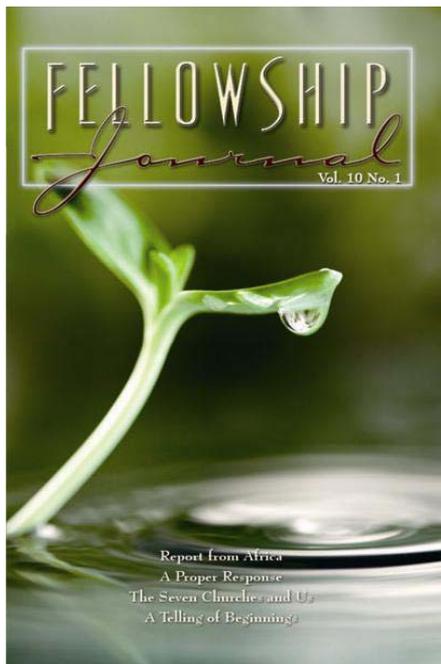


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Saints Are Gathering!



A number have been coming together in homes in Port Clinton and Genoa, Ohio, to study the Bible, fellowship, and seek the Lord. Saints from Lorain and Toledo have been joining in.

Some of them come from some distance to enjoy this time of fellowship in the Word. Thus far they have gone through the Gospel of John and Acts, and are now in Hebrews. Every Monday they fellowship over a chapter after sharing a meal together. Pray for their pursuing and their continued and increasing consecration to the Lord! May the Lord bless them in His will and for His Body's sake.

These are days of "great searchings of heart" ...

*...and all the more as you see the Day approaching
(Hebrews 10:25)*

A Trip to Africa

Over the past several years I have been involved with a number of brothers jointly caring for the practical details of the work in Africa. As time has gone by, something has risen up in me—a desire to visit and see the saints there! Finally, in December 2010, after many delays due to other responsibilities, I made the trip!

REVELATION ALONG THE WAY

Leaving on December 8, the first leg of the trip was a short flight to the Detroit airport where I was then to board a flight overseas. In the Detroit airport, while on a “moving walkway,” another traveler asked where I was headed.

“Amsterdam,” I answered.

He said that he, too, was headed for Amsterdam. Since Amsterdam is a major hub for flights from the US, and most travelers then proceed onward to other countries, he asked my final destination.

“Uganda,” I responded.

He then asked why I was headed for Uganda.

This question somewhat caught me off guard. How would I answer? What, in fact, WAS my purpose for going to Uganda? And how should I put it into words that would make sense? Was I just going there to see the saints? If I said, “To see the saints,” would he understand?

After only a quick thought I answered, “Mission.”

When the word came out of my mouth I initially felt OK...but then an awkward sensation began to settle into me. On the one hand, I thought he probably understood this word as it is commonly understood among today’s Christians. But on the other hand I started to question within myself, “What AM I going for!?”

In considering this word I remembered a receptionist at my office. She visits Central America for two weeks each year on a “mission” to help the poor. I also have a business colleague who takes two weeks’ vacation to do “mission” work in South America helping engineer church facilities. The gentleman I was speaking with said that his church was also doing mission work. I considered the purpose of my trip. Was I doing the same kind of mission work?

As I considered, a deep sensation arose within me. I realized that I am NOBODY! I don’t know how to help the poor. I am not a “handyman” who can help with building projects. I can hardly do anything, let alone do it right! Yet, as this sense of my own inadequacy arose, another realization began to shine—I am a member of the Body of Christ! The Lord has put within ME a special portion to supply to the other members for the Lord’s move in Africa.

I began to praise the Lord for placing me in Willoughby with several other saints who He has burdened to pray and care for His move in Africa. The Lord seemed to speak the words of Joshua 1:9 directly to me: **“Be strong and take courage, do not be afraid or dismayed.”** Brothers and sisters, I may not be qualified to be a missionary according to the traditional standard, but I am a member in the Body who genuinely cares for the Lord’s desire and His move in the saints in Africa!

ARRIVING AND ENTERING INTO THE FELLOWSHIP

The trip was long and I arrived in Kampala several hours later than the scheduled arrival time. It was very late at night but the saints were waiting for me!! What a joy to see some I knew and to meet some new brothers. Thank You, Lord, for the household, the family, of God! They provided wonderful hospitality and I settled in.

The next morning I had the opportunity to meet with several saints who were participating, full-time, in a 10-month “labor” with the Lord. I expected and intended to just sit in on their fellowship time and hear from them. Instead, they wanted to hear from ME, and I had not prepared anything! But, again, something rose up in my heart. The Lord has provided us such a rich time in the word back in Willoughby over the past two years! And I had the realization that this had been “deposited” in me for the saints, including these dear ones in Kampala!!

In Matthew 16, Peter received the revelation that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Upon Peter’s declaration, the Lord further revealed that He builds His church on what the disciples have seen. Brothers, we have seen such a revelation...of who He is, and what He is doing! Now in our journey with Him, we have the desire to live a life controlled by this vision! This is a life that allows Him to operate in us for the perfecting of the saints and the building up of His church. This is exactly what we are here for! Our coming together to pursue, to fellowship, to mutually encourage one another, is EXACTLY for this purpose!

The Kampala saints’ desire to pursue this wonderful Christ encouraged me greatly!

The trip was surely not going the way I had expected. I soon realized that I could plan all that I wanted, but He is the One Who directs my path. What a blessed opportunity to learn to be humble before Him and allow Him to direct my ways.

TRAINING AND CONFERENCE IN KAMPALA, UGANDA

Coinciding with the time of my visit, there was a week-long training with Titus taking place in Kampala. (This was very similar to “Vision Week” we have in Ohio each summer.) Then, at the end of the week-long training there was a weekend conference.

I saw some wonderful things among the saints. Randy Mann shared with us last year, that during his trip to Uganda he had traveled to Rukungiri (close to Rwanda and Congo) and visited with some saints there. As a result of that trip, during this year’s week-long training 16 saints from Rukungiri made the 7-8 hour trip to participate and “gain Christ”! Then, for the weekend conference another busload of 35 made

Uganda...



Uganda...



the trip! What a wonderful and encouraging sight! These saints joyfully and enthusiastically joined in with the saints from Kampala and several nearby communities.

During these two events I was overwhelmed by the riches in the sharing, and I saw an exceeding joy shared by all the saints. This week was also the “finals week” at Makerere University. Several of the saints who attended are medical students at the university. Several times I noticed one, or several, missing from a meeting. They were taking their final exams! Then, there they were again in the next meeting! My heart was melted and filled with praise!

During the training we covered Ephesians. For the weekend conference we covered the seven epistles to the seven churches in the book of Revelation. All the saints (including me!) not only saw the vision of the church, but also the need to hold fast to our first love! We may only have a little power, yet we all stand firm in one spirit in each locality, receiving and loving one another!

JOYFUL AND ENCOURAGING SIGHTS!

During the time in Kampala I was deeply encouraged to see the saints joyfully *giving and receiving hospitality*. Coming from the United States with our comfortable life, it is easy to be impressed only with the poverty of other countries. But here I saw such a joyous giving, not out of their abundance, but out of the depths of their poverty, with a pursuing heart for the Lord (2 Cor. 8:2).

Several saints were such an encouragement to me when I saw their serving (Phil. 2:30). They carry the burden, both spiritually and practically, for the saints and the churches. And I noticed that many of them were quite young. Lord, continue to supply them to serve You in the churches!

They are deeply enjoying the hymnal. However, the cost is almost impossible for them to afford. They were encouraged to take a hymnal initially for the enrichment of their time with the Lord. Then many are going to fast one day each week, saving about one dollar each week, and make payments to pay for the hymnal! What a heart for Him!

The church in Kampala actually has several meeting places. Titus' sharing to clarify this simple issue helped many of the saints who may have considered the many facilities as many "churches." We are all of one church in whatever city we may meet!

Personally, I had such a realization of the need for the raising up of more saints as pillars to further the Lord's move on that continent!

ONE FROM KENYA!

There was one brother, a leading one from Nairobi, Kenya, who traveled to Kampala. It took him 12 hours by bus! He attended one evening meeting and then the meeting on the following morning. He then had to take the bus back home that day. Such a desire! Such a heart for the Lord! But what was even more encouraging—the following week he came to the entire week-long training and weekend conference in Ghana!!! It is a deep joy for me to be able to tell of this brother, an encouragement to us all!

TRAINING AND CONFERENCE IN GHANA

From Kampala we went on to Accra, Ghana. The churches in Ghana have been there for many years and are more established and experienced than the churches in Uganda. There are several meeting places for the church in Accra, of which I saw two. The smaller one I visited is used for trainings, the newer and larger one was used for the conference. There are many churches throughout Ghana and they fellowship closely with churches in Nigeria and the French-speaking countries of Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast.

In Ghana there are currently 25 saints from the countries mentioned above who have given themselves for two years to pursue and serve together. How encouraging to see many setting aside all to pursue the Lord and His move!

In the week-long training in Ghana, Titus shared from Acts and focused on the apostle Paul. The theme was, "From Saul to Paul," and how this brother became a vessel prepared for the Lord's use and for His purpose. Then in the weekend conference he shared from Philemon, a book that provides us with a heavenly model and a picture of the practical church life.

Ghana...



Ghana...



SOME NOTES FROM THE SHARING ON PHILEMON

The name Philemon implies to love the brothers and joint companionship. Philemon was a leading one in the church. Apphia was Philemon's wife. Her name has the meaning of fruitfulness. She was serving in the church life. Archippus was Philemon and Apphia's son. His name has the meaning of mastering horses! This younger one was fighting to fulfill his ministry. Onesimus was an escaped slave who belonged to Philemon. Onesimus had heard the gospel through Paul and been saved. Paul wrote this epistle to accompany Onesimus as he returned to Philemon. Onesimus' name signifies "useful, helpful, profitable." This formerly useless sinner had now become profitable! The story of us all!!

