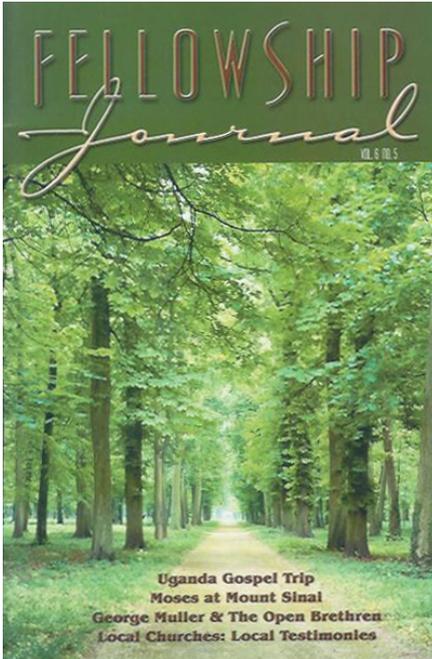


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Uganda Update

On June 10, thirteen brothers and sisters ventured to Uganda Africa. The main purpose of their 2 1/2 week visit: to assist in bringing the gospel to Uganda and open new areas for outreach and follow-up. The trip could not have occurred at a better time. The ten-month training had just ended and six of the graduates consecrated themselves to serve the Lord on a full-time basis for at least one additional year. In fact, all the new graduates were eager to go forth and pioneer new areas with the good news of their great salvation and the timely visit from the saints in USA and Canada fueled this burden. Together the Americans and Ugandans, in beautiful coordination, labored and prayed to conduct 14 gospel events through Kampala, Entebbe, Jinja and Mukono. Over 3,000 attended those events. Among those, 800 signed up to be re-contacted.

We praise and thank the Lord for the saints from North America, who consecrated their time and provided their own funding for this trip. Although the trip was quite rigorous at times (even exhausting), the Christ we shared together has left an indelible impression on both the visitors and those of us who remain.

A Great Revival

There is a growing discontent among the Ugandan people over pastors and religious leaders who try to take advantage of their own people through false hopes of prosperity and promises of miracles. People are growing weary of this



sort of fraudulent conduct. They are spiritually hungry and seeking to know the Lord and the truth in the word. This had led us to pray desperately that the vision of Christ and the church flood Kampala and even all Uganda... that people would know the love of God, the surety of His salvation and His ultimate desire to be glorified through us, His church. We do not want what we know of the Lord to be something hidden when people are crying out for the truth.

The Lord has been faithful in answering our prayer. Over the past few months, seeking pastors from over 40 communities in and around Kampala are now attending the weekly pastors training. To date, 180 different pastors have come to some of the training. Every week the attendance increases as the word of the training is reaching to more and more communities.

Join us in praying that there would be a great revival throughout Uganda. While the door is open and the Lord is blessing, we must act.

A Hidden Mystery Being Made Known

I love the passage in Ephesians chapter one. In verses 22-23 Paul says, “and He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His Body, the fullness of the One Who fills all in all.” Consider for a moment the impact, the powerful implication within these verses. It appears that the reality of “all things being under His feet” and Him being “head over all things” is practically seen in the church. The church then, as Christ’s own Body, becomes the very means He uses to express Himself to the world today. Christ wants to be known and the church as His one Body is the very fullness that enables Him to be known.

When believers throughout the city begin to catch this vision, lives are changed, hope restored, and God is glorified. What a shame to Satan, who would instigate man to become independent of God, when believers come together with the realization that they are all part of Christ’s one Body and one unified expression of Him.

Sharing God’s Love

When brothers and sisters from several churches in the USA and Canada were planning a visit to Uganda they quickly gathered together items for dona-



tion. The visitors packed light for themselves but brought the maximum weight allotment, filling their suitcases with the donated items. Those visiting brothers and sisters along with the new graduates from the ten-month training organized a special trip to a children's hospital in Jinja. The hospital received some badly needed medical supplies while every child, parent (and even hospital staff) received a smile, some words of encouragement or prayer along with a small toy and some candy.

Although our contributions were small, it was refreshing to be able to share God's love and bring a bit of joy into the lives of fellow human beings who were in desperate need of it.

On June 12, a graduation dinner was held for sixteen brothers and sister who successfully completed the ten-month training. It was a precious time for the graduates as visitors from the USA, family members, and upcoming trainees were able to give witness to all that transpired during the prior ten months.

It is hard to assess all the benefits of such a training. One certainty is that after ten months all the graduates possess a real love for people, burden for the gospel, and heart for Christ and the church. Immediately after the visitors returned to the USA, the graduates began, on their own, to organize themselves into teams for follow-up appointments. They set forth with boldness to see how what was sown among people in Jinja, Entebbe, Mukono and Kampala through the recent gospel events may continue. May the Lord use these graduates to build the church in Kampala and spread throughout Uganda.

A Word of Thanks

A special thanks to all those who visited this past June. The encouragement you brought us and the Christ we shared will be forever remembered. We would also like to thank you for all the love, prayers, and support that are enabling the move of the Lord to continue here in Uganda. Your emails and letters really supply us - so please keep them coming. May the Lord help us recognize all the opportunities for us to discover Him.

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Sometimes in our Christian life we reach a point that we need to be encouraged. We wonder, "Can the Lord really take me through all the way like He said He would?" Besides the Bible and many of the hymns, the testimonies of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord and found Him faithful can be a great help to us.

Recently someone submitted to me a life-story of one such servant, a brother known to some locally, for editing. I was encouraged as I read through this life of faithful service to the Lord, and the many answers he and his family received to prayer. I had to consider again how much I myself could testify of what Watchman Nee spoke of in his song "Utterly Abandoned to the Lord of All" (*Hymns*, #439).

Testimonies of people from cultures other than ours also testify of the Lord's power. These include amazing books such as *Zvi* by Elmwood McQuaid (the story of a Jewish boy who escaped the Warsaw ghetto, fought courageously for the new state of Israel and found Christ), *The Death of a Guru* (first published as *Escape Into The Light*, by Rabi R. Maharaj, who was once worshiped as a Hindi guru), and *The Wind is Howling* (by Ayako Miura, who also wrote *Shiokari Pass*, a book that introduced the way of Christ to many in Japan). *Peace Child*, written by Don Richardson, speaks of the gospel among the New Guinea tribesmen and those who risked everything to bring it to them. In this vein we should also recommend Jim Elliot's biography, *Through Gates of Splendor*, written by his wife Elisabeth. He and those with him were martyred bringing the gospel to the Aucas, a tribe similar to the Motilone Bruce Olson encountered in the selection here (drawn from his autobiography *Bruchko*).

There are many autobiographies of such saints as Charles Finney, James McKendrick, George Muller, Madame Guyon and John Bunyan, and biographies, as for John Wesley (such as *The Burning Heart* by Skevington Wood); J. Hudson Taylor (*God's Man in China* by Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson and Maria* by John Pollock); T. Austin-Sparks (*Shaped by Vision* by Rex Beck); Watchman Nee (*Against the Tide* by Angus Kinnear, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age* by Witness Lee); George Whitefield (as by Arnold Dallimore); Martin Luther (as by Roland Bainton); George Muller/Mueller (as by A.T.Pierson); Charles Finney (as by Lewis Drummond); John Sung (by Leslie T. Lyall); D.L.Moody and Ira Sankey, and many, many more.

Certain church histories, such as *Miller's*, by Andrew Miller, contain many inspiring accounts within their pages. Others chronicle the continuing price paid by believers in our own day, such as *By Their Blood*, a book of 20th century martyrs written by James and Marti Hefley.

Whether or not we can agree with everything each servant came to stand for, his or her consecration and love for the Lord still refreshes ours. Such testimonies also warn us against becoming proud, as though we are superior to others simply because of where we find ourselves! Seeing, therefore, as we have such a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us run the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1). - Editor

Those who bring the gospel for the first time to other cultures have marveled at how God has prepared the way for them. Don Richardson, for one, has recorded a number of such instances in his book Eternity in Their Hearts. The following is drawn from Bruchko, Bruce Olson's autobiography.

Jesus

Reaches the Motilone

Bruce Olson grew up in Minnesota. He came to Jesus when he was a junior high student. When he was 16, he sensed that the Lord wanted him to go to South America for Him, and so at age 19 he arrived in Caracas, Venezuela, with no backing other than the assurance he was following God.

Eventually he felt the Lord was leading him to a primitive tribe called the Motilone. They were a fierce people... they had killed almost everyone from the outside who had encountered them. Still, he went, and after a long period of prayer and preparation, he found himself living among them. One of them, Bobarishora, whom he called Bobby, became his pact-brother.

One day, as Bruce, Bobby and some others were coming back to the communal home from a long journey, they heard some shouting, as though someone was in agony. This was unusual for the Motilone, for they rarely cried out even in the midst of the greatest sufferings. The Motilone with him seemed to want to ignore it, but Bruce insisted they go and see what the matter was, thinking someone was in need of his medical skills.

What he found were two Motilone, one who was shouting into a hole "God, God, come out of the hole!" and another who had climbed a tree and was stuffing leaves into his mouth, calling, "God, God, come back from the horizon!" It was the strangest thing he had ever seen.

Looking around him, he saw nothing but despair on everyone's faces. When he asked Bobby why the one was looking for God in a hole, Bobby answered, "It is as good a place as any to look."

