is in fact truth, and in this truth, life is concealed. When we read the Bible, if we study only the letter but not the intrinsic truth within, we will not receive life. Hence, every Bible reader has to see the truth that is conveyed through the letter of the Word. Once we see the truth, we will spontaneously touch life.

The Life-studies have been published to help us enter into the depths of the letter of the Word. Therefore, all those who carefully study the Life-studies will surely gain a certain amount of experience. The Life-studies bring us into the biblical truths, from which we may receive the genuine life supply.

Today the Lord's recovery is a recovery of the truth and of life. We all know that the decline of Christianity is due to the fact that it has lost both the truth and life. This loss of the truth and life eventually produced many human methods and worldly organizations, which are not what the Lord wants. The Lord does not want any organization or human method. Instead, He wants His church to know Him as the truth and to receive and enjoy Him as life. The entire content of the church must be the growth of Christ in us as truth and life. This may be likened to an orchard, the entire content of which is the fruits of life produced from the fruit trees. In an orchard we cannot find any organization or behavior. We can only see the fruit trees growing and bearing fruit as the issue of their growth in life. This should be the situation of the churches in the Lord's recovery today. In the churches we do not want to have any organization or human methods. Rather, we want to minister to God's people for their growth by planting and watering as the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:6 and 9. (*CWWL*, 1984, vol. 5, "Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery," ch. 6, pp. 415-416)

BEING EQUIPPED IN THE TRUTH AND GROWING IN LIFE IN ORDER TO FEED THE LAMBS

The Gospel of John is a book on life, but John was also particularly fond of using the word *truth* in his writings. Hence, in his Epistles, just as in his Gospel, he first mentions the truth and then presents the matter of life. This shows us a spiritual principle. If there is no truth, there will be no life; and if there is no life, there will be no truth.

In John 14:6 the Lord put life and truth together. Then in chapter 15 the Lord spoke of the matter of fruit-bearing. This indicates that fruit-bearing has a great deal to do with life and truth. Experientially, our barrenness exposes our shortage in life. Why are we barren? It is because we are not rich in life. If we have an abundance of life, we will spontaneously bear fruit. If we would pay attention to fruit-bearing, we surely must pay attention to the growth in life. If we would pay attention to the growth in life, we must also pay attention to pursuing the truth. Once we have the truth, we will be led into the experience of Christ. In this way we will be able to shepherd our lambs. Otherwise, we will have nothing to feed our lambs with and no way to take care of them. Without knowing the truth or growing in life, we may still be able to lead people to be saved and baptized; however, if we lack the knowledge of the truth and the experience of Christ, we will not be able to properly fulfill the responsibility of feeding.

Parents feed their children by giving them food to eat and milk to drink. Similarly, in order to feed our lambs, we must prepare spiritual food and milk. The Lord's word is the bread of life (6:35, 63) and the spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2:2). If we know the truth in the Bible and the word of the Lord, we will be able to give our lambs much nourishment. For example, we can use the Gospel of John to feed others, saying, "John 1 says that the Lord was God, and as God He became flesh. Furthermore, with Him came the truth, which is the Word of God. Then chapter 8 says that the truth shall set us free, and chapter 17 says that we are sanctified in the truth. In actuality, the truth is nothing less than the Lord Jesus Himself. Thus, we have to love the Lord, pray to Him all the time, and read His Word every day." How good this is! The Gospel of John speaks of life and truth. This life and truth are just the Lord Jesus, and today He is the Spirit who lives in us and supplies us day by day. Hence, chapter 6 tells us that the Lord is the bread of life for us to eat (vv. 35, 48). When we eat Him, we live because of Him (v. 57).

If we have a rich knowledge of the truth and a considerable measure of the experience of life, when we go to visit our lambs, we will be able to supply them with the milk of the word according to their situation. This is the proper practice of feeding the lambs. Regrettably, when most of us see our

lambs, usually we can only say, "Do you attend the Lord's Day meeting? Why don't you come to the meeting? The meeting is really good; you surely have to come." We only know to say this to our lambs over and over again. Eventually, they get so tired of us, and gradually they do not like to see us anymore because they know that we have nothing to say except, "The meeting is really good; please come." This is not feeding them; rather, it is like serving them a summons to appear in court. Therefore, they not only are not supplied, but they even grow tired of us.

Therefore, when we see our lambs, we should not say, "The meeting is really good; please come." Instead, we have to speak the truth to them. The truth is the Lord's word. Perhaps some saints will say, "There are many places in the Word that I do not understand; I cannot even comprehend the Gospel of John." The Lord has already opened the entire New Testament to us in the Life-study messages. If someone does not understand the Gospel of John, he should read *the Life-study of John*, where all the truths are opened. Once he reads the Life-study messages, he will be able to understand the intrinsic significance of the book. (*CWWL, 1984*, vol. 5, "Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery," ch. 7, pp. 432-433)

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 1.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1984*, vol. 5, "Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel—The Four Pillars in the Lord's Recovery," chs. 1, 6-7.
3. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1984*, vol. 5, "Guidelines for the Propagation of the Lord's Recovery," ch. 1.