These four individuals when put together show us a wonderful local church life: leading brothers loving and caring as joined companions; sisters serving and bearing fruit; brothers carrying the Lord's ministry to all around; and all the saints who had formerly been useless sinners now profitable to the Lord and the churches.

At the end of the epistle Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke are mentioned. These were faithful workers serving the churches.

What a wonderful picture the Lord displays in Philemon! We were encouraged to see such a high yet practical vision at the end of Paul's writings—elders loving the saints; serving ones working to see the saints grow, become operative and bear fruit; ones who receive the ministry and fulfill it; and everyone becoming a blessing to the church! And furthermore, it shows the church treasuring its intimate relationship with the workers! This is practical and this is the testimony of His economy!

SOME FINAL IMPRESSIONS

One young brother from Uganda traveled with us the second week to attend the training and conference in Ghana. On the way back to Uganda he shared a glorious observation. He realized that life in Ghana is very different than life in his home country of Uganda. The poverty in Uganda is devastating and all-encompassing. He saw that life in Ghana, on the other hand, is comparatively peaceful, comfortable, politically stable, with the churches more established and experienced. Then he shared this observation—the door for the gospel is thus more open in Uganda! How encouraged I was to hear such a word from this

brother. What a heart to see such a thing! Instead of merely observing his own condition, his consideration was from the Lord's side! Everything is under the Lord's sovereignty and for the sake of the gospel!

From the beginning to the end of this trip, I had the sense that I was being immersed in the grace of the Lord. What a joy to see the hunger of the saints wanting more of Jesus! What an encouragement to see many desiring to live by the vision that the Lord has revealed to us! What a joy I have in me from this time!

And yet I also have a deep sense of burden. Saints, how we all need to stand together to fight for the saints in Africa. And may we jointly "shoulder" the burden of the work to carry the gospel and New Testament ministry of life to them and FROM them. This is both a spiritual and practical matter!

At one point we sang the hymn that begins, "*No mortal tongue can ever describe the freedom of the soul, when passed beyond all earthly bribe...*" (#280). I have a deep conviction that this is the right time for the Lord to gain souls in Uganda. The saints are realizing that the world around them will become more and more attractive. Many things can easily become bribes to the soul, yet they boldly and joyfully declare, "We are our Lord's alone!"

The window of opportunity that the Lord has opened for the gospel is definitely now. We do not know how long, however, it will remain so.

I pray that we would all be like-souled, genuinely caring for what concerns the saints in Africa (Phil. 2:20). May we stand firm in one spirit, with one soul, striving together along with the faith of the gospel (Phil.1:27)!

How I thank the Lord for this opportunity to visit the saints in Africa! May all of us be encouraged knowing the things concerning them (Phil. 2:19). By knowing the things concerning them, may all our joy be made full (2:2).

And with great joy I also relate that the saints in Africa send their greetings to you all! - *Mike Li, Willoughby, Ohio*

ELDERS AND WORKERS CONFERENCE

The following messages given during January 21-23, 2011 by Titus Chu should prove profitable to any who read them.

MESSAGE 1

What is our burden for this weekend? First, it is very good for the leading ones from different churches to get to know each other and stand together. Second, as my fellow-soldiers, we need to know what is really happening; so we will spend time to hear about what is taking place in the various areas around the world. The door is more than open.

BE PREPARED FOR TESTING

To stand for the Lord and fight the warfare is not a simple thing. Satan will do everything to damage the Lord's testimony. We may wish the Lord would confine Satan's work, but instead it seems the Lord says, "Do whatever you want to do, but don't harm their life" (Job 1:12). The Lord made it very clear while He was on the earth that we are here to build up something. Social Christian groups that are centered on man's needs may not be building anything, but if someone's focus is both on God and man, he is building something. The Lord said that some who build will build on the rock and some would build on sand (Matt. 7:24-27). Outwardly the situation may not look very different, so the Lord sends or allows storms to come to separate what is real from what is not. Those who build on sand will see their work damaged and collapse. Even though their labor may have been something for Christ, their building will fall if the ground they built upon is sand. The Bible does not say the result of their work will be utterly blown away, but it does say it will be greatly damaged. Therefore we need to be clear about what we are basing our work upon. Is it doctrine, some person, or practices? Whatever is built on such things will fall when the rains come. For Christ to have the preeminence in His work, it must be so.

All our work must go through something to be tested. If you think you are doing well, God will allow something to come in to test you. The Lord will show us whether we are really IN what we are doing. Unfortunately, saints often end up getting hurt when His laborers have been building on something other than the rock.

Therefore it is we laborers who need to be tested! As we are laboring to build, we are also building ourselves; therefore at the same time the Lord tests us to find out where we really are. Our work or the local church we are with will be tested, and we who serve will be tested. Many churches and laborers who seemed to be so clearly for Christ ended up not being able to stand simply for Christ when the test came. Instead of looking to Christ, they seem to have lost their discernment. Many clung to something other than Christ Himself. Many congregations have gone in directions that have taken them clearly away. Those who lead among them seem to have truth, but when really pressed to back up what they are doing from the Bible, they are unable to do so.

We have to judge ourselves in this matter as well. What convicts us in our labor must be backed up by the Word. Some have said, for instance, that they are the Body and no one else is. Is there such a verse to back this up? But these also could ask us, “We hear some are laboring to build up ‘community’ churches. How does the Bible back YOU up?” The Bible must be our unique standard.

Many who serve are now under a time of trial. I feel sympathy for them; but no matter how big the storm may be, it will pass. There will never be an endless storm, just as there will never be endless sunshine in this age. What is left standing after the storm passes is something very precious! If you are able to say afterward, “Thank you Lord, You are still the Lord,” that is a healthy response. If you can only say, “Why us? This is not fair!” then something within you has been exposed.

WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE DURING A TIME OF TESTING?

Looking at the damage afterward some may also say, “The whole structure is in trouble! We must do something to rescue it!” Others may realize, “Thank you Lord for giving us this so that we might wake up, repent, and turn back to You while time still remains. Thank You for Your mercy.” Treasure every moment the Lord gives you to labor so that your building work may be on the proper, solid ground.

What makes what is within someone most clear? His response. Amnon, who typifies the flesh, loved one of his half-sisters and upon persuading her, defiled her (2 Sam. 13:8-14). The Bible tells us that

afterward he hated her more than he had loved her before(v.15). That verse helped me understand that what one loves or hates is not trustworthy. Some can testify they now find repugnant some matters they once held dear. If this is your case, it reveals that your work was totally in the flesh. I do not believe that the girl herself changed in some basic way! The problem was within Amnon. We have to be very careful of overly appreciating someone or something other than Christ.

Take care of your response. Even if your response is righteous or seemingly godly or even for God, storms will test whether you have been of God and whether what you have done is truly as God desires. As their work is tried, the workers are tried. And when the workers are tried that is a sober thing. Will they repent, recommit themselves and continue to labor, or will they maintain their situation, complain and be stumbled? If we are healthy, we should feel for any dear ones who were not mature enough to escape the damaging effect of the storm, but what is our response? Do we labor in a renewed manner on their behalf as the storm is taking place, or do we get caught in the realm of bitterness? We are learning to serve and lead. When the work is tried, the workers are tried. If the workers become carried away during the time of storm, that becomes very serious.

How should we react during such times? We simply should not react. Jesus never reacted. If He rebuked people, it was always with the intent that they might repent.

Try not to react. For example, we should not come out FOR or AGAINST someone. For the sake of the saints we may have to speak something, but not in the way of merely reacting to the situation. We are more precious than that. Learn to see spiritual things spiritually. If something is off or lacking, look for whatever solution the Lord must provide. I am appreciative that as a group we have tried to respond to the situations according to the spiritual understanding we have. For this we have to be thankful.

Every few years, storms are going to come, and they often come just when we begin to feel things are going well. Therefore, when things are finally peaceful, we should be wary!

Due to the storm we have passed through, the testimony today among us is ten times stronger than it was five years ago. We cannot believe how much the Lord has blessed us, and how much He is doing. For all that has happened, we are going on. For a number of years we were blocked and many lost morale, but by the Lord's mercy we are comparatively healthy. We need to establish the proper direction for the churches to labor and pursue together. In Cleveland, it would seem we

should be discouraged because the number baptized every year seems to equal the number who move away due to the economic situation here. It seems the Lord has placed us in such a city to see whether we mean business with Him or not! Somehow the situation remains stable, even after what we have been through.

If the brothers who serve allow themselves to be elevated, the Lord will grant His increase. We desire to see more local churches raised up in this area that become prevailing and strong. There will be a ten-month labor during which time we believe more young ones will be raised up for His testimony's sake. You who are older are encouraged to come and be refreshed as well. I hope to be with them one week out of every month. As we are before the Lord, we can only worship Him for the precious experience He has brought us through. Through this storm the Lord has helped us to grow.

OUR EXPERIENCE AS SEEN IN THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION

Watchman Nee's *Orthodoxy of the Church*, drawn from what the Plymouth Brethren saw (see Andrew Miller's *Church History*), has been very helpful. Before reading these books I thought the seven churches in Revelation had nothing to do with me. Then I read that the church in Ephesus represented the church during the time of the apostles, the church in Smyrna the church under Roman persecution, the church in Pergamos the church under marriage to politics after Constantine, the church in Thyatira the Roman Catholic Church, the church in Sardis the church of the Reformation (today's Protestant denominations), and so on. After reading in this way, some claim we are today the church in Philadelphia, but that must be a funny Philadelphia! Then, of course, we all are watchful of the danger of the final church mentioned, Laodicea. I began to reconsider this matter in light of my own church history. In my own experience, the church life I came into matched what is seen in Ephesus. After three days of gospel preaching during which time I was saved, the number baptized was around 700. The saints in the church in Ephesus were very much as we used to be! Many of you who came into the church life during the "golden" era of the 1960s and 1970s will agree.