The man who had been shouting into the hole came over and said, "It is no use. We have been deceived." They told Bruce of the story he had heard before, of a false prophet who had led the tribe away from God many generations before. "We no longer know God," they said.

To Bruce, this was the opportunity he had been waiting for. Still, he wondered how he might convey to them the ideas of Christ's incarnation and sacrifice in ways they could understand.

One of them began talking of the legend among them that a blond-haired man would come among them bearing God's banana stalk. When Bruce asked what this banana stalk was, Bobby went over to a nearby banana tree, and whacked it open with his machete. "This," he said, "is the kind of banana stalk God can come from". As he said that, the inner layers of the stalk uncurled, resembling the pages of a book. This triggered something in Bruce, and he realized this legend was speaking of the Bible.

He grabbed his pack and took out his Bible, telling them that it was God's banana stalk. One of the men snatched it out of his hand and began tearing out its pages and stuffing them in his mouth, thinking that in doing so he would get God into him!

Bruce tried to explain to them how reading worked, but they were still unable to comprehend such a thing. Bruce then remembered another Motilone legend in which a Motilone became an ant so he could teach the ants how to build a home. He told them that in the same way that this Motilone had become an ant, God had become a man. This stunned them. They immediately asked where they could find His trail. Bruce told them that Jesus Christ was God become man, and that He could show them God's trail. When they asked, however, how they might find Jesus, Bruce had to tell them that the Lord had been killed because of them, and this again stunned them. They could not comprehend how this was possible.

Since to the Motilone death and life come through the ears (that is, through language), Bruce was able to relate to them through another example that Jesus had covered their sins in the eyes of God just as their chieftain would cover his ears with the carcass of a boar to hide himself from evil spirits. Jesus, he said, was slain so that they might put Him on so that their deception might be covered in the eyes of God. At this, the man who had been digging the hole wept. It was the first time Bruce had ever seen a Motilone cry.

They were devastated at the thought Jesus had died. Bruce, however, told them that the Bible spoke that Jesus had resurrected. One of them took his Bible and held it to his ear, and said he could not hear it say anything. Bruce told them that as God's banana stalk, the way it spoke did

not change from day to day, but was the same from one day to the next.

They questioned him further, saying, "In all our history, no Motilone has ever come back from the dead." Bruce replied that it was proof that Jesus was indeed God's Son.

Later, Bobby asked Bruce about how he might walk Jesus' trail. Bruce reminded him of something he had told Bruce when Bruce had refused to get up into the hammocks that hung near the ceiling of the communal home. Bruce had said, "I will go up only if I can keep one foot on the ground." To this Bobby had laughed and said he had to place both feet in the hammock. "You have to be suspended," he said.

Bruce told Bobby that he had to suspend himself in Jesus. He also told Bobby that no one could tell him how to walk Jesus' trail. Only Jesus could do that. Bobby then asked, "Bruchko, I want to tie my hammock strings into Christ, but how can I? I cannot see Him or touch Him." Bruce told him, "You've talked to spirits in the jungle, haven't you?" Bobby understood immediately.

Later, Bobby came to Bruce with a broad smile. He himself had found Jesus, and had begun to walk with Him.

This account in Bruce Olson's own words may be found in the chapter entitled "Jesus the Motilone" in Bruchko, published by Creation House Publishers (first put out under the title For This Cross I'll Kill You). Due to copyright issues, we have only summarized it here. The reader is encouraged to read the story of Bruce Olson, who is still alive today among the Motilone people in Colombia. A more recent book, Bruchko and the Motilone Miracle, published by Charisma House and cowritten with James Lund, recounts what has occurred since the first book was written. Both are recommended, although the first is perhaps more accessible to readers of all ages.

Bruce Olson developed an alphabet for the Motilone's tonal language, taught them how to read it, and translated the Bible into that newly written language.

By means of Bobarishora's salvation, the entire tribe came to Christ, and they themselves brought the gospel to neighboring tribes, some suffering martyrdom in the process.

MOSES AND GOD'S PEOPLE: GOD GAINING HIS TESTIMONY

What follows are messages given by Titus Chu in the College Training that took place in the summer of 2006 in Montreal. Prior messages can be found in issues 5:5 and 6:1.

MESSAGE SIX

After the Passover and the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, the Israelites gained their freedom, but they still did not understand what this freedom was for! They knew something about God and still practiced circumcision as He had commanded Abraham their father, but they did not realize much about who God was. After so many generations of slavery in Egypt, now He was bringing them out! They should have begun wondering about who their God was. He had shown Himself as a performer of miracles. He had acted as the Avenger on their behalf. He indicated He wanted to bring them out into a land that flowed with milk and honey, but they had no idea what that was.

BAPTIZED IN THE CLOUD AND IN THE SEA

God's presence now appeared with them as a pillar of cloud and of fire. What they needed now was to pass through the Red Sea so they might be cut off from all their relationship with the land of Egypt and enter into a new situation. By this baptism, they became available to God to do His will. They were now in the place they would find out who their God was, and what He was after.

When they arrived on the other side of the Red Sea, the Israelites were rejoicing. Moses and Miriam, Moses' sister, led all the people in song. They were happy, having been freed from their long bondage. Soon, however, they discovered they were short of water! Besides air, which is available everywhere, we need food and water, and it is in the basic things that we first confront God.

SEPARATED FROM EGYPT

The Israelites did not yet know how real or dependable their God was. This is the story of Exodus 15, as they entered the wilderness of Shur, or "Separation". (In order to bring us forward into His purpose, God first calls us to be cut off from all our old relationships. You should write all your old friends, telling them you have died! Tell them you have become a follower of Jesus. They should know you can still be their friend, as long as they can accept you as a Jesus-lover. After this, all of the "friends" who bring you into the world will disappear, for to them, you have died!)

GOD SUPPLYING THEIR WATER

As they journeyed, they found no water. For two million Israelites, with all their young and their old, three days without water was a serious matter! On the one hand, they had escaped Egypt and were separated unto God, but on the other hand, they seem to have encountered at least as much suffering, if not more, in the wilderness! Many must have considered returning to Egypt!

BITTER WATERS MADE SWEET THROUGH CHRIST'S CROSS

Furthermore, when they finally found water, it was bitter and not fit to drink! This was their experience at Marah ("Bitter") in chapter 15. The bitterness was not something that was to last, however. The people asked Moses what to do, and Moses cried unto Jehovah, and Jehovah showed him a tree, which was appointed to be thrown into the bitter

waters (15:25). Something had to pass through death. When Moses threw that wood into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

The noun for water here is plural. It is not water, but *waters*. Christ died for us to become One who can enter into all of our situations and make them alive. Then, our situation becomes sweet. When we confront some people, for instance, we encounter bitterness. If we come to them with a living Christ, that bitterness will not affect us. Instead, we will bring sweetness into that situation. When you are alive, all the things around you become sweet. When you are not that alive, whatever confronts you brings bitterness. So, if you desire to satisfy your thirst, you must have a living Christ! When you have a living Christ, all the bitter things will become sweet. If you go to your university with Christ, you will find every situation you confront can become something sweet!

ENTERING INTO A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP

There at Marah the Lord made a statute with them (15:25-26). When your thirst is really satisfied, the Lord asks whether you are happy. If you respond that you are, He asks whether you are now ready to be brought into the “real stuff”. He says, “Since you are so happy, let us make a deal.” The Lord tried the Israelites in this matter. Instead of punishing His people as He did the Egyptians, the Lord supplied them with sweet water and satisfied them. The Lord always first supplies us with sufficient strength so that we might go on further with Him. Perhaps He may ask us to go to a certain place for Him, and yet we are not prepared to do it. After He makes us so happy, however, we find we are able to tell the Lord we are ready for whatever He wants. That is grace. After we enjoy Him to a certain degree, He reveals something further to us, and makes a statute, a deal, with us.

As you begin to follow the Lord, you may feel there is no water, and even when you do find it, it seems bitter. Then Christ becomes more real to you, and the waters become sweet, and you enter into a deeper commitment with Him. This opens the door to Elim, a place of 12 springs and 70 palm trees!

ENTERING INTO REST AT ELIM

Of course, 70 palm trees and 12 springs may not seem much for two million people, but they reveal that Elim is a place of supply. Once we cut off our old relationships and separate ourselves unto the Lord, we enter into the bitterness where nothing satisfies us any longer, except for what comes through this wonderful “tree” that has become a piece of “wood” for us. And as we are satisfied with HIS sweetness, the Lord comes in to make a deal with us. He does not force us in the matter. He is so gracious and merciful. Eventually He brings us to Elim where we are happy to “set down our stakes.” God, however, calls us forward again, saying, “You need to be enlarged yet more!” And you cannot say no, for the pillar of cloud has lifted up and is moving on!

MOVING ON TO THE WILDERNESS

Thus the children of Israel were brought to the Wilderness of Sin. (Exo. 16:1. This name in Hebrew, however, has nothing to do with sin!) After only two months, their position was now between Elim, where the supply had become part of their story with God, and a place of thorns (Sinai). The Lord was asking, “Are you willing to go on?” Our reaction to this question is the most important matter in our entire life.

Normally, we are comfortable where we are. We have some amount of enjoyment from the Lord as we attend meetings or conferences. We do not anticipate anything further. Yet when the Lord comes to us and points us to the way of the cross, we must be able to continue on, or else the Lord will not be able to fully transform us.