EPHESUS

The Lord mentions three things regarding Ephesus to John in Revelation 2: their work, labor, and endurance (they are diligent), their ability to test false apostles (they are spiritual), and their hatred for the

deeds of the Nicolaitans (they do not allow anyone to replace Christ in the way of clergy-laity).

Wasn't that our situation? We labored diligently, were zealous for the Spirit, and rejected anything that would frustrate the function of the members.

Thus, Ephesus was as its name indicates: "Desirable". However, it also had a characteristic that became the root of all that was not desirable, and that was that it had left Christ as its first, or top, love (2:4). They had loved the Lord as their first love, but now, instead of simply loving Him, they loved to do things *for* Him! Even in the glorious days of the 1970's, didn't we see this? Our hymns were about loving the Lord to the uttermost, but within us there was this mixture, and the Lord lost the preeminence among us. We loved the church life and preached the gospel and labored for Him and enjoyed all the riches we received and encouraged all the saints, and yet in the process the Lord Himself slipped from holding the first, unique place in our hearts.

SMYRNA

Next comes Smyrna, which represents suffering and martyrdom, producing a very healthy church. Actually, Ephesus is very healthy too, for in the "Ephesian" stage everyone is willing to pay any price, and no one thinks about accumulating anything for themselves. During that time, people willingly gave up their professions to take up a trade so they could be free when there was a conference or a need in the church life. At the same time, beginning to experience Smyrna, we were persecuted by those around us, but we went on. We were so much in what these two churches represent.

PERGAMOS

In church history, the overall situation passed on to the stage of Pergamos, or "marriage" (to the world). By the Lord's mercy we did not get caught by this! When the world tried to do something to work its way in, we did not give place to it. Praise the Lord!

THYATIRA

Pergamos, however, is followed by Thyatira, which signifies the stage where religion takes over. We had such a marvelous and faithful beginning, and we suffered for the Lord. We took the way of a simple life and met in a simple way rather than doing things in a flashy way for

the testimony's sake and we refused to have anything to do with politics. But when the stage of Thyatira presented itself, we did get caught. Religion came in to replace Christ, and that was our condition for years.

Religion has two sides: one side in what is believed, and another side in what you practice because of what is believed. Religion prevails when what is produced as a practice overtakes the operation of faith itself.

For instance, among the many riches ministered to us by the servant of the Lord was the matter of seeing the church life practiced in every city. Out of the real desire to see the testimony of the Lord spread, a move came about to have saints migrate to the top 50 metropolitan areas. (Akron was number 51 at that time.) It seems the Lord wanted to know whether we wanted to be in the reality of following Him, or in some practice! Eventually, however, some of those migrations were abandoned in favor of consolidating saints into larger groups. During that time I even saw brothers bargaining between themselves based on the number of saints with them. When a practice becomes more important than the faith that suggested it, Christ is no longer present, nor can He be. He will not share leadership with something else. Migration is the right thing if you are moved by Christ to do so, but when spiritual things are done without Christ, and a practice becomes something everyone is doing merely because it is the thing to be done, great loss will result when the time of testing comes.

We have failed in handling religion. We appreciated the riches Christ blessed us with, but we did not know how to watch for and handle the by-product that unavoidably tries to rise up, which is religion. Religion came to have a stronger influence among us than the riches themselves! This is the principle that Thyatira embodies, where religion creeps in and takes control. Religion is in our blood, and it prevents people from freely following Christ.

SARDIS

To Sardis the Lord says, "I know your work, that you have a name that you live, and you are dead" (3:1). I feel Sardis doesn't just signify the denominations; it signifies us as well! We may feel happy we have escaped the institutional control that others fell prey to, but we are still pretty dead!!! The Lord tells Sardis, "Strengthen the things that remain that they don't die." We have to be careful that we do not give up what the Lord has committed to us in exchange for success in such things as gaining increase or acceptance. Before we realize it, the little reality we still have may disappear!

We really are exactly like the seven churches. We were just as Ephesus. The church life in so many localities is still something the Lord desires. Some seem to have lost this realization, but in my experience, from the time I began to travel to my experience today, as I see Christianity, including many so-called “local churches,” I have a real prayer within me, “Lord, as everything is falling apart, help us to keep Your testimony.”

We are Sardis. We are neither Philadelphia nor Laodicea. We may have cleared the stages of religion and institution, but religion and institution are still lurking within us. We have light and revelation and riches, but they can easily become things for us to try to make use of rather than be constituted by.

Today in many places, practice has become more crucial than Christ. The Lord said, “I am the WAY.” Let everything else be voided.

We still practice Ephesus, and to a certain extent we are still enjoying Smyrna. We may have overcome the worldly influence, but religion is always with us. Who are we? We are the church in Ephesus. We still are to be desired, and desirable. We love the Lord, serve the Lord, and stand firm with the Lord. We want to pay a price for the Lord. We have cut ourselves off from politics. In America, it isn’t the same as in Germany when Luther labored. During that time politics and the church were intertwined, but we have nothing to do with such politics. Furthermore, now we have somewhat come out of religion. But we have not escaped Sardis, having a name that we are living, when in fact we are somewhat dead. We must keep what we still have, and honor it. “Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain and which are ready to die” (3:2). To die is to be bereft of what constitutes life and reality.

The Lord has opened the door to us in many areas. The directions in which we can labor are many, but we have almost no strength; we are very weak. We should be very healthy when in fact our breathing has become labored. Yet some places have done more than “hold on,” they have increased! The Lord says, “Keep what is remaining. Don’t despise yourselves or what you have. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are in danger of dying.”

PHILADELPHIA

What is the remedy? It is Philadelphia, that is, to love one another.

We should treasure our history and our riches and everything we have passed through. We shouldn’t deny what we have received. There is much that has great value. We have been very blessed in going through

what we have gone through. We were Ephesus, and the Ephesus element is still with us. We still focus on diligence even though we are no longer diligent! (How many leading ones are visiting the saints? That element is still with us, even though it may have declined.) We still understand spiritual things, so what is false cannot easily invade. We are clear we cannot have clergy and laity. We are experiencing some suffering, as Smyrna. Whoever stays in this region goes through something! Everyone else is fleeing. And, unlike Pergamos, we cut off anything of politics. We do not seek any endorsement from any other than Christ. We are thankful we have come out of the world. But as we enjoy so many riches, we also see many religious byproducts. I have rarely seen a brother with so many riches as Witness Lee. He had a way to help people love the Lord. If you went right now and visited from group to group, you would see very few who care to know Christ as life. Through this man's ministry many have become lovers of the Lord.

On the other hand, I have never seen a group of people become such "workaholics" for the Lord. Our very fiber has become fixed on doing something or gaining someone. What is the way to be rescued from being such workaholics for Christ? Philadelphia. We need to love people in Christ according to who they are, not for the purpose of *gaining* them.

Instead of seeking to be more prevailing or popular, we should simply love others and desire what is best for them. It is too easy to see a brother as something more than a brother. We have an obligation to develop and perfect the saints, but we shouldn't let anything replace our life-relationship with them. If one is talented and another is not, there should be no difference in our love or care.

As those who have escaped religion, as Sardis, we have only a little strength. How can we then become vital in fighting for the Lord's interest? **Love the brothers.** Love should cause us to be unrestful, and love should be the motive for our labor with the saints.

Even the most spiritual make mistakes, yet we still must love one another. This is how Philadelphia comes in. If Philadelphia comes in among us, even what little we have can be saved. Otherwise, that reality will disappear. If we really love one another rather than just think about how to work with one another, I believe the Lord will have a way to carry us on. We have come this far because of Ephesus and Smyrna. And I am thankful we have been out of politics, and that we have been delivered out of the religious *system*. Yet religion is still in our blood, and thus our riches have become something "little" that we are in danger of losing. What is the way to keep what remains and is about to die? It is to turn from doing so much and trying so hard to simply loving the brothers, the churches, and the saints.

Forget about any idea of having any “turf”. We should sweetly desire to fellowship with all the saints. This must be the ability we cultivate. Love will be our remedy. In this may the Lord be merciful to us.

LAODICEA

What is Laodicea? When the brothers overly try to love one another, there is the danger that the leaders will allow the opinions of the saints to prevail over the Spirit as to how the church life is practiced. One saint can influence the leading of a church simply by having an opinion and then insisting upon it. When that happens, the Spirit can no longer lead. When brothers really love one another, a lot of voices will come up, and if you do not know how to properly minister to those saints in life and love, those opinions can overly influence the church life. That is when the Lord says, “I vomit you out,” and it is finished. Having escaped the outward rule of the world and religion, let us honor the riches that we have been committed with and love one another. If some insist on something and threaten to leave if something is not done, and the leadership submits to that, then the testimony is finished. We, by the Lord’s mercy, must be watchful of this. The love in the church life is exercised in our standing with how the Lord is working with each one of us.

MESSAGE 2

It is easy for us to become work-oriented and possessed with doing things for Christ, even when we do not have Christ! Thus though many churches have seemingly been raised up, few have been able to pass through the time of testing.

SERVE IN THE WAY OF LIFE, NOT IN THE WAY OF ORGANIZATION

Our way is a narrow way. I am happy our young generation is as exercised as we were, and at the same time also more thorough. They are together more as a team than those whom the Lord has called previously among us. My word to them is to make their plans, but not to care for their plans. We have a living Christ to lead us. If we determine what is to happen and then simply carry that out, it becomes a theological institute rather than something the Lord is leading. We should always consider how something can be brought higher or have more life. That is to labor according to the principle of the Body rather than the principle of human organization. You should administer the riches you plan to

administer, but may the Lord be free to lead as to the way it is done, and may we abide in the principle of the Body.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF SEEING THE CHURCH

Your basic vision will decide what you experience at every stage of your Christian life. Many scholars are represented in this book I hold in my hand; yet most have missed the element of the church, and therefore they are not able to open many portions of Scripture. For instance, it becomes impossible for them to interpret such a thing as the virgins in the Song of Songs, which are simply the saints in the church life. Therefore when they come to the Bible there are many places that remain closed to them. We should not be narrow; we should be able to read other people's work, yet we should also feel very sorrowful that so many lovers of Jesus are hindered from seeing the church.

Value this basic vision, for if you do not have it you will miss much, and you will end up running wild (Prov. 29:18). Your vision will determine what you end up with in your Christian life. The church may not be perfect, but at least we see it! The saints may not always be wonderful, but at least we see who they are! We are able to treasure the leading ones (the guards in Song of Songs 5:7), even when it seems they frustrate us and don't understand us. We live for this, we fight for this; this is our life. We are for Christ in our life and as the reality of our church life, and we are for the churches as the unique testimony of Christ in localities. If this is your realization, you will grow well and build well.

OUR RESPONSE DECIDES MUCH

In addition to your vision, take care concerning your response to the situations that arise. Nothing is more crucial than this! When something is wrong, your body responds with a fever. Likewise, your spiritual response reveals how healthy you are. Those who are not healthy typically over-respond.

When I was in Taiwan I labored for two-and-a-half years in the early 1970's. Afterward, much of what the Lord accomplished was destroyed by certain workers. They told many who were perfected that they were not qualified to serve, and had to get a job. I received so many letters, but I dared not answer one of them. As I told some of them afterward, my only trust was that they were in the Lord's hands. If someone really sees the church, there is nothing to fear. That is why I did not respond as I might otherwise have. We must trust Christ Himself to

protect and nurture whatever is of Him. If I had responded, the “honey” would have caused the relationship we had in Christ to “ferment” and spoil. No human relationship should flourish among us except that relationship that is in Christ!

Your response definitely tells where you are. If you respond in a fleshly way, that means you are in your flesh. If you respond according to your ability, as Jacob did, then you know you are in your natural man. When you respond spiritually, then you know there is some spiritual element with you. You don’t need to find some way; you need to be in your spirit, touching and abiding in Christ. Then whatever way you take is spiritual. Be aggressive. Do your best to pioneer. Step through any door that may open to you. But at the same time, remember that we are the followers of Christ and care for Him above all else.

Many of the things in the church life we have passed through have not been easy. How do we respond to the things in the church life that may trouble us? Concerning the Lord’s testimony, I am not at all timid. But regarding other things, I don’t respond. Your response decides what is what. If you are spiritual, your response will be in life; it will be according to the vision you have. If you are not in spirit, your response will be according to what is right or wrong or what should be or should not be, according to your natural or fleshly view.

We desire to stand firm according to the vision we have received and to practice according to it. Any planning or arrangement that we accomplish outside of this vision will ultimately not be profitable, even if it seems to yield “success.”

1. Ephesus

Besides being historical, the seven churches in Revelation point to the experience we have had in the local churches. The local church experience begins with Ephesus. Ephesus has three good things. First, they were very zealous, faithful and committed to Christ. The church in Ephesus is “desirable,” and to be desired. We should appreciate that and we should have such a church life. Secondly, the church in Ephesus was spiritual; they had the ability to discern the true from the false apostles. Third, in their practice they refused to have a class of people taking care of the rest. They refused the works of the Nicolaitans, or clergy-laity. Any local church that possesses these is more than marvelous.

Yet the root of all the problems is also found in Ephesus. What is this root? They allowed their healthiness to replace Christ in their hearts!

While I was in military academy, I took time every day in that tight schedule to pray and read the Bible. I used every minute available to

pursue the Lord. One day I told the Lord, “I am doing so well, there is nothing more You could ask of me.” The Lord answered that “prayer” quickly! Just after that as I was in class, I was hit with something. I went to lay down but could not sleep. The pain was so great I had to go to the hospital. A brother there took an X-ray. The next day, as usual, I led the singing in the meeting, although it was difficult. Monday I was notified to come to the hospital immediately, for one of my lungs had collapsed! I was told by the doctor I must have total rest. When I recovered enough to return to my unit I could no longer keep my schedule of reading the Bible and prayer as before. Rarely, however, have I had such a pure hunger towards Christ as during that time. I told Him, “I don’t care how much I read the Bible; I just care that I can love You.” My focus had changed! Ephesus was focused on doing, and that became the reason the Lord Himself became someone less precious to them. Doing things for Christ should never replace Christ Himself as our focus. He Himself must be our first love!

2. Smyrna

The Lord thus brought us next to Smyrna. Suffering can do so much for you! In China we went to one area in which many in the past had been persecuted for Christ. That suffering produced something very healthy, and the gospel prevailed in their towns. The more the church is persecuted, the more people get saved! Through persecution, the church becomes prevailing and marvelous. I am sorry that the opportunity to suffer in the United States is not so available. But even though we may not be able to say we are being persecuted, we can still persecute ourselves. Don’t seek to avoid suffering; don’t seek to remedy things that go against you in the church life. Don’t seek to have your way in the church life. Take the way of suffering. Learn to persecute yourself! Paul beat himself so that nothing against Christ could come forth (1 Cor. 9:27).

There have been times when I could have easily cleared up a misunderstanding that caused me to be shunned by others. I could have vindicated myself and set the record straight. The other way, however, is the way of Smyrna, derived from myrrh, which in the Bible signifies death.

The government may not put us in jail, but we have many other opportunities to suffer! Even those who have cared for you or been your close companions for years may turn away from you at the time you feel you need them the most. What would you do in such situations? Can you learn to be a Smyrna, and produce something sweet for the Lord’s satisfaction? If you are able to do this, you will have the capital to be a spiritual man. Of work, there is no end, but how many spiritual men are there to carry it forward?

We may be the only ones left who still stand according to the vision we have received. And we are a bunch of funny, psychologically beat up, crippled people. Even those closest to us have risen up against us, and yet we keep on struggling forward. Can we learn to joyfully say that we are willing to suffer the shame and bear the cross so that the church might gain some maturity? Your response tells you where you are. How you respond to things is not at all a light or easy matter.

3. Pergamos

In Pergamos, there was a strong bond with the political realm. We were healthy, however, and the world did not overtake us. As far as the world is concerned we are the trash and offscouring, the scum (1 Cor. 4:13). The more you are the servant of God, the more you become worthless in the eyes of the world. Yet what a good aroma such trash produces to the Lord! As the Lord is working to gain him for His service, a brother may feel rejected by the world when he cannot find a job; but what a good smell that produces! On the other hand, when everything seems promising and your future is assured in the world, your aroma to God loses its sweetness. I am always happy when I hear that someone who holds much promise in the eyes of the world gives that up to serve the Lord. Such a saint is delivered out of Pergamos.

4. Thyatira

Yet even if you are able to escape the world, you cannot so easily escape religion. And what characterizes the influence of religion is the loss of proper reason. Once you become brainwashed by religion, your logic becomes damaged and your life comes under the control of that illogical logic. That is why what is represented by Thyatira is so serious. Jezebel brought in some teachings, and those teachings damaged the entire congregation. Don't take the matter of teachings lightly. Whoever can gain someone's reasoning gains their entire person! This is the danger of religion.

In Revelation 2:20 the Lord condemns how Jezebel had introduced something related to the Bible and to the world. In this way she leads the Lord's servants into fornication, (which may be spiritually interpreted,) and into idol worship. They became brainwashed to the extent that even if the Lord Himself could speak to them, it would do little good. If you would have told them to follow Christ, they may have said, "We will only follow the ministry." If you had told them that we are all one Body, they may have responded, "No, only we are the Body." Their logic had been damaged. The Lord told them He would cast her into a bed of sickness

and cause those who commit adultery with her to suffer. This indicates how impotent such people are. They may seem very excited as they get together to arrange things, but they have nothing with which to help others love the Lord. They cannot bring others to Christ or produce overcomers for Him. That indicates they are on the “sickbed”. When you are in religion, the life-element disappears.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF “THE REST IN THYATIRA”

But besides those who become involved with Jezebel, there are “the rest in Thyatira” (v. 24) who refuse to be in religion and are still open to the leading of the Lord. He says “as many as have not known the depths of Satan as they speak, I will put upon you no other burden.” Some will be sick on the bed and party to teachings that the Lord calls “the depths of Satan,” yet there are others who are not part of that. Praise the Lord, some have not held to these teachings! There are some in the midst of that situation who have escaped and whom the Lord is still able to speak to. They are open to Christ and the leading of the Lord; they have not been brainwashed by those teachings. To those the Lord says, “I have so much sympathy for you. I put upon you no other burden. I will just be with you. Hold what you have until I come.” The Lord, in effect, says, “The riches you possess are adequate. Hold to those!” If the Lord raises up some servant to bring in something higher and richer, thank the Lord for that, but even if not, enjoy what you already possess!

SIX CRUCIAL THINGS

In this section there are six most crucial things in every local church life, including yours. In your locality don’t be proud of your activities; be proud of these six things! What are these six matters?

The first is the **Lord**, who is living.

The second is **the Lord’s speaking**, with its strengthening, enlightening and judging. (If in the church life you never sense you are being judged, that means something is wrong. The Lord’s speaking not only tells us what to do; it also tells us what *not* to do, or what we should be cautious about.)

The third matter is the **apostles**, who understand the tribulation, kingdom and endurance of Jesus (1:9).

The fourth matter is the **messengers**, the living and shining saints who are able to hear the Lord’s speaking.

Fifth, you must have **saints**.

Sixth, you must have the **local churches**.

REGARDING THE CHURCH AND LOCALITY

The Lord says, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” (1:11). The Lord doesn’t say, “Send to the seven churches: to the **church in** Ephesus,” and so on. One church equals one city. In the Lord’s eyes, each of the localities became a ground. Thus we call it a “local” ground, which is a ground of oneness. When the church in Ephesus existed, it stood firmly to bear the testimony of the Lord in Ephesus.