ARRIVING AT THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

It seems the Lord takes us on too quickly! After only one more month, they would arrive at Mt. Sinai (Exo. 16:1; 19:1, see also 18:5). The Lord urges us forward, saying, “Grow up! Grow up! I will give you sufficient grace!” After He brings us to a place of satisfaction, He moves us from

that experience to something not so pleasing. We feel like lingering; we have no inclination to move towards any challenge that lies ahead. Perhaps, if we are “second generation,” we feel that we cannot be expected to consecrate ourselves like our parents have. We are able to take God on our own terms. As long as He makes us happy, we are with Him. We can go forward if He gives us a good time. The Lord, however, is leading us to take the way of the cross. It is already decided. There is a place of thorns, a place where there seems to be nothing at all that is encouraging. It is there that God will appear to us, since it is a place that is bereft of anything that might compete with Him.

You may feel you have your future planned, but the Lord desires to turn you around to face Sinai, a place that has the appearance of curse! In Sinai there is nothing outwardly encouraging, but it is only there that your determination to follow Christ can be demonstrated.

CONTENDING WITH HUNGER

In Exodus 16:2-3, after they had arrived in this wilderness, the children of Israel declare they wish they had died in Egypt, for in Egypt they sat next to fleshpots, full of food. A fleshpot can contain any kind of flesh. Perhaps they were thinking of how they used to barbeque. In Egypt they also said they were able to eat bread “to the full”. By this time in the wilderness, any bread they had brought with them from Egypt was long gone. They accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to starve them to death!

First they experienced thirst; now they experienced hunger. Hunger has to do with a different kind of need that we have as human beings. For instance, men and women have a need to marry or the need to find the life-employment that fits them. Perhaps we might have a desire to achieve recognition among our peers. Such are the things that drive people in their human life. People hunger to satisfy their need for fulfillment, that their existence might realize something of its potential. Most people take the way of the “fleshpot,” that is, what the world provides. When we take God’s way, however, we forfeit the means

people use to achieve their goals. Therefore, we feel like we are being killed, and that our life will come to nothing.

Moses told the Israelites to come before the Lord, for the Lord had heard their complaining. The glory of the Lord then appeared to them in the cloud (16:10). God did not, however, punish them. Instead, He told them that in the evening He would satisfy them with meat, and in the morning He would send bread. In other words, God was more concerned with the source they received it from than the fact that they desired it. I may not be right in everything, but as long as I am right with God, and clear with Him, I am able to remain firmly within what He desires. God told them He understood their need, and promised to give them food. He wanted them to know that He was their God, and that they could trust in Him. His word to them was that He was able to take care of them.

QUAIL

Thus in the evening, God sent quail into the camp. So many millions of quail must have filled the sky! Did God prepare them all ahead of time and keep them nearby until the Israelites arrived? Did He simply create them? No one knows. Many times when God leads you, you discover things which cause you to wonder: was this a planned coincidence, or was it a divine creation? Any way you look at it, it was a miracle. The quail covered the camp.

MANNA: WHAT IS IT?

In the morning, after the dew went up from the ground, a small round thing was left behind, having the appearance of hoarfrost. When the children of Israel saw it, they called it “What is it?” (“Man hu?”). God satisfies them with this daily “manna”.

Sometimes, after we have been waiting so long for something to happen, when it does we can only wonder “What is this?” Every day God provides manna, if we know how to recognize it. If we are such people, we are always able to testify of the Lord’s rich provision, morning by morning

(v. 12). Have you had occasion today to say “What is *this*”? Sometimes it may seem something not so pleasant; sometimes it may seem something wonderful, but either way, are we able to “eat” what the Lord provides for us day after day, like the Israelites did for forty years? (Manna was their food until they entered into the good land.)

TESTED AGAIN BY NO WATER

In Exodus 17 we see the children of Israel again coming to a place where there was no water for them as they traveled under God’s command. It was at Rephidim (“Rest”). Having been fed by the Lord they found rest, yet once again they were tested by the fact there was no water!

Why is it that so many are able to love the Lord when they are young, and then disappear? Even though you may have been brought to rest in the Lord, something can still snatch you away. Even though you love the Lord and have experienced His supply, and you have consecrated yourself to Him, when you find the enjoyment is gone, you may find yourself getting involved with things that have nothing to do with Christ or the church life.

Most of you are restful in the church life. You are in Rephidim. If you need money, your parents can provide it. You can go to Mountaintop. You can even go to a new locality for a year to raise up the church life. You can say, “Lord, I worship You as a young person in the church life. Everything is being taken care of on my behalf.” Everyone will indeed do their best to make a way for you. Yet when you truly follow the Lord, as those who serve you have found out, at times you will experience “no water”. When you encounter this, you need to be enlarged.

A CONTINUING THIRST

Yes, even more mature believers can still say they still have other yearnings. When I heard China had opened a railway to Tibet, I confess that I experienced some “thirst” for that. From my youth, my desire has been to go to Tibet. From one angle, when I see this or that place on the

globe opening up, I realize it means less opportunity for me to go to Tibet! I am in Rephidim, but I have a thirst. I have been through so many countries and experienced so many cultures, yet I still long to go to Tibet. Why? I am an Israelite. This is a part of my journey. No matter how restful we are, there will still be some special desire within us that we wish to fulfill. Something particular will still be with us that we will yearn for. We will be able to say, “I am content, and yet. . . .” You still desire a certain kind of something.

STRIKING THE ROCK AT HOREB

As a response to the murmuring this time, the Lord told Moses to take the elders with him. There had to be a collective strength. The Lord would appear to them in Horeb, a place that was God’s alone. There God would smite the rock, and water would come forth for the people to drink. Moses did so in the sight of the elders, and the Israelites called that place Massah (Temptation) and Meribah (Strife). To me, that would be a strange sign that in the middle of the desert there would be a rock where Moses met God when He first appeared to him in the burning bush (Exo. 3:1). In this place, God told Moses he had to go with the others with the rod that had divided the Red Sea and to smite the rock and open it so the water could flow out. What is the answer to my yearning for Tibet? It is to abide in the death of Christ. The rock is Christ, cleft for us (1 Cor. 11:24; 10:4).

This is the most difficult matter for most of those who love the Lord. We will be attracted to opportunities in our lives that will make it difficult for us to really know the Lord. We may try to ignore the thirst, but it will still be present. If we do not come to know Christ in His death, we will be caught by that thing we thirst for. We may know Christ as the one who satisfies us in our daily life and meets our need as our daily bread, but we must also know Him as the One who delivers us from that particular desire that has a hold on us. The Lord may even agree with us that it is a reasonable thirst, but He will take us to the rock Horeb, a place of destruction and isolation, for only there the things of the world lose their hold.

I had a good job, and then one day the Lord told me to leave it. Again, as I was in His presence, He told me once more. I went to my boss and told him I was going to quit. He told me it broke his heart, for I was one who was being raised up for management. The second day he presented me with a paperweight that said, “THINK” for me to consider. A few days later I received a phone call from another university offering me a very good position. As a young man, I would hold the number two post! I replied that I had quit my job to serve the Lord. That person asked, “If I had called you just a few days earlier, before you took this step, would you have come?” Saints, when these things happen, are we able to hide in the death of Christ? Can we tell the Lord, “Lord, You died for me. I died with You. You never aimed at anything in the world. Neither will I. I abide in the effectiveness of Your cross!”

This rock was eventually called “the spiritual Rock that followed them” by Paul (1 Cor. 10:4). When we are tempted by some particular matter, such as a job that promises prestige and financial security, we must remember there is a Rock following us that tells us, “Take Me as your reality. I can satisfy you.”

Many tell the Lord that they love Him, and then turn their back on Him and seek after what it is they really desire. In the midst of such believers, wouldn't those who truly follow the Lord be tempted to give up and do likewise? Could they not gain something in the world and still maintain their claim that they are for Christ? Saints, if we do not come to know Christ as the spiritual Rock that follows us, we will have no way to fully follow Him. The other things that will tempt us are simply too powerful. After the experience of the smitten rock, however, they were able to defeat the Amalekites, who represent the flesh (17:8-15).

Consider a brother who is in medical school. When he becomes a doctor, will he still be able to follow the Lord, or will he be swallowed up by other considerations, such as the temptation of money? When you enter your career, and you receive opportunities for advancement and an improved lifestyle, will you still be able to reject them if they

compromise your stand for Christ and the church? Or will you be able to use your profession for the gospel and for the Lord's testimony? The temptations will be many, but there is a Rock already broken for you to hide yourself in (see Song of Songs 2:14). In Christ as the Rock, you will be protected. How good this is! Whenever we turn to this Rock and call upon Him, all our thirst for other things disappears, and whatever is tempting us loses its power. The more we follow Him, the more we find that nothing is more attractive or meaningful than a life that is absolutely for Christ!

THE ROCK HAS BEEN SMITTEN: SPEAK TO IT!

This rock was with Moses and the people at Horeb, which was first referred to as the mountain of God (Exo. 3:1). Now there is something called the Rock of Horeb (Exo. 17:6). The very capital Moses had acquired of God became the means for God to accompany Moses as a Rock. Moses had only to hit it to break it, which has been accomplished once and for all. It is not something left for us to do. Christ has been broken already for us. Therefore He is always ready to flow out the water to meet whatever the need is, wherever we are, for He follows us! There may be endless temptations, but there is also a limitless supply that follows us. How we worship Him! The unlimited supply will swallow up the endless temptations. Eventually we shall become His people, abiding in Christ, taking Him as everything, because the Rock is smitten. All that is left for us today is to speak to the rock whenever we desire that water. Saints, speak to the Rock, and let the waters flow!