Thus, if the Lord here were to say “Cleveland,” He would mean the church in Cleveland. Every born again believer in Cleveland is a member of the church in Cleveland, but there has to be a ground. Those who include all the believers in that ground, stand for that purpose. They may call themselves “the church of the Clevelanders,” or, “the church of God in Cleveland,” for such designations are in the Bible. No one who stands on this ground, however, can just invent a name! Everything we say and do must be according to the Bible. If the Bible has something, we strongly support it, but if the Bible doesn’t have it, we should not feel as though we can add it.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THESE SIX THINGS

In your practice of the church life, these six things must become your banner. You cannot go by your condition or how defeated or victorious you feel. You cannot go by your number. You must ask, Do we have a living **Christ** walking in our midst? And as He walks, do we have **His speaking**?

For instance, even though there were just a few of us meeting in Pittsburgh, we met every Saturday afternoon to pray for the church. We were always gathering and often were in prayer together. We really had the Lord’s presence, and we really had His Word. The meetings were rich in divine speaking, and the saints were really enjoying the Lord with His speaking.

Furthermore, we had brothers who labored among us as **apostles**. An apostle is a sent one. What were the three items John mentioned about himself? First, that he was their partner or joint-partaker in the **tribulation** of Jesus Christ. Every apostle experiences tribulation as he struggles to see the testimony of the Lord raised up. Paul’s word indicated such suffering when he wrote, “I travail again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19). An apostle doesn’t just go places to minister something for everyone’s enjoyment. A genuine apostle invests himself with sufferings

so that the testimony of the Lord may be raised up and become strong! Those who are apostles bear the weight of the care of the churches.

Furthermore, John the apostle said he was the saints' partner, or joint-partaker, in the **kingdom**. The apostle labors for the kingdom of God. What is a kingdom? A kingdom is a king's domain. Today God's kingdom is simply the church. The Body of Christ is the sphere of Christ's kingdom, and today's kingdom life is to be found in the local church life. A proper apostle is one who is able to help others in the church life enjoy the church life for their growth in Christ.

Third, John the apostle stated he was their partner in **endurance**, which is a most difficult matter for anyone who loves the Lord. Why do those who serve the Lord require endurance? Because the Lord often waits until the very end of something before He finally reveals Himself and His provision. The Lord does this because He desires to rule by infusing life rather than outward government. Thus a servant of the Lord must have patience. An apostle will often see little appreciation for his labor; and he often must endure for many years before he sees its fruit. We need such servants of the Lord!

Who are the **messengers** of the churches? The messengers are those who have the ability to receive the message! God is always speaking, but sometimes we don't have the ability to hear what the Lord is saying. That is why the messengers in the churches are important. The messengers must always be living and fresh so the Lord can continue speaking to the churches. If an elder is always living back in the "good old days," he may not be able to hear what the Lord is speaking today. We may be able to speak of marvelous times of days gone by, but can we receive what the Lord is speaking today? The elders thus must always be willing to be revised. They must be aggressive with the Lord to receive what He is doing today. Then the saints where they are remain protected.

Then, how about our **saints**? Are they spoiled in their understanding and sick on a bed, or do they have the ability to go on? We must labor that the saints the Lord has committed to us might be healthy.

Finally, do we have **local churches** surrounding us with which we can go on? Every locality needs the other local churches. There are many in this area. It doesn't matter whether they are large or small, strong or weak. If the young people and the children from the various localities are brought together, for instance, a way opens up for them and the church in your locality is strengthened. The same is true for the sisters, and for many other "groups." If we only focus on our local church while neglecting the provision to be found in the other churches, we will struggle needlessly and the vision of our saints will remain limited. Be brought into the fellowship with the nearby churches and you will be blessed.

No matter what Satan has done to destroy us as long as we have these six matters we will be able to go on following the Lord. Therefore the elders should gather and pray with these six things in view.

MESSAGE 3

If you are short of one of these, something has to be done! If Christ is not walking among you, something must be done! If you do not have the Lord's speaking among you, something must be done! If there is a lack of apostleship, something must be done! If there are not enough messengers, something must be done! If the saints themselves have been touched by the deep things of Satan, something must be done! If your locality stands isolated from the other churches, something must be done! We can be small without Christ or small having Christ. We can also have a large number having or not having Christ. In the temple in Jerusalem, even though everything was done properly, where was Jesus? By the Lord's mercy, may we always have this marvelous Christ. When we have Christ and are able to receive His speaking in the church life, we have everything we need.

WE NEED THE LORD WITH HIS FRESH SPEAKING

I call my wife frequently, wherever I am. We don't necessarily say that much to each other, and even though the words may be words we have spoken before, they are fresh. That is what is important. The church always needs this speaking of Christ.

If you minister, something has to be alive! Every Lord's Day morning must be a life-giving time. If you do not have brothers who can minister, have everyone get into the Word during the week and then come to share together. Someone who has more can say more and a younger one may learn to say less. If after Lord's Day morning the saints are not being fed, then you know there is something wrong. The Lord's words should enlighten, protect, regulate and even judge those who hear. The result should be that the saints' love for and growth in the Lord is increasing.

APOSTLES ARE ABLE TO MAKE WHAT IS SPOKEN INTO WHAT CAN BE SEEN

As He walks among the churches Jesus says, "What you see, write." How can you see what is spoken? It is when what you hear becomes a revelation. The Lord doesn't want tape recorders; the Lord wants those who see. He desires that we would be people of revelation.

For some reason it is difficult for a servant of the Lord to say, “I am an apostle,” for it makes him seem like he is uplifting himself. What marks a servant of the Lord? What he hears can become what he sees. Don’t think this is a light thing. You can over- or under-interpret something, or even totally misinterpret it. The ability to turn what is heard into a picture becomes the basis of apostleship. No apostle today will be as great as John. Maybe that is why it is hard for a servant to declare himself an apostle. It is also hard for many churches to say, “We need an apostle.”

THE LORD SPEAKS TO THE APOSTLES TO ENRICH THE CHURCHES

Many in the leadership consider how they might be self-sufficient rather than how they might receive help from the Lord’s servants. But when the churches come to their most critical time, the Lord says, “I will speak to the apostle who will interpret it into a picture and pass it onto you.” Everything John writes is according to what the living Christ ministered according to the situation of the different localities. What an apostle hears becomes what he sees, and what he sees then becomes the source of further enriching and salvation to those who receive it.

I still treasure the riches that have been ministered by the Lord’s servant, Witness Lee. I treasure how through his ministry we were helped to love Christ and consecrate ourselves to Christ. Go to other Christian groups. You will see that, even though they appreciate the Lord’s redemption and may be active in service, few if any pursue after Christ as we do.

We all like to be somebody and have our own turf, but any brother should be able to visit any local church. The Lord has given us some to serve us. We should be able to receive from them for the advancement of the Lord’s testimony.

JOHN’S UNIQUE STATUS AND QUALIFICATIONS

For you to translate what you see into a picture and then pass that picture on to the church, much learning is needed. Nothing says such a servant cannot have a job, but when someone is able to devote his time, he has more opportunity to learn. Consider John. Why was the Lord able to entrust His last message to this servant? God spoke to man for 4000 years and ended with him! John might say, “Well, I just loved the Lord and nothing else, so He gave me the impossible task of taking care of His mother.” (James was perhaps too busy handling other things so he had no time. If I were Jude I might have been bothered. Jesus had a few

brothers. It seems none cared for their mother, but rather the work they could handle!) That became a protection to John. After Mary passed away, I believe John considered where he should go. Peter was possibly in Baghdad. Then I believe Timothy wrote him. Timothy was caring for all the churches in Asia Minor after Paul was martyred. Perhaps he felt very inadequate in the face of some trouble the churches were experiencing. (Inadequacy can be a great blessing, since it causes you to reach out to others! A good church has to learn to say, "I am open to the servant of the Lord.") This is possibly why John went to Ephesus. Eventually he was exiled to Patmos. After his exile he returned to Ephesus.

The man writing on that small island of Patmos had a lot backing him up. He was one who knew Jesus as a child and a relative, and who became His youngest disciple. He was the only disciple who stayed with Jesus all the way to the cross. It was he to whom Jesus committed His mother at the cross. John had a rich manifestation of faithfulness and so much understanding of who Jesus was and experience of how Jesus operated and how the churches were raised up. All this qualified him to be the apostle to receive this revelation and to serve the churches at that time.

EACH CHURCH NEEDS THE APOSTLES

Even though they may not seem as qualified as the apostle John, the churches need to recognize that there are servants whom the Lord has raised up today who can help them. A congregation may ask such a brother, "Can you spend a weekend with us to help us?" Based on what such a brother has heard and seen of Jesus, he is able to minister to the saints.

When I first came to the USA I visited many groups of ten or so, or even fewer. You do not preach in such a gathering; you help them to read the Bible. When the leading brothers are helped to read the Word, they become invigorated. You don't need servants who require a pulpit to preach. You need servants who can bring you to Christ. But all the churches have to learn to be open to the Lord's servants. Without the protection of the Lord's servants, your church life can go off-course or become wild.

EACH CHURCH NEEDS MESSENGERS

Next, due to the fact that the churches have been around for many years now, every local church needs messengers. Paul's visit to Ephesus initially was around AD 50. Thus the churches were about 40 years old

by the time John wrote Revelation. Paul raised up a church in Ephesus so healthy that he could write such a wonderful epistle to them, but even such a church after another twenty years had degraded and become self-sufficient. Don't think self-sufficiency is a light matter. When the Lord looked at the elders there, He must have realized they were not able to receive what He was speaking. You must have elders, but the work of the Spirit may not come from the elders. Elders may be messengers, but messengers may not be elders! If there are no messengers in a local church the Lord can do very little. This is why the churches need the help from the servants of the Lord. Every church must have some real Jesus-lovers!

How wonderful it would be if we could have many more messengers who can listen in the churches after our training this coming year! When the elders lead, you must be very wise. Many times the Lord speaks to the messengers, just like Samuel when he was young. Eli was good enough to realize the Lord was speaking to the boy. The best situation is that the elders and the messengers are one. Regardless, we still hold all the elders in honor.

The presence of such messengers is really our hope. May those in the upcoming labor become messengers in the churches!

EACH CHURCH NEEDS ITS SAINTS TO BE HEALTHY

Furthermore, the saints have to be alive. If there are fifty dead in a congregation, I hope at least fifteen would be alive. In Thyatira, perhaps the ones who are "the rest" have to be able to hear the Lord.

EACH CHURCH NEEDS THE OTHER CHURCHES

Finally, the Lord's speaking to one church is for all the churches. We must be related to the churches nearby. May we be able to hear whatever the Spirit is speaking to the churches! (Rev. 2:9, 11, 17, 27; 3:6, 13, 22)

- notes from messages given by Titus Chu to co-workers and leading brothers on January 21-23, 2011, Ashland Woods Fellowship Center, near Sullivan Ohio.

Testimonies Regarding the Raising Up of Many of the Churches in This Area

*“I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear,
either publicly or in your homes.” - Acts 20:20 NLT*

*“And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of
my anxiety for all the churches.” - 2 Corinthians 11:28 ESV*

*It was felt fitting during the recent time of fellowship among the leading ones
and workers that some brothers should share about the history of the churches
for the sake of those present who may not have been aware. The servant whom
they often refer to was not present. The editor can testify that the tone was
one of a simple telling of the history and an appreciation of what the Lord
has accomplished. Others may benefit from these recollections and by the
example they contain. Let us remember, the book of Acts is still being written!*

Paul Neider:

There are a number among us who are younger and who may not know our history. Some brothers who have witnessed various things from the beginning have been asked to share.

James Yang, Cleveland:

The Lord's heart's desire is the church, a vision that was shown to me years ago.

I am not here to exalt anybody. I just speak the facts of how the Lord used His servant to labor among His churches, to build up the churches and perfect the saints so His gospel and His testimony might spread on the earth.

Titus came to the US in 1964. He first attended a seminary in Texas but after two weeks discovered they were not really abiding in the truth. He got fed up and left, and for whatever reason ended up in Eugene, Oregon. There he stayed for a month with a Christian family and perfected a number of the saints there. I believe around that time he met David Dong and some others in the Minneapolis area. Later, since he felt he could not go on in seminary school, he wrote to Brother Lee as to what he should do. Somehow, as many have heard, the mail got mixed up and a letter Brother Lee had written did not reach Titus, nor had Titus' letter reached Brother Lee. Titus then visited Christian

Chen, one of his early companions who had moved to Cleveland where he was laboring with a small group of saints. This brother had invited Titus, and that is how he ended up in Cleveland.

I got saved in 1963 through a Christian family in Pittsburgh. In 1964 Titus came to Pittsburgh to study at the University of Pittsburgh. Prior to that there were two Chinese couples having a Bible study, which I as a young brother attended (I was saved through these saints). There was also a Caucasian couple who had received the Stream magazine and contacted the Stream ministry. That brother was informed that there was a Chinese family in Pittsburgh and came to visit. These three families then came together in the afternoon on the Lord's Day to have a Bible study after attending their various denominational gatherings.

Titus, by this time, had been in the church life for ten years already, and when he came to Pittsburgh he immediately brought us together and fellowshiped with us the matter of life, the matter of the cross, and the matter of God's eternal purpose, which is the church! We all had the desire (although I was just tagging along). These saints had some capacity as those who were already serving in some way. The Caucasian brother brought in a neighbor who was a deacon in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. We came together and were reading the Normal Christian Church, which we were getting little out of; to us it seemed quite doctrinal. Who could think they could practice the church by reading a book? But when Titus came he brought some light to us and we began to realize there was something there. Therefore we knew we had to come together as the church, to stand for the Lord's testimony. We did not know where. At that time Titus invited Brother Lee to come to Pittsburgh to hold a conference at the university. That was in 1964. Right after that conference, out of the thirty or forty who came together, ten of us who had a desire came together at a brother's house where we shared our frustrations. There, for the first time in my life, I knelt down and prayed for the Lord's manifestation and for the Lord's standing with us. That was the first meeting and the church was established in Pittsburgh. That night we forgot about going to our denomination and determined that beginning the coming Lord's day we would start meeting as the church in Pittsburgh. The leadership was established at that time and Titus was there, all the time coaching us. He did not do it himself, however; he invited other brothers to help speak. That is how the church life was established in Pittsburgh.

Around this time, in 1965, there was a group of Christians in Mansfield. Their background was Grace Brethren, and they were very seeking. I believe they also had been reading Watchman Nee's books

and had contacted Stream Magazine. They found out there was a group of Christians in Cleveland, and the Chinese saints in Cleveland went down to visit them. So in 1966 they also came out of their denomination. Meanwhile, the brothers taking the lead in Cleveland had to leave, and Titus took a job in Cleveland after receiving his degree in 1965, (although I never saw him study, for he always seemed to be laboring with the brothers, especially on the matter of the cross, which we don't seem to hear so much about today. I was helped at that time to realize that if there is no death, there is no life!) Every week he traveled. He visited Burton. He visited Warren, Silver Lake and Pittsburgh. He visited many places. He raised up and sought out Christians. Eventually he spent time to perfect the leading ones in Pittsburgh every Lord's Day. He was always trying to bring the saints in Pittsburgh, Mansfield and Cleveland together. There was a lot a traffic among the churches. We were all very young; we just would go and were joyful to be with the saints.

One crucial time came in 1968. At that time Titus invited Witness Lee to come to Mansfield to have a three-day conference. That was the year I got married. We went directly from our honeymoon right into the conference. It was full of life and joy. That was the first time I really tasted the reality of the church life. When we came together, the fire was strong!

After that we felt we needed to invite our brother [Witness Lee] again in 1969 to a week-long conference in Erie, Pennsylvania. At that time the Spirit really moved! I was not someone easily moved, but during that time I really touched something. The topic was the "Sevenfold-Intensified Spirit". There were about 120 attending. Many came from the East coast: Connecticut, Buffalo, New York and so on, as well as Ohio. It was so good; we felt we must come together again soon! We came together in the winter. In some areas, such as Texas, they were experiencing this. That year a number migrated to Houston for the Lord's testimony. We had heard about this.

When the Texan brothers heard about the conference in Erie, they sent two carloads to the three-day conference over the New Year. At that time Sharon was expecting, and Titus was debating whether he should join the conference or not, but decided he is God's servant; he had to go. After the evening meeting, the Texan brothers testified how wonderful it was to come together to bear the testimony. That really stirred up the brothers in Ohio and Pittsburgh and we felt we should have done that too. That night we went to see Brother Lee and he listened to everyone of us, about our background. After listening, he said, "You brothers cannot move. You are rooted too deep; you are too involved in

your own localities.” That night many of us could not sleep because of what we heard, because of our desire for the Lord’s move. The next morning, after the meeting, about ten of us gathered together and fellowshiped. Prior to that we knew we had to come together, but we did not know where. Some thought perhaps Pittsburgh should be the place; others, Cleveland. We could not decide where would be the best place to be trained to practice the healthy, normal Christian church life. We remained there, arguing back and forth until one brother said, “OK, let’s just come together to pray about it. No more talking.” Then, when the name Akron came up, we all had such an echo in our spirit! I had never even heard of Akron before. As we prayed, we forgot about lunch. Afterward we knew the Spirit had spoken. Akron. We ten were so joyful! I decided I would go and tell Westinghouse, where I was working, that I was quitting. The others made their decision to sell their homes and move. That is how the Lord moved at that time, and that is how we responded at that time.

Then in 1969 and 1970 we began to move to Akron. Immediately the Lord gave us three families, who are still there. Initially we had twenty from Mansfield and some from Pittsburgh, about twenty, and some from Cleveland, Buffalo, and Connecticut... about 60. A little more than a year later, the number tripled to around 180. We didn’t gain so many locally, but there were so many saints who heard about it, who were longing for the church life. They heard it was actually being practiced in Akron. Titus established the leadership (which no one should think was an easy thing, for a number desired to be leading ones) and he used the time to train the young people to be in life, to be energized, and to be in truth, so that they might be restrained and governed according to what God had ordained. Anything aside from the Bible doesn’t mean a thing. We have to have God’s life by God’s word! You may have God’s life, but for what?

At the same time, the gospel was being spread and for the first time the proper service was established, including the service office. Gifford Neill and I were the first service office brothers. We didn’t know what we were doing, but the zeal for God’s house was consuming us! Within us there was a hope that the Lord would go on.

Over a year later a migration took place from Akron to the Washington D.C. area that many don’t know about. And a number also went to Indianapolis, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Due to the “consolidation” some returned later. The migration to Cleveland took place in 1972. Titus didn’t have much to do with this at the time, for he had gone to Taiwan to hold a training there.

Dave Shields, Akron:

Its awkward to talk about yourself, but I trust there is some profit, in this case. I came to the church life as a 22 year old fresh out of college. My intention was to visit a friend of mine who was already in the church in Mansfield, spend one summer there, hopefully get a job while I was there, and then go off to seminary. That was my plan.

I arrived in Mansfield and my first meeting—some of you knew Dick Coleman—was in his living room. The number was small enough to fit in a living room at that time. All I remember about that meeting was the pray-reading! I thought, “Man, what am I getting into here?” It wasn’t even pray-reading as we know it today: it was a kind of “wild” pray-reading. That is all I remember of my first experience of a church meeting. If I didn’t know this one brother and have confidence in him, that would have been it right there; but I thought, “I’ll stick it out for the summer. I want to know what he’s into.”