MOSES AND GOD'S PEOPLE: GOD GAINING HIS TESTIMONY

MESSAGE SEVEN

Numbers in the Bible have meaning. Both the twelve springs and seventy palm trees at Elim, for instance, signify something complete, for the numbers twelve and seven signify completeness. The number twelve represents completion in eternity, while the number seven speaks of completion in this age. Therefore, the record of seventy palm trees speaks to us that God will cover, protect and shade us to the uttermost! Twelve also is a number composed of three (God) times four (man), which reveals that this Spirit of God who is in our spirit will flow for us to drink through all eternity!

THE FOUR SECTIONS OF EXODUS

In this study, we divide Exodus into four sections. The first covers the preparation of Moses up until God first appeared to him and directed him to deliver His people from Egypt. This time of Moses' preparation included forty years in Egypt and forty years in the wilderness.

Due to the situation and condition of the Israelites, and his own situation, what God was asking him to do seemed impossible. His response was: "Who am I to do such a thing? And who are You? Who are these people? I have no such ability. Anyway, regardless how You assure me, I cannot comply." Yet eventually the Lord had a way to work with Moses. How marvelous it is that the Lord has a way to work with us even when we are **not** able to follow Him!

We may have vowed our consecration to the Lord, but when it comes to the “big” things, most of us have already made up our minds. Therefore our only hope is that the Lord would overcome our resistance! God was able to bring Moses back to Egypt, beginning the second section, which involves God’s work to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. The means God used were powerful. He brought plague after plague upon Egypt. Using miracles, God brought Israel out with a strong hand. Then, after they finally crossed the Red Sea, they entered into what we may refer to as the third section in this book.

In this third section, God’s goal was to reveal to His people that He was able to be everything to them. He isn’t just a miracle-performer; He is able to be everything to us! This is marvelous. The problem is, however, that most of us seem to think that our IQ is higher than God’s. We know that, unlike ours, His wisdom is limitless, and yet we still trust our own understanding and judgment more than we trust Him. We may tell God we love Him, but it seems we think He doesn’t really know us, and we cannot trust ourselves to Him, even though we know in theory that all things are in His capable hands. Hard as it is to believe, it seems nearly no Christian is able to fully trust in his or her Lord.

But praise Him! The Lord was able to bring Israel all the way from the crossing of the Red Sea to the mountain of God and the smitten Rock, just so they might learn that He was trustworthy and able to satisfy. It is the same with us, even though very few may trust Him enough to serve Him. O saints! You need to know that the Lord can meet your need! In Exodus, we see how God proves He is able to meet the needs of His followers.

God had done so much to prepare a vessel, Moses, who was able to work with, for, according to, and unto God. Secondly, He had brought the children out from Egypt and revealed Himself in His punishment upon the world. Thirdly, He revealed He could meet their need. There are many different kinds of people with many different kinds of needs, but He is able to take care of them all!

**THE FOURTH STAGE:
BRINGING HIS PEOPLE INTO ONENESS WITH HIM**

Finally, in the next and fourth stage, God asks: “Are you prepared finally to turn your thoughts to ME?” He had proven Himself and done so much for them. Wasn’t it time the people should have some concern for God Himself? Shouldn’t some be asking, “God, what is Your purpose?”

For many young people, the time of real testing comes when they graduate from high school and consider what to do next. Many young people consider what college they should go to (often based upon its distance from their parents). Some set high goals for themselves, but in my view, even to become a college professor is a waste compared to serving the Lord full-time. We shouldn’t just live our lives as those in the world! We can live a life to serve God Himself! How marvelous! There is nothing wrong with getting a job, but if you pray and ask the Lord “Should I get a job?” He will probably grant it. Why not instead pray, “Lord, should I serve You full-time?” If more young people would ask the Lord to allow them to give two years of their lives to be trained and equipped to serve Him and become a blessing in the church life, how wonderful that would be! If a number would give themselves to be spiritually equipped and trained after they graduate from college, they will be surprised at how useful they become in the church life. You must realize that the way God is leading us is not only according to what our needs are, but also according to *His* need!

THE FAILURE OF MOSES IN HEEDING JETHRO

In Exodus 18, Moses’ father-in-law suddenly appears. (Many people related to Moses, such as his older sister Miriam, seem to have lived beyond the 80-year age limit Moses speaks of in Psalm 90:10!). What follows is the first serious failure in Moses’ serving life. Moses allowed his father-in-law to convince him to set judges over the people. Did not God also see that there were able men among them who could do this? Yet God had not said anything of this kind. Jethro’s direction that Moses set judges over God’s people according to their ranks may appear logical, but to God this was very offensive, because these people were *His*, not Moses’ or Jethro’s. God had

His own way, which was to bring the leader to Himself, and to send the leader to the people with His direction according to the situation. In this manner, the leaders of the congregation were brought to God to enjoy God. This is God's way. Moses, however, did not come to God in this matter.

**THE HIGHLIGHT OF EXODUS:
GOD REVEALING HIMSELF AT MOUNT SINAI**

The final section of Exodus begins with chapter 19 and continues to the end of Exodus. It is the most crucial section. Everything else up to this point has been like the appetizer to prepare us for the main course. We may be impressed by the stories of the plagues and so on, but these things should not be our focus. What is most precious are the times Moses went to see God on the mountain to be with Him, and his returning with God's revelation to His people. These episodes are the real treasure of Exodus. God prepared Moses, God punished Pharaoh, and God led His people into the wilderness and sustained them so that they might come to know Him, beginning at Mt. Sinai.

They came to the wilderness of Sinai on the first day of the third month after they departed from Egypt. Only sixty days had passed since they crossed the Red Sea. In Exodus 19:4-6, we see God telling His people that the reason He had borne them as on eagle's wings was to bring them to HIMSELF. It was not merely to meet their physical need or to bring them into some other good fortune. All of God's work is to bring us to *Himself*. Isn't this wonderful? We may care about what college we attend, what career we shall choose, and so on, but God's heart is involved with whether or not we will be brought to Him in all these things.

WE ARE HIS TREASURE: IS HE OURS?

A very rich boy would be foolish to think a girl he loved was simply marrying him for himself. He should first insist that she sign a contract that told her she would get nothing if they divorced. Then that girl's true colors would show! This is what God did at Sinai. A girl and a boy should marry because they are mutually attracted to one another. Thus God told them, "If you obey

My covenant, you shall become a treasure to Me above all people” (19:5). God desired that this people whom He had brought out of everything would become His personal treasure! This indicates that God loved them more than anything else. And His desire is that we would love Him for Himself, rather than for anything He might give us apart from Him.

It is marvelous that God would treasure us in this way. For instance, even though there are many three-year-old girls in the world, I only care for one: my grand-daughter. She is the one I want to sit next to, even though she may make a big mess while we sit together. God’s heart was caught up with this particular people. He did all that He did in the book of Exodus because He treasured them to such a degree. He could not stand the thought of not possessing them! The thought of being kept at a distance from them any longer was intolerable to Him. Any separation from them affected God. He could not be satisfied until there was such a relationship. Why? Because they were to Him His unique treasure.

HIS TREASURE, A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS, AND A HOLY NATION

In verse 6, He tells them further that they would be to Him a kingdom of priests. This touches His testimony. All the regenerated, born-again believers are to God such a priestly company today. To God, we are a kingdom of priests (Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5,9). We should serve God as His priests. Therefore, as a young person, equip yourselves for this. After you graduate from college, give yourself to be trained for this. Then eventually, whether you go on afterwards to get a job, go back to school, or serve the Lord full-time, you will have something solid, and you will become a blessing to your local church.

As His treasure, we are a “peculiar people” to God (1 Pet. 2:9 KJV, which has “peculiar treasure” in Exo. 19:5). We are also a kingdom of priests. Furthermore, in 19:6 the Lord continues by declaring they were a holy nation, which refers to their being the Lord’s testimony.

We are a testimony of the country we live in. We are a testimony of what kind of food, culture, education, etc., the USA has. We express what America

contains. What is it we testify as the nation of God? The holiness of God Himself. People should be able to see in us that our God is a holy God.

APPROACHING THE MOUNTAIN TO MEET GOD

In 19:11 the Lord tells Moses that after the people purified themselves, they were to come up to the mountain. Why? So that they could begin this process of becoming what God was seeking. In order to become the Lord's personal treasure, we must come in contact with who the Lord is! Up until now, many of us may only know of Him as a kind of Santa Claus: someone who answered your cry when you were under some kind of bondage, or who quenched your thirst, or met some kind of human need you had, etc. Many among us are like this. Therefore, God must show us something more.

AWESOMENESS AND AWFULNESS

On the third day in the morning, there was a thick cloud on the mountain, and thunder and lightning and the loud sound of a trumpet so that all who were in the camp trembled (19:16). When it is time, God will unveil something. When I was young, I told the Lord that He should be happy, having found a young man like me to love Him. How could I say such a thing? Because I hadn't really yet seen God. At Mt. Sinai, the people confronted their God. Eventually they could only approach to a certain point, to the foot of the mountain, for the entire mountain was on fire. When God comes, He consumes (Heb. 12:29).