Then that weekend was the Erie conference. I was loaded into a car and off we went (I still had no job). The conference wasn’t in the city of Erie, but at a campground. I had no exit; we were out in the country. I didn’t have my own car. I walked in and there were brothers sitting in a circle and I heard “Amen! Amen! Amen!” The whole thing to me was so bizarre! If I had had a way out, I’m not sure I would have made it through that week. But the sharing there... The reason I am bringing this up is because I caught a vision at that conference. The Lord knew He had one week to get me, because if I had gone home in the same state of mind I arrived in, that would have been it; I would have disappeared. In that week, however, I saw very clearly the matter of the church. Before this time I already loved the Lord Jesus. I already loved the Bible. In fact, while the conference was going on, I was indexing and checking in my mind everything that was being spoken, against the Bible. Everything passed, much to my dismay! My realization was that, up until then, I had loved Christ the Head, but I had never loved the church, His Body! I began to realize it was one organism rather than two separate entities. I was very much caught by the matter of the church in the city, realizing this was the way to preserve oneness; there was no other way. I knew enough of the Bible and loved the Lord enough to realize this was important to Him.

Besides the ground of the church, the other thing that came out strongly to me was the exercise of the Spirit. It was my habit to talk long walks with the Lord to pray, and I remember going off because I was struggling with what I had heard and seen. I choose a path in the woods and I started to pray as I was used to, but all that I could do was say, “O Lord, Lord Jesus”. I didn’t want to give in to call on the Lord, but that was

all I could do. I wanted to talk to the Lord, I wanted to tell Him I was angry with Him, yet all I could do was call on Him. To this day, these two things I saw during that time have preserved me, that is, the exercise of the spirit (which I cannot get away from), and the vision of Christ and the Church. These two things have kept me in the church life through every storm over the years. Regardless of the offense or the trial, these two things have gotten me through it.

This was 1969, the time of the Vietnam War. I had a deferment due to my intention to go to seminary, so for me to change that plan had great consequences. It wasn't just a career change! Yet once I saw what I saw, I realized my whole life had to take a u-turn. I had a useless degree that only really qualified me to go to seminary. I realized that the draft board would be waiting for me, yet when the Lord calls, you have no choice but to follow.

So I returned from Erie to Mansfield, realizing this was it. I became one of the "wildest" young brothers there. We would walk down the streets and open doors to stores and restaurants and just shout, "Jesus is Lord!" Did that bear fruit? If you are talking about fruit in terms of numbers of people, the answer is no. But if you are talking about bearing fruit inside of me, the answer is yes! To be wild and crazy for the Lord when you are young works something lasting.

The second Erie conference was when the matter of Akron came out. Akron is not that far from Mansfield. Everything I owned fit in a suitcase. I was only substitute teaching. I didn't have a house to sell or a family, so to me it was an easy thing to move. We arrived in Akron in December 1969. Rick Coleman and some others were there as well.

The investment of time that our brother Titus made for us was considerable. (To this day, I am amazed at how he continues to labor. Sometimes I think he should slow down, but this is something he doesn't seem to know how to do.) He would drive down to Akron just to pick us up to preach the gospel at Cleveland State University so that there could be some "English-speaking" to accompany the Chinese saints there. (The little congregation in Cleveland at that time was all Chinese.) I was still "brand new" at this time, wondering what I was doing in Cleveland!

He would gather a group of us at his house, and we would go over something written by Watchman Nee, which he would translate from Chinese, and he would help us in how to minister. Then we would go to our respective localities. His goal was to train us. I really began to know truth at an entirely different level. The matter of the anointing became a groundwork laid in me that is still so profitable today. I learned how to touch the Lord inwardly, how to know the Lord's leading, and how to follow the Lord.

Somewhere along the way the draft board did contact me, but the Lord got me out of that. The brother I followed into the church life was selected, however, and ended up at an army base in the South.

The investment Titus made was something. The church in Akron started from ground zero. Brothers that I thought were ahead of me were actually just slightly more experienced; they didn't really know what they were doing, either. No one had any previous experience of the church life. Titus trained us in service and ministry, helping to establish these matters. Somehow, through his ministry, the level of consecration was high. When there was a conference in California, there were brothers who would simply quite their jobs so they could go the conference. They would come back, then, and find another job. Many did this.

When the matter of moving to Cleveland came up in 1973, everyone was excited (myself included). Then the brothers had some surprise fellowship with me. They said, "Brother, someone has to stay behind." To me that was hard, because all the wild young "horses" were going to Cleveland! By this time I owned a house and was married, and I was able to say "Amen." Eventually I did move to Willoughby, where the saints had begun meeting in 1975, and to Cleveland, and then back to Mansfield, and to Akron once more as well, where I am today.

The idea of consecration and selling all for the Lord does not take place simply by sitting in your living room and reading the Bible. It takes this kind of brother investing himself to put this kind of thing into you. And the reason there were all these churches in this area, I would have to say, is because of brothers who came under this kind of influence so that their hearts and their spirits and their desire was such that this kind of thing could be produced.

Dave Bixler, Cleveland.

I was born into a Mennonite family. When I was in junior high, I remember the preacher preaching about oneness. He said, "At least when we get to heaven we will all be one!" I remember I had a very clear feeling, "Why do we have to get to heaven to be one?" That seed was already present with me.

After graduating from high school, I went to Moody Bible Institute, and I loved it! Here were all these Christians from all over the country, and we were all seemingly one. We were one in the gospel; denominations were nothing. We were just together loving the Lord, pursuing the Lord, and preaching the gospel. In that particular time in America, denominationalism was very strong, unlike today. And, if you were a Catholic, many Protestants considered you unsaved, and vice versa.

When it came time to graduate from Moody we had to go back to our denominations and “shake hands over the fence.” That was a frustration. I didn’t like that.

While at Moody I met my wife, and it was my wife’s mother who contacted Brother Lee’s ministry in 1964. (I began Moody in 1963.) My wife’s mother was very much a person who was touching life. She wrote to her daughter, my wife, twice a week, and I always read her letters, which were life-infusing. I began to get a taste for life (versus doctrines)!

While we were at that stage my wife’s parents began to have a lot of fellowship with Pittsburgh and Cleveland. Christian Chen was coming down and ministering and so on. I graduated in June, and in July Brother Lee came to visit Mansfield (the group of saints meeting in Mary and Dick’s house, which was mainly sisters). Brother Lee came to have three days of meetings in their home. That was the first time I met Brother Lee. Brother Lee had no intention of sharing on the ground of the church, but he did, during the second or third meeting. I was working second shift, so I missed the meeting. Like Thomas, I missed the revelation! But they received it, and they became clear that they had to meet as the church.

Penny and I were getting married August 26, and they didn’t know how they could marry us, so they stayed with the denomination until we got married and started meeting with the church on August 28! I would give one illustration from before that time. Titus was getting brothers together. This was long before Erie. I remember going with my father-in-law and others, along with some from Pittsburgh, to Warren where we met in Bob Wilging’s home. Titus came down, and I remember how he just shared and shared and shared. That was a little window of how he labored, how we went from place to place to infuse vision among the brothers.

I would say this kind of labor that Titus had over a two to three year period was a foundation so that when we came to the Erie conference, the groundwork was there to allow the brothers to come together. At the Erie conference, I would just give my own testimony. They could call on the Lord for a half an hour, and it was life-giving! The brothers from Texas, from Lubbock and Waco and another place, were struggling in their little groups, so the Lord moved them to come together in Houston. And they experienced the Lord’s blessing and strengthening, and that was their encouragement. When they came to visit in Erie, that was an encouragement.

People were testifying about how they were touched, and calling on the Lord. I was really opened. After a couple of days I talked to my

father-in-law and said, "You know, people are talking about calling on the Lord and it has helped them so much. I try, but nothing's happening." My father-in-law said, "Don't worry about it," which was very wise. Well, that evening I touched my spirit, and everything changed, and I became one of those crazy brothers too! Amen!

We came to Akron. There was struggle there because of some ambitious preachers who wanted to take the lead, and Titus had to fight through all that. I didn't know a whole lot about it, but found out later. I remember sitting in Titus' dining room and he would labor with us. He always tried to put the brothers forward to help them minister. We had contacted some saints in Cambridge, so a bunch of us went there and after we arrived back in Mansfield I remember Titus encouraged two or three of us to share. I was one of them and I had no idea what I was going to share. But that is what he would do; he would put you up to see if you had any capacity or would have a breakthrough or something. That was a way he labored.

Bob Brenneman, Willoughby.

I entered the scene in 1970. The Lord was moving in this country. When I hear the sharing about Uganda it reminds me somewhat of how the Spirit was moving in this country. Christians were seeking and looking for the proper church life. "Where is it? Lord, what are You doing?" And that was going on in me. I was in South Bend, Indiana, with Dave at the time. He left me behind after he went to Erie and moved to Akron. I figured I would have to wait in South Bend until the Lord moved there!

But there were many pockets of seeking ones here and there and Titus would seek them out; somehow he knew about them and would travel just to share something with them. Right during that time after the brothers moved to Akron he arranged a little mini-conference with some couples in Michigan. That was my first contact with the brothers. Titus was sharing on the one new man! I had no clue about what the one new man was, but I enjoyed it and we sang songs out of the supplement of 36 songs, such as "Our God is Living" and "Joy, Joy, Joy." I loved those songs. I had heard them before, but I hadn't enjoyed them so much before. This time the Spirit was involved! I was on the ceiling singing those songs, and wondering what the one new man was.

Shortly after that there was a conference in Akron. Dave invited me to that again. That's where I was captured for the church life. Some of you talked about being offended when you came to the first meetings; I wasn't offended by anything. I just ate it up, because it witnessed within what was going on in me.