OUR GOD SHALL CONSUME WHAT IS NOT OF HIM

If God does not bring us to this point, we seemingly live a happy life. When God really meets us, we are finished. You may have plans for your life, but if God becomes your God, He has His own plans for you. The person you marry or the children you have or where you end up living, for instance, may not be as you had imagined. He will also unveil many unexpected opportunities, but your realization will be that God is consuming everything so you might be for Him alone.

More than once I have touched the Lord to the point I had to prostrate myself before Him. Once you see who He is, you pour out your soul to Him, and you experience being consumed. The smoke that ascended at Mt. Sinai on that day was as the smoke of a furnace and the entire mountain quaked! How threatening that must have seemed. When the earth shakes, where can you put yourself?

MOSES ALONE APPROACHES GOD

The Lord came down upon the top of the fiery mountain and called Moses up to Himself (19:20). The whole mountain was on fire, so the Lord was asking Moses to walk through the fire into the darkness at the top where He was, and Moses came. Moses had learned something. He realized that if the fire was from the Lord, the Lord would also be able to preserve him.

THE PEOPLE NOT YET READY, BUT GOD HAS LAID HOLD OF THEM

The Lord warned Moses that the people must not touch the mountain, or they would die. A boundary had to be set up, to sanctify it. God desired to be with His people, yet they had no realization of how far off they still were from His holiness. They were His treasure, and a kingdom of priests to Him. Therefore He had to show to them something of who He was. In their present state they could not be a testimony of who He was. This is why there had to be a boundary set around the mountain, lest they be consumed by God in His holiness. They were not yet ready to bear His glory. That time would come in Exodus 40, where the glory came down in their midst, filling the tabernacle. But at this point they were still young, and did not realize what their condition was.

The people saw something of God's power: the fire and smoke, the lightning and thunder, the trumpet blast and earthquake. They did not really see God Himself; they only perceived His power. They still had a long way to go, but God had claimed them and would bring them to the goal of becoming His testimony.

MOSES AND GOD'S PEOPLE: GOD GAINING HIS TESTIMONY

MESSAGE EIGHT

God has a need, and His need is the unique need above every other need in the universe. Therefore when a human being lives according to God's need, he or she lives the highest life. Moses had to find how to bring the Israelites fully into God's heart, God's desire, God's operating principle, and even God Himself, so that they might eventually become one with Him as His people. Exodus only covers the first two years or so of their forty-year journey before reaching the good land. All that follows in the rest of the Books of Moses (Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) is in the principle of what commences in chapter 19 of Exodus, where God conveys His testimony to the nation of Israel, and the means for them to become His testimony.

GOD'S APPEARINGS TO MOSES AT SINAI

God is the one who is the focus and purpose of our pursuing, our exceeding great joy (Psalm 43:4). In Exodus at least six times Moses spent time with God upon Mt. Sinai, beginning in chapter 19. In the first instance, God revealed what kind of heart He had. He told Moses He wanted the Israelites as His treasure to be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation to Him. This must have made the Israelites quite glad!

The second time Moses went up was when God revealed something of who He really was, so when God appeared to them, it was with fire, thunder and earthquake. When God actually appears, it is far beyond anything we could

imagine! He is not a sweet mood, even though He does take care of our need sweetly, as indicated at Marah (15:23-26). When we really know who the Lord is, however, a fear of Him is established, and this fear becomes the base of our life. Many things you will dare not touch, because you realize God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:18-29).

The third time Moses came up, God began to show him that in His presence, there would be days of festivals! Knowing God is a matter of feasting! When you have God, you have festivals. Human festivals end with emptiness. This is why Jesus stood up in John 7 and said, on the last day of the feast, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink!” (v. 37). On this earth people greatly look forward to festivals. Earthly festivals, however, come and go. But God says, “If you have Me, you will have festivals continually.” These festivals in God are what bring in the enjoyment of the church life.

This is the significance of the fourth time: when you know who this God is, with the aspect of festival, the entire church will be brought into blessing.

The fifth and/or sixth time (it is hard to discern), God said “You need to grow and bear My testimony,” and then the Israelites ended up in a deep valley, compared to Moses, who was on the mountaintop of his experience. In that, they received judgment (chapter 32). Due to this, in the sixth situation, Moses brought the situation to the Lord and said, “Either you take all of us, or you kill me.” Moses joined to the people he led to the extent that he could talk with God in such a way. He said, in effect, “Either bring us all on, or else delete my name out of the book of life. You called me and I have answered Your call and joined myself to this people. You are responsible to take us all on. If not, I am also through with You.” In response to this, God granted Moses a marvelous experience, due to how Moses opened the way for Him to exhibit what His purpose was. Thus, the ark of testimony was raised up, and God’s glory filled it!

RECEIVING THE COMMANDMENTS

In 19:24 we read, “Then Jehovah said to him, “Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people

break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them.” Verse 23 was the conclusion of the second meeting of Moses and God. In verse 24 God told him to go down and then return, this time with Aaron. What God spoke to them is in chapter 20 where He speaks the Law that testifies of who He is.

THREE MOST SIGNIFICANT COMMANDMENTS

“NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME”

We will only consider three things contained here, among all the other matters. First, God told them, “I am the Lord Thy God..you shall have no other gods before Me” (20:2-3). This indicates that people, even though they have God, might have something else as well! Young people may have another god before God, such as a university, or a boyfriend or girlfriend, or a parent or grandparent might have their children or grandchildren. God, however, says, “I am Jehovah your God.” In the King James, Jehovah is translated “Lord”. He is not only our God, but also our Lord. He has our life. We belong to Him, for He is the Lord our God. Nothing else should be as important to us as He is. This, however, is often not the case. It is too easy for young people to accumulate many other gods, but fortunately they are often quickly dropped in favor of others, so they don’t last long! But still we may have many other gods in our life, placing God “second in line”. God, however, desires to be our unique God. He alone should be our Lord. Before Him we shouldn’t have any other gods that challenge Him as our Lord.

“REMEMBER THE SABBATH”

The second crucial matter is the matter of the Sabbath (20:8). On the seventh day God rested because He had accomplished everything (Gen. 2:1). Therefore we have to learn to enjoy this rest in what He has accomplished. God is very strong to tell His believers, “Rest in Me.” We may even strive to be overcomers, yet our God tells us, “You have to learn to rest in Me, and in what I have accomplished.”

Some have expressed concern that some have divided themselves from others over some matter. If we see that we are all organically members one of another in Christ's Body (1 Cor. 12), we need not fear such a thing. We may rest in this fact. The thought of division belongs to human institution. Once we see the matter of the organic Body, we would never trouble others with the suggestion that some are dividing themselves from others. I hear many rumors concerning me, but I am restful. I am able to tell the Lord, "You know everything and You are doing the best." It may be true that those who are spiritual must endure persecution (2 Tim. 3:12), but we should still be restful. Who is able to tell you not to love the Lord, or the local church, or your brothers and sisters? As long as they cannot tell you to forget about Christ, you should not be troubled. (If they do, you can say, "I had better forget about you!")

"HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER"

The third thing we should mention is the commandment to honor our father and mother that we may "live long in the land" (20:12). Remember your source. Remembering your source is an important thing. I was asked to join in a kind of rebellion one time against Brother Lee, but my reply was that he was my source. I cannot say anyone has never made a mistake, but I do not honor a person because he is perfect; I honor those who are my source.

Young people also like to get away from their parents when they go to college. This seems to be a part of American culture. (I strongly urge you to go where there is a strong church life to support you!) Learn this principle: to honor your source. There was a time when someone was accused in my ears, and he may have indeed had some problem with Brother Lee's leadership. I never dropped my love or respect to that brother, however, for he also was one who was my source.

In the ten commandments are these three major matters. First, do you take God as your LORD? He alone must be your God. Second, since you have such a God, do you know how to live a life at rest in Him? Since He rested, you can also abide in His rest. Third, do you recognize that as a human being, the great virtue is that you always remember your source?

Chinese pay attention to the matter of honoring their source even to the point of becoming self-effacing. It becomes a performance, so this is not so good. The principle, however, is right. Honor your parents. Appreciate them.

My comment as a parent to my children is: “Do not let the older generation frustrate your life.” But for them to say “Do not frustrate me” is not such a good thing! Anyone who says such a thing can probably not truly love God. Those who love and appreciate God must honor their parents, because this is His commandment.

It is normal that kids cause their parents to become upset and sad at times, but our attitude should be to honor. Even if our parents do not understand us as we follow the Lord, we must still honor them, even though we should never compromise our stand or our faith. I never surrendered my faith as a young believer, but I also never told my parents they had no right to judge me. If my dad got mad at me for something I did in following the Lord, I still knew he loved me, and would wait respectfully to be received at the dinner table again. I never declared, “God will judge you for persecuting me!” Show honor. Render your love to your parents. That is the top virtue to be developed in your human life. A person who honors his or her parents is a person able to love the Lord in a real way.

One brother told me his father beat him, and he ran away to the meeting hall, and the brothers received him! If I were the elder, I would pray with him and tell him, “Remember, your dad loves you more than you love him. Go back to him. I will even go with you.” This brother became a doctor and raised up a family, but never was reconciled to his father. Eventually, one day he did apologize, but to my feeling his testimony was not fitting a true child of God. Some may have even thought he was so much for Christ in running away and never going back to his father. I would say, No. Honor your parents. Such a person caused agony to his father for years. How can this be praised? Such a person is not trustworthy, for he does not know how to honor his source. I can give you a long account of all those who helped me, and to this day I appreciate them, regardless what happened in their lives afterwards.

So, in our Christian life, we must realize that nothing can be allowed to challenge or replace the Lordship of God in our lives. Secondly, we should be so restful, for God has accomplished His work. Thirdly, always remember your source.

I appreciate the young man who grows up not seeking a better career, but rather how God has governmentally arranged something for him to be where he is today, physically and spiritually. Anyone who possesses this virtue will grow healthy and well. This is what God showed His people on Mt. Sinai.

THE FEASTS

In chapter 23, we also see that when we have God, our life is a life of feasting! In verses 14 through 17 the Lord told them they must keep a feast to Him three times a year: the feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover); the feast of Harvest (Pentecost); and the feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles). Three times a year all the males were to appear before the Lord. This word is very human. He didn't say "Passover" for unleavened bread, or "Pentecost" for harvest. These titles seem so legal. The Passover is over, there is no more killing. Now it is a matter of enjoyment in reality, not in religion. This is why He calls the first feast that of Unleavened Bread. This first feast is our experience of Christ.

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

In this feast of Unleavened Bread there are three days, representing the Lord's three days upon the cross. On the first day, the Lord died. That was the Passover. Then He rested in Hades (even though He preached the gospel to those spirits of Noah's age-1 Pet. 3:19). The third day was His day of resurrection, or the feast of the firstfruit (of barley). (Ingathering refers to wheat.) In the Bible, barley symbolizes resurrection. Therefore what is included in the feast of Unleavened Bread are three days of three aspects. Firstly, Christ died, so we do not have to! Second, Christ rested, so we have unleavened bread. Nothing of the world can bother us. The third day is the feast of Firstfruit. All the harvest begins to ripen and is coming in. These

reveal our growth as Christians. First, we enjoy Christ's death. Second, we enjoy Christ's rest. Third, we enjoy Christ's resurrection. These all relate to the feast of Unleavened Bread. The focus of a feast is that we *enjoy* what Christ has done. The Lord died...thus we are made alive. The Lord rested...thus we have become pure before the Lord, enjoying the feast of Unleavened Bread. The Lord is resurrected...thus we can become the firstfruit to the Lord out of our enjoyment.

In 1953 I experienced the "Passover". In 1954 I began to love the Lord, for these 52 years the Lord by His mercy has always led me to live a life of feasting on unleavened bread. We are in the world, but we do not belong to it (John 17:15-16)! Now, today when everything is so messy and degraded, God is calling some to be the firstfruit of the barley to have the first taste of what is resurrection. Paul said "Not only I desire to know Christ, but also the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10)!"

The first feast is the feast of Unleavened Bread. Here you take Christ as Lord and God as God, and the church life becomes a feasting life. We all have experienced such a Passover, and are enjoying such an unleavened bread. Thus, we live in this world, but we are different from those around us. The difference is, when we make any decision, *Christ* is involved. Thus, it is unleavened. Many of you go to college in your hometown. This is a good sign. Your decision-making is different than those in the world. Too often young people in the past determined to go to a college not too close to their homes. They needed their father's money, but they did not need his presence. Think how leavened that is! Many today can testify I chose my school with the Lord's testimony in view.

Leaven ferments us, making us useless. If the Lord provides something, enjoy it, but do not *seek* the things that leaven. Since you have this heavenly Christ, can you not live an unleavened life? The unleavened life produces the feast of Unleavened Bread. In this feast, you experience the growth in life. Firstly you die with Christ, secondly you live in Christ, thirdly you enjoy the resurrection of Christ as the firstfruit of the barley. How good that is! This is the first feast.

FEAST OF HARVEST

The second feast is the feast of Harvest. When you eat enough unleavened bread, you also take in a harvest. The Lord desires that we would experience a harvest where we are. This is not the job of some worker, it is your job. When you enjoy God as your Lord, and you enjoy the feasting life--enjoying Christ's death, living and resurrection--you will live a feast of Harvest (also called Pentecost because it takes place fifty days after Passover). Once you are saved, the Lord is fully responsible (five times ten, or responsibility in fullness) to bring about a kind of harvest through us. [Fifty is also seven times seven plus one. The new first day of the week (or eighth day of the first week) is the day of resurrection. And seven is three plus four, completion in time. SO completion upon completion, then you arrive at a GRAND resurrection, symbolized by one!] You have experienced the Passover. Do you have the experience of the feast of Harvest? What is it? It is the experience of resurrection upon resurrection upon resurrection!

My last fifty years of following the Lord have really been "five times ten." God says, "I am fully responsible for your growth, development, operation, usefulness, and your becoming a blessing to Me." More than that, He can say, "When you first loved Me, you touched resurrection. And now you also touch resurrection, but what a difference!" When we first touch resurrection, it is not so grand. It is something to get us out of a mood, perhaps. But every time, the Lord says, "MAKE IT HIGHER!" He wants us to see what is the real resurrection. Do we think something is too hard? Do we think we have no future? Do we think it is finally over? No! Remember, there is resurrection! "Fifty days" means God is fully responsible to bring us from one level of resurrection to another unto its fullness, to the highest of man's ability.

Furthermore, the feast of Unleavened Bread is in the month of Abib (Sprouting), and the feast of Harvest is in the month of Sivan (Covering). How do you enjoy this resurrection? How do you enjoy this harvest? It is in the church life, in which you are under the covering of all the brothers. Without the church life, no training and no labor works. If you are by yourself and think you can go forward in this way, you should know it is not possible. This is why I refuse to depart from the brothers and sisters. Outside of the

church life, it is not possible to grow in such a way. Even if the saints don't like me, I refuse to leave, because this is where my covering is!

FEAST OF INGATHERING

Finally, we come to the feast of Tabernacles, which is also the feast of Ingathering. This is the time we gather together the labor of our life to remember our God! Thus the accomplishment of God's purpose is finally with all the matured ones. It is still too early for you who are young to enter into this, but enjoy the feast of Unleavened Bread and participate in the feast of Harvest. The church life will elevate your Christian life, and eventually usher you into this third feast, the feast of Ingathering, in which God's purpose is accomplished!

The feast of Ingathering takes place in the month of Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2). Ethanim refers to a gift in grace, a living stream, or fruit coming forth. This is the significance. When this feast comes, it first comes with a day of blowing of trumpets, sounding the victory of Christ. Hallelujah! It also includes the feast of Atonement. The Lord comes to redeem and save whoever comes short. Thirdly, comes the feast of Tabernacles, in which we live in a tent for seven days. Thus this feast of Ingathering also includes three feasts: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Atonement, and the feast of Tabernacles.

The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate feast of Tabernacles, in which we will abide with God forever. This is the completion in eternity.

EATING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

In Exodus 24, we are told Moses came up to God a fourth time. This time it was not just with Aaron, but also with Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu. (They got into trouble later, but at this point they were able.) Aaron means "light-bearer". Out of such a light-bearer came Nadab ("liberty"). Augustine commented that in essential things of the faith, we must have unity, but in non-essential things we must give liberty. We must have the freedom in our spirit. We must not insist on things that are not essential to the faith. The Lord would be displeased with us if our unity was based on such a thing as

uniformity of practice. Such unification is against the principle of the operation of life. We all must eat, but you should be free to eat American food, and I may eat Chinese food. We should be very free to read the Bible, sing a song, or pray in some manner. As long as it is not sinful or worldly, we should appreciate it when we come together.

God told Moses to get the “light-bearer” up, and secondly, get up those who have the freedom to follow the Lord. Number three, get Abihu, which means “worship of God” up. Then, he was also to get seventy of the elders, to worship God afar, for they are too young and could not handle God yet. Some of you do not see too much in the Bible yet simply because the Lord cannot afford to reveal too much to you yet, lest you die (that is, become proud and lose your ability to receive).

BECOMING A WORK OF SAPPHIRE
UPON WHICH THE LORD CAN STAND

Moses alone was to come near to the Lord. When Moses told the people all that God had said, the people replied, “All that the Lord has said, we will do!” (24:3). Don’t believe that! But in verse 10 we are told they saw the God of Israel. Under Him was a paved work of sapphire stone. The constituted, transformed saints provide God’s support. Some were so much worked upon by the Spirit that they become a paved or carved work of sapphire. These are the ones who support God, giving Him a way to stand. O, how I should wish to be that sapphire! I do not care what price I must pay, if God could one day stand upon me to declare Himself... how glorious!

They saw God and they did eat and drink. God is here! Enjoy! It was not a somber scene, but one that is so wonderfully pleasant. I think in the whole Old Testament, Aaron, his sons, and those seventy elders were the most blessed people. This was the fourth time Moses appeared before God on Mt. Sinai. What a beautiful picture. God has shown who He is, what He desires, and what His people should do. They should live a life of feasting. Then the people should come up, to the mid-point of the mountain, and see God upon a paved work of sapphire, typifying those mature ones who support God to bear the testimony. There, instead of being struck down, we eat and drink and enjoy God. Isn’t this marvelous?