I went back to South Bend, gave my boss two weeks' notice, he let me go in one and I was back in Akron, just in time for a conference with Brother Lee. I moved into the brothers' house with Dave Shields and Rick Coleman and some others. Titus would gather us young brothers, as some have mentioned, to begin to perfect us. This was a big help. He would have us share and so-forth. Those times were concept-changing. The concept-changing principles, I call them, where the veils are taken away and you begin to see the vision of Christ and the church and the Body life. Therefore when the migrations came about, there was some ground already in a number of brothers as young leading ones to be with the churches.

I would just mention this in conclusion. Cleveland was reestablished coming out of Akron, and Buffalo came out sometime during that time (the main core was three families from Willoughby), and Detroit, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Dayton, I believe. Also Indianapolis and others. This was through the laboring of our brother. He sought out the seeking ones. Eventually, it was very common, every weekend it seemed, that a family would come with a U-Haul. They had quit their job and were moving for the church without having another job. Through our brother's laboring, many began to contact the church. Then, during the perfecting, a number were raised up to take the lead, and the churches came out through the migrations through our brother's labor. Don't think these areas are your own labor; there was a labor behind the scene to produce all the churches in this area. Praise the Lord for His Spirit's brooding and moving and the apostle standing with the Lord's moving, and the brothers standing together with him, and the churches that were produced.

Paul Neider, Cleveland:

My origin was in Mansfield, based on a conference at Kenyon College. I'd like to underscore the point the brothers made.

The undergirding, the big impetus, to what was happening was Brother Lee being in this country. But you needed a local brother laboring, and Titus had had ten years in Taiwan. So, as the brothers have repeatedly indicated, he was always trying to perfect. It wasn't just the speaking, it was the serving. Back then, the services were not actually obligations; they were a training ground for the saints. If you were in children's service or moving service, there was a lot of preparation. People really wanted to give themselves, and that was the spirit in the churches at that time.

Titus started to hold some trainings. I didn't want to move from Mansfield to Cleveland. I enjoyed the church life in Mansfield. But eventually via some strong insisting brothers, I ended up in Cleveland, where I was able to get a job. This was late 1977. I was brought into the lead early, and that was a tough row to hoe. But that was the desire at that

time, for many to be in leadership. I remember I couldn't figure out why he was always dragging me around with him in his car. I didn't feel I had much potential or knew much, but that was his way. He would take brothers with him, and by observation, by osmosis, by mentoring, he would try to get something into you.

In 1980, he decided we were going to have a full time training, and by the Lord's mercy I said amen. It wasn't that hard to quit my engineering job (as all engineering jobs were about the same) but of course I was concerned about how the Lord would provide for my family. But the Lord provided grace, and I quit. Then within a few weeks Brother Lee asked Titus to go back to Taiwan! And at that time I was thinking, "I quit my job to be in this one year training, and you're taking off now?" I didn't like it one bit. There were some brothers who then opted out, and Chuck Debelak and I began leading the training! I called it the 'blind leading the blind' training. But it was profitable because we were so desperate, and we prayed a lot, and we went out and preached the gospel. At that time there was a farm that was purchased in Avon that was used to try to finance the work a little bit. There weren't that many full-time coworkers at the time. To make a long story short, that training ended, and the bonding and cohesion that came out was wonderful.

In 1984, Titus had another training. Vern, could you talk about it?

Vern Yoder:

In 1984 there were forty from around the Great Lakes in ten different teams. For us young brothers and sisters no one knew what was going on, as it was something new. There were teams and once every other week we would go to Cleveland (usually) to present what we had been laboring on. For those ten months we had a glorious time getting into the truth and being perfected. In one week we would often produce an outline of around 40 pages, which we would present. One of the projects one team worked on was a harmony of the gospels. For me it was the most important time of being constituted in the truth and life that I have experienced in my 26 years serving full-time. At the end of that time ten brothers consecrated themselves to serve the Lord full-time, including (of those present) myself, Jim Ruffin, John Berglund, and Jeff Brown.

Paul Neider:

I was not involved in that, but that became a direction in his labor, which was to produce full-time serving ones. The constitution began to come in through these brothers committing themselves to serve in this way, though I did not feel myself called in that way.

What characterized Cleveland in all those years was that we had a lot of trainings! Titus would minister, and we would take notes and be tested and so on. By his going through Second Corinthians, for instance, you came to understand the heart of a serving one. He used that pattern to inject something into us so that we wouldn't simply be sitting back, but that we would invest ourselves into others. I would say that term, putting yourself into, or investing yourself in others, characterized what he was doing with us. We are not here to be passive members in the Body; we are here to be building members in the Body. That spirit pervaded the church, and the saints vied to really invest themselves. That was a huge characteristic that existed.

In the midst of all of this we were sniped at, Titus in particular, for not being "in the flow." But because he was always producing, it was difficult for others to undermine what he was doing. Nevertheless there were efforts to undermine him. Brother Lee used him repeatedly to go back to Taiwan to give trainings, yet at the same time the undercurrent was there.

The reason I bring this up is to point out that the situation today had its source early on. It wasn't something that happened out of the blue. It was due to a suspicion that early on he was not marching with the other brothers, which was not the case. He was trying to get into the depths of what was being released, as opposed to the format. You can emulate things outwardly, or you can put yourself in and try to understand the depths of what is being released. You don't try to carry something to please others so that it looks the same; you try to carry it according to the spiritual understanding the Lord would give you!

We had the migration to Detroit (once more) and to Pittsburgh. I was taken along with Titus and a few others. These brothers had some experience in going into a city and sensing where the Lord would have them. Eventually a testimony was raised up in Pittsburgh, Detroit and Buffalo (in 1985). Again I was in a car with Titus, and there was a church in Buffalo. These things happen really organically; it was not a matter of a move or a forced migration. Some migrations were based on a good desire, but what was learned was that if it was something based on a good idea rather than the Lord's leading, it was not going to happen. As a result, consolidation took place where saints from all over came in to a given locality, and it was not a healthy environment. The migrations that came out of the kind of labor he had, however, seemed to be healthy, and those churches still stand.

We eventually got to the point in the Cleveland area where we had to expand. We eventually had groups in Westlake, North Olmsted,

Garfield, and Lorain. Some moved to Cincinnati. This “critical mass,” and the perfecting we had received, became the base.

Titus was always throwing brothers into the “deep end.” When I moved from Mansfield to Cleveland, he told me I had to share the first Sunday I was there! We had the gospel every Friday night for many years, along with a love feast. Titus would often appoint us to share when we felt we had the least to give, yet that was what caused us to be dependent on the Lord rather than our own preparation. And the Lord blessed it. There were a lot of “amens” against concepts and desires. My point is not only did he establish churches and unveil God’s economy where we could begin to see God’s eternal purpose, but he also perfected many saints over the years. Many are present here, both English-speaking and Chinese-speaking, who can testify what his portion is.

I am not here promoting anything. There have been times when it has been difficult; but after you look at the whole process you realize the Lord worked through that to produce something, or someone. Many here have gone places, and because of the constituting that has gone on, there is some effect. Now there is a band of coworkers who are laboring with him. What does he do? He sends people out, sees that churches are raised up, and then begins the perfecting all over again.

My feeling is that if we come away with anything, it should be these two things: number one, the Lord has had a very specific move in this area, and, number two, by His servant’s labor the stature of saints and the churches have come up over the years. It is not a matter of exalting anything.

When we went through the storms, that is another aspect. I had been going out to Anaheim for these brothers’ meetings for years. I could sense there was a lot of friction. There was a feeling, as I said, that we weren’t “in the flow” and “what’s your problem?” Titus did try to cooperate. He did send brothers out to the West Coast to be with Brother Lee over the years. After Brother Lee passed away (all of us had a very strong life-relationship with him) there was a feeling that this group of “blended brothers” were now taking the lead. Titus endeavored during that time to try to help them to see that we could not become an organization; that a publishing house could not lead the churches. I can remember being in some of these meetings where he would get quite vocal, and my feeling was I wish there could be a trap door I could drop down in so I wouldn’t have to sit through those times. In hindsight, I realize he was struggling with these brothers so that they could realize, “Don’t make this an organization. Don’t institutionalize this. Bring in more fellowship.” It didn’t work; so eventually we got a letter from them

in 2006. That was after, I would say, many attempts on the part of many brothers to bridge the gap. The letter basically indicated that he was to hand over the churches he served and his co-workers to the LSM brothers. I remember being there and looking at the letter, along with others, and looking at Titus and saying, "The churches don't belong to you." I had been trained well enough to realize that the churches didn't belong to any one man. They are the churches of Christ, of God, and of the saints! They don't belong to the apostle; they don't belong to the one that labored. I said, "It is not up to you to respond to this letter." A hundred or so brothers came together and we responded. The letter writing took on a life of its own. They responded, and then eventually the "quarantine" letter came in October, 2006. This letter named a couple brothers, Titus being one, and indicated the churches and saints should have nothing more to do with him. We looked at that and I wondered, "How does a group of brothers quarantine another brother?" I looked for and could find no Scriptural precedent. We decided that we just had to go on.

It took me about two years to get through the feelings that those actions generated in me, but today I can testify that if I saw the brothers, I would greet them warmly. I feel it is the Lord's mercy that due to the help we have received over the years we are able to have this kind of response. You can't kid yourself; when there are feelings that rise up, you have to let them rise up and deal with them. The Lord has been merciful; when you look at our situation today we are pretty much at the number we had before. Have there been casualties along the way? Have situations arisen that we have not been happy about? Absolutely. But I would say, by the Lord's mercy, the Lord's foundation is still firm among us. Because of his strong stand and his unwillingness to render evil for evil, we have had a pattern. What we have passed through has shaken a lot of brothers, and that is one of the reasons we are here today... to have a sweet time together and realize we don't have to agree on everything, but that the sweetness and the harmony be restored among us so that the Lord has a further way to go on is absolutely necessary.

Ashland Woods Fellowship Center, Sullivan OH, January 21, 2011