George Muller & Bethesda Chapel: A Case Study

Watchman Nee said the Brethren movement “was greater than the movement of the Reformation.” He called it “a great revival,” and “a full recovery.” From small beginnings in 19th century Dublin (Ireland), Plymouth and Bristol (SW England,) the “Plymouth Brethren” grew, producing numerous spiritual men and influential Bible teachers (John N. Darby, B. W. Newton, C. H. Mackintosh, W. Kelly etc.). They recovered many truths and scriptural practices. As the fulfillment of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13) they had a little strength, yet they kept the Lord’s Word and upheld His name. The Lord gave them an open door; the movement spread worldwide; many seeking believers joined their “assemblies.” Yet, tracking the Brethren’s growth is challenging. They were reluctant to report statistics. One notable exception, however, was George Muller of Bristol, famous for his orphan work, caring for thousands of children in dependence upon God. Muller, with his German exactitude, recorded every penny received in answer to prayer. He also kept excellent records of the Brethren “assembly” in Bristol. We examine the growth of the Bristol assembly, including the impact of the 1848 division and the attack on Muller and the Bristol Brethren. We also contrast the century of sustained growth among the “Open Brethren” with the stagnation and decline of the “Exclusive Brethren.”

Beginnings in Bristol—Explosive Growth

George Muller (1806-98) and his co-worker, Henry Craik (1805-66), moved to the port city of Bristol, SW England in May, 1832. They had the full support of the small congregation to meet along scriptural lines—

no clergy, no salaries, Bible-based ministry and practices (e.g. Lord's Table, believer's baptism.) The initial congregation of 68 founding members (May 1832,) grew dramatically to over 250 by year-end 1834. That's a growth rate of over 50% per year for the 30-month period. Of the 200 added, 100 were new believers, saved through the Church's gospel-preaching. Over the next 5-years (1835-39) the growth rate declined, but remained in the double digits—over 12% per year—healthy growth for a larger assembly. Attendance grew until 1845, although at a declining rate, indicative of a maturing Church. The number peaked at about 700 in 1845.

The Impact of the Plymouth Division—Collateral Damage

The heyday of the Brethren was brief. After only 20 years they suffered a major schism, dividing into “Exclusives” (under Darby) and “Open” (with Muller, Robert Chapman etc.) branches. It's no coincidence that Bristol's number peaked at 700 in 1845; it then declined for 5 years. Bethesda's membership did not regain its former level until 1856, revealing the division's impact on Bristol.

It began as a conflict between Darby and Benjamin Newton, the leader of the Brethren's premier assembly, located in Plymouth. Perhaps it was inevitable, given the strong personalities involved. The catalyst was differing views regarding Bible prophecy (the rapture) and church administration. Due to this, in 1845 Darby denounced the Plymouth gathering as sectarian. Its unity, he asserted, was no longer the oneness of the Body. Based on this judgment, Darby initiated a rival meeting in Plymouth. A concerted campaign followed attacking Newton's teaching and character. Initially the Plymouth leadership stood firmly behind Newton, limiting the damage. However, the eldership fragmented when Newton was accused of heresy after which he withdrew from Plymouth in December of 1847. The flagship Brethren assembly in Plymouth was decimated. The original meeting declined from over 1,000 to 280 believers. Another 120 believers attended Darby's rival meeting. Approximately 60% of the Plymouth saints became casualties of the conflict, scattered sheep without a shepherd.

How did these events impact Bristol, a city only 130 miles (200 km.) distant. The Newton-Darby conflict was played out in Plymouth. However, there was “collateral damage” elsewhere as believers became distracted and discouraged. Statistics show the bitter conflict in Plymouth

impacted other assemblies, including Bristol (often referred to as Bethesda, due to the fact they met at a chapel of that name). Significantly, the two years, 1846-7, saw the first recorded decline among those meeting in Bristol. But this was just the beginning of trouble; the worst was yet to come.

Bethesda Chapel, Bristol—a Church under Attack

1848 marked a turning point for George Muller and those meeting at Bethesda Chapel. That year Bristol became a church under attack.

In April, some believers from Newton's Plymouth congregation moved to Bristol, asking to join the fellowship. Bristol's eldership ascertained they did not ascribe to Newton's deviant teaching, so they were received into the fellowship. Darby argued that receiving believers from a contaminated place (Plymouth) infected the Bristol assembly. He issued an ultimatum—reject those from Newton's Plymouth meeting, or face the consequences! Muller and the Bristol elders rebuffed Darby's "guilt by association" argument. Believers could not be excluded *en masse* simply because they came from Plymouth, they asserted; only individuals subscribing to Newton's heresy should be refused fellowship. Darby made good his threat; in August of 1848 he issued the "Bethesda Circular," excommunicating the entire Bristol assembly. Remember, this was not an issue concerning truth, but practice. Neither Muller nor Bristol were accused of any heresy. Yet Darby "drew a line in the sand"—due to Bristol's refusal to reject those from Plymouth, he quarantined all meeting in Bristol (Bethesda), as well as any assembly that received anyone who met there! Neutrality was not an option. Henceforth, a prerequisite for joining Darby's Brethren was their response to "the Bethesda Question," that is, whether or not they endorsed Darby's quarantine of Muller and the Bristol assembly. Due to untiring propaganda, the majority of Brethren assemblies followed Darby, thus becoming "Exclusive." A minority of assemblies, mainly in SW England, refused to condemn Bristol. By default, they remained "Open" Brethren.

No doubt Darby's attempt to intimidate Bristol's eldership, his ultimatum and the subsequent schism impacted Bristol. Moreover, his insistence that churches judge the "Bethesda Question" produced turmoil among the Brethren assemblies throughout the world. Darby's followers in Bristol separated themselves from Bethesda and formed their own Exclusive gathering. Other believers in Bristol, disenchanted by the turmoil, departed. A sister, Anne Evans, described this era as "*a time of agony, of intense sorrow and upheaval.*" Bethesda, "*was*

for a time shattered from end to end. Friendships were broken up; families were divided—husband from wife, children from parents, business relations were dissolved, health and even reason wrecked.” (quoted in Steer, p. 133). Statistics support these observations. During 1848-50, 82 believers (12%) left the Bethesda fellowship; most becoming the core of Bristol’s Exclusive meeting. A further 96 (14%) left Bristol entirely. Although 57 new members were added, the substantial exodus of existing believers produced a net decline of 63 (9%) of the gathering at Bethesda. Over a 5-year period (1846-51) Bethesda Chapel lost over 250 existing members (37%). However, continuing evangelism and the Lord’s adding members mitigated the devastating effects of Darby’s attack. Consequently the Bristol assembly suffered a net loss of 80 members (12%) during that 5-year period of turmoil. During this time of sorrow the same sister recalled “George Muller was a grand stay to us; he did not lose his head; he held the reins with a steady hand; and when at last Bethesda emerged from the turmoil she was stronger, freer than ever before.”

After the Storm—Sustained Growth

The Bristol Church weathered the storm, emerging stronger and freer. Critics prophesied that George Muller’s orphan work would fail. Yet, it was during the turmoil that his large new orphan house was built. “*The orphan work, which was [predicted] to have come to naught,*” (says the Bristol sister) “*was the ‘wonder of the world’...*” a visible testimony to the prayer-answering God. People asked: “If George Muller is so wrong, as the Exclusives contend, why is God still answering his prayers and manifestly blessing his orphan-work?”

It took 10 years for the Bristol assembly to regain its original strength of number. Statistics suggest the Lord’s blessing continued. In spite of the Exclusives’ embargo against receiving their “open brethren,” the Lord kept the door open (Rev. 3:8). Despite the stigma of the Exclusives’ relentless denunciation, the Bristol congregation grew steadily—to 900 by 1866 and 1200 by 1885. From the low-point in 1850, this represents a growth-rate of 2% per year for the next 35 years. That rate-of-growth seems low, yet it was sufficient to mean the assembly doubled in size in that time frame. Consequently, by 1885 the Bristol assembly had doubled compared to the 600 reported in 1850. Moreover, more Open Brethren “gospel halls” were started in other neighborhoods of Bristol. Meetings also began in the towns and villages near Bristol and in cities further away. In England and Wales over the period from 1851-87 there was a tenfold increase in the number of Open Brethren assemblies to 575 in 1887.

After the Parting of Ways—Continued Growth vs. Stagnation & Decline

1848 was a landmark year for the Brethren; it marked the separation of what came to be known as “Exclusive” and “Open” Brethren assemblies. Although the Newton-Darby conflict was the catalyst, the underlying cause was a fundamental divergence in views. George Muller, Robert Chapman and others emphasized the local church administered by a plurality of elders. Darby, having observed that “the Church is in ruins,” denied the role of local elders, while on the other hand emphasizing the unified action of assemblies expressing the universal Church as ‘the Body.’ It has been 150 years since these divergent views began to have their impact. That’s long enough for the consequences to have become manifest.

‘Open Brethren’—A Century of Sustained Growth

When Darby died in 1882 there were 558 “Exclusive” assemblies in England and Wales. By 1885 the number had increased to 589. Around the same year (1887) the “Open” assemblies numbered 575. In terms of numbers of gatherings, the two groups were roughly equal. This near equality is significant. Brethren assemblies totaled 132 in 1851, but we do not know how many were Exclusive. Probably it was the majority, since most aligned with Darby on the “Bethesda Question” in 1848. The near equality in the late 1880’s implies the “Open” assemblies had a higher growth rate during the interval 1850-90. From 1885 forward the trend-lines diverge. The number of Open assemblies grew steadily, at a modest growth rate, until it had doubled by 1933, reaching approximately 1200, with an estimated attendance of 50,000 believers. The comparable numbers for all the Exclusive groups was 30,000 believers in 800 assemblies. Interestingly, 1933 marked 100 years since George Muller and Henry Craik founded the Bristol assembly that gathered at Bethesda Chapel. It took the Bristol brethren a decade to recover from the 1848 schism. However, over the long haul that episode proved to be but a brief interruption in a century of prolonged growth. Immediately after the Bethesda schism there were perhaps 60 Open Brethren meetings. A century later, that number had increased to 1055! The number of “Open Brethren” assemblies in England and Wales peaked at 1227 in 1959. That figure is two-and-a-half times greater than the number of “Taylor Exclusive” assemblies at that time, and 75% greater than the number Exclusive assemblies of all “shades”.

‘Exclusive Brethren’—Division, Stagnation & Decline

The Open Brethren exhibited growth well into the 20th century. In contrast, the number of Exclusive Brethren meetings stopped growing soon after Darby’s death in 1882. As long as he lived, Darby succeeded “in holding together...simply by the force of his own personality, a world-wide confederacy united only by...an ecclesiastical formula of a most... impracticable description. Yet, till within a year of Darby’s death, they cohered so perfectly that every minutest act of discipline...in any part of the world was recognized in every other.” (Embley, p. 202) After Darby’s passing the Exclusives began to fragment. The first major schism was underway as Darby departed, producing the “Kelly party.” Since then the Exclusive Brethren have fragmented into a number of mutually-excommunicated circles of meetings. In contrast to the steady growth of their “Open-cousins,” the Exclusives exhibit a pattern of division, stagnation and gradual decline.

Why the Different Patterns?

The Open and Exclusive Brethren branches share much in common. Both stood apart from “organized Christianity” and denounced the clergy-laity system. On the positive side, both are fundamental, emphasizing Bible teaching and the Lord’s Table. The divergent patterns of growth must be explained by their distinctive emphases. Open Brethren emphasize the local administration of each assembly. They reject all forms of centralized Church government. In contrast, the Exclusives stress the coordinated action of assemblies expressing the universal Church (‘the Body’). Among the Exclusives, occasional local disputes have been exacerbated resulting in global divisions. Denial of the local eldership among Exclusives led to the emergence of a global leadership, first manifest with Darby. The Exclusives’ stress on the up-to-date speaking of “God’s elect vessel” produced a succession of powerful global leaders (e.g. James Taylor Sr. & Jr.) exerting immense influence over hundreds of assemblies and thousands of believers.

Over time the Exclusive Brethren became more closed. The basis of fellowship shifted from receiving all genuine believers in Christ to accepting only those who separated themselves from all other denominations, including the “Open Brethren.” Among the Taylor Exclusives this was explicitly stated. One of their teachers, C.A.Coates, wrote, “We cannot now say that we are free to receive Christians without raising any questions as to their associations, it would

mean confusion and looseness...The title of any Christian to be received to break bread has now to be conditioned by the principles laid down in 2 Timothy [2:20-21].” The Taylor Brethren required separation from all former religious associations, as ‘vessels to dishonor’, for reception into their communion. Watchman Nee’s violation of this principle was the reason for the Exclusives’ 1935 excommunication of him and all the local churches in China. Once these Brethren began isolating themselves from other believers and wider society, the early Brethren’s vigorous growth could not be sustained. Rather than being a shining testimony attracting seekers and bringing salvation to sinners, the Exclusives’ stand ultimately produced an isolated, irrelevant and ingrown community. In contrast, the decentralized structure of locally-administered ‘Open’ assemblies allowed greater scope for resolving disputes locally, accommodating diversity, developing innovative methods of “incarnating the gospel” to reach the local community and permitting gifted members to develop their personal ministries. This type of Brethren assembly experienced sustained growth for over a century, until the 1950’s.

Brethren History—Relevance & Applications for Today

The Lord’s recovery inherited many basic elements from the Plymouth Brethren. They, like us, chose to stand apart from “organized Christianity.” With them, we declare the Bible is our unique standard. Watchman Nee absorbed much of their biblical teaching. Witness Lee also met with the Brethren for over seven years. The local churches in mainland China adopted many of the practices they had recovered from the Bible. Moreover, the fact that, for a few years (1932-5), the Taylor Exclusive Brethren received Watchman Nee and 90 local churches into their fellowship proves a commonality. We are not claiming that the local churches are identical to the Brethren assemblies, nor are we advocating the *carte blanche* adoption of either their “Open” or “Exclusive” model. Yet we ask, given the resemblance, what can Plymouth Brethren history teach us today? - Nigel Tomes

(Derived from “*The Church Under Attack—George Muller and Bethesda Chapel, Bristol—A Historical Case Study*,” www.concernedbrothers.com)

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On Churches and Ministries

Shall the elders within a locality be able to utilize materials, encourage the saints to participate in arranged times of ministry, or receive those they perceive to be gifts to the Body, even though unendorsed by Living Stream Ministry—and still be recognized within and without as those leading the church in that locality?

This is one way to convey the current issue that has arisen among those churches that have considered themselves like-participants in the Lord's recovery.

LSM's attempt to quarantine but one group of workers should not be allowed to cloud this issue, although their letter compelling all the churches globally to judge the matter should have helped many to become clear regarding the nature of that action—particularly since no valid charge could be laid at the feet of those singled out, and certainly none that involved teachings concerning matters of the faith!

So it has come down to this: what churches shall choose to remain standing upon the ground of oneness and inclusion, *or perhaps clearly take this stand for the first time?* The elders who take such a stand acknowledge they are answerable to the Lord rather than some other group of men, regardless how they also claim to serve Him.

The problem with pledging allegiance to a particular ministry is that those churches *of Christ* that do so submit themselves to institutional control. It is clear in the Bible, however, that the Lord appoints overseers (elders) only at the local level. There may be leadership among the churches through the work, but, as Brother Lee noted, it is only by means of the revelation conveyed. It is not a control by regulation such as “You should only receive materials or ministry produced in connection with us” etc. This was clearly not the pattern in the New Testament. Paul acknowledged before the Corinthians the value of Apollos' ministry as well as that of others, even though those ministries were not directly affiliated with his (1 Cor. 3:22).

This does not mean that the elders in a locality should not draw from or find continued help from a particular ministry, especially if that ministry was responsible for raising them up, or raising up that local testimony of the Body of Christ. When Brother Lee was alive, most among the churches recognized in their own conscience that his ministry was the means the Lord had used to bring about this work among them.

One leading brother told me that the primary reason they no longer felt they could hold the LSM video training in his locality was that they simply did not have enough time to preview the messages before the saints viewed them so that they could be prepared beforehand for any issues that might arise. Up until a certain time, this had not seemed necessary, but that had changed. Thus, the elders did not feel their locality should continue to participate, based on the varied nature of the content. This, unfortunately, has been perceived as a blanket rejection of the ministries of those laboring in connection with LSM, which is not necessarily the case. It is only that these ministers identify themselves with an organization that has sought to depreciate and isolate the ministry of a brother many recognize to be their spiritual father, and this without just cause. It is thus difficult and perhaps even improper for certain localities not to react to such a worldwide effort to censure and to hinder the ministry of one whose ministry they have found to be of great help for much needed perfecting and building up.

What this “turmoil” has done is to force many churches to reconsider what it is that the Lord has truly committed them with. If the stand of many assemblies as testimonies of the one Body of Christ becomes more definite, then something Satan has meant for evil has been used for good (Gen. 50:20). What will be seen in its aftermath will not be “isolated churches,” but rather churches that are able to fellowship together based not only on their particular needs, but also their particular *strengths*. Thus, may the Lord have the freedom in every locality to move as He wills, and may the churches be able to learn from one another what is being gained.

Even if a locality were to say, “At this time we will receive ministry only from those in connection with *this* ministry, for this is how the Lord is leading us,” surely such a stand should be honored, and may that locality honor the feeling of other localities in how they feel led by the Lord. Fellowship among churches must be inclusive.

But if a locality says, “We shall receive ministry only from those in connection with *this* ministry and fellowship only with those assemblies that do likewise,” it must be recognized that such a stand is sectarian, for it is based upon a determination to gather under a certain banner rather than recognizing the Lord’s absolute right to lead. (May our conscience operate!)

We continue to embrace those meeting in such assemblies as our brothers and sisters, and love them just the same, even though we may not be able to endorse any denominating stand. Our commitment is to stand as the testimony of the *oneness* of Christ’s Body and of His *sufficiency* as its Head! In this, we must recognize that the Lord has the right to supply His church as He wills, and this supply comes through the gifted members, however He may produce or send them. (Did Paul, for instance, foresee that John would one day be the one God would use to meet the need of the churches he once served?)

It has been proposed among the leading ones and those in the work in this region that four criteria be considered necessary for a local church to stand as the local testimony the Lord desires:

The Spirit must have the complete freedom to lead.

Christ must be the unique focus.

The Bible must be recognized as the authoritative standard.

The ground of gathering must be the ground of oneness within the locality.

Titus recently encouraged some young saints, disturbed by events, to handle everything in love. We should not be discouraged, thinking somehow we are no longer members together in this one Body, even though some who once shared this stand with us may have (perhaps temporarily) exchanged it for another. Yet regardless what others may do, we must continue to stand according to what the Lord has revealed to us. May the Lord continue His ministry among us and lead us, so that we all might one day “arrive at the oneness of *the faith*.” - *John Berglund*