

CONCERNING CAMPUS WORK

Some saints—including full-time serving ones, students, and others—may have incorrect concepts concerning how those in the local churches should work on the college campuses. For that reason, it is good to review some basic principles and the way in which the ministry of our brother Witness Lee speaks concerning how to carry out this service to the Lord.

Not Proselytizing but Conducting Ourselves in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel

In 1983 Brother Lee told us, “If those whom we contact desire to attend our meetings, we should welcome them, but we must never try to proselytize. Proselytizing is not an honorable thing. Even though we hope that people will take the way of the Lord’s recovery, we do not proselytize. We must allow the Lord to operate in people according to His desire (Rom. 9:15)” (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee [CWWL], 1983, vol. 1, 451*). It is the Lord who adds to the church (Acts 2:47). Thus, in the elders’ training he conducted in 1984, Brother Lee told us to “let other Christians have their own choice regarding the matter of the church” (*Elders’ Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord’s Recovery [ET4], 129*). Brother Lee spoke such words repeatedly when he was among us. Even in years in which the local churches were suffering under fierce and slanderous attacks, he faithfully charged us to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27; cf. 2 Cor. 6:3; *Preaching the Gospel on the College Campuses, 27-31; CWWL, 1982, vol. 1, 11-12, 281, 379; 1983, vol. 1, 451; 1984, vol. 1, 325*).

This does not mean that we would not speak of the church to others. Paul said that he withheld nothing from the Ephesians that would profit them (Acts 20:20). Thus, in response to a question Brother Lee said:

The truths in the New Testament include God, Christ, the Spirit, the believers, the church, the kingdom, and the New Jerusalem. These are the truths in God’s New Testament economy. Just as we should speak concerning God, Christ, and the Spirit, we should also speak concerning the church. We should not have the attitude that we use this truth to recruit people. Rather, we are presenting the truths to new believers so that they may know these truths. As we present the truth, a believer may have a positive or negative response. We should not be bothered by a negative response. (*The Vision, Living, and Work of the Lord’s Serving Ones, 116*)

If someone asks us where we meet, we should not be coy or evasive. As Brother Lee explained:

When other Christians ask us where we fellowship, we should not pretend to be someone else. We should be frank and tell them what we are. Whether they would continue to be open to us or whether they would be closed to us is up to them. Regardless of their reaction, we still would love them and not argue with them. (*ET4, 130*)

We are who we are and should present the truth that underpins our practice in the local churches, even if some may misunderstand. Our practice is to, as much as depends on us, diligently keep the oneness of the Body of Christ, which is the oneness of the Spirit, whether other believers choose to meet in the local churches or not (Eph. 4:3-4; Rom. 12:18). If they reject us, the fissure in fellowship is their responsibility and is beyond our control.

Our Campus Organizations

The practice of the campus organizations started by students who meet in the local churches is to register with their respective schools with generic and inclusive names such as “Christians on Campus” or “Christian Students.” Some critics have misrepresented this as being deceptive, but this practice of registering a campus club with a generic name is consistent with the local churches’ practice of not taking a name. The New Testament speaks of the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, the church in Corinth, the seven churches in seven cities in Asia, and so on (Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11). These were not names but merely descriptions of what those gatherings of believers were. The same principle applies to our campus organizations. They take a generic and inclusive descriptor that reflects what they are. They are not “the church” on the campus, and it would be inappropriate for them to register as such. They are, as their registered names say they are, Christians on campus or Christian students. Moreover, they are open to all Christians on their respective campuses, whether they choose to meet in a local church or not.

Our Burden—Gospel, Truth, and Life

Our burden in laboring on college campuses is threefold—to preach the gospel, to teach the truth, and to minister Christ as life (Mark 16:15; Gal. 4:16; 2 Cor. 3:6). We emphasize campus work because that is where young people congregate, and historically the Lord has initiated fresh moves with young people. The apostles were young men

when the Lord called them (Matt. 4:18-22). Luther, Zinzendorf, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Darby, and many missionaries were called by the Lord when they were young. As people age they get more set, settled, and occupied, both in their circumstances and in their thinking.

Even those of us who are quite young in the Lord should aspire to closely follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus, of the apostles, and of those the Lord has given to us as models (2 Tim. 3:10; 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2 Thes. 3:9; Heb. 13:7). Their conduct with people was pure, even testifying to the conscience of those who rejected them (1 John 3:3; 2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:2). Rather than proselytizing, they preached the gospel to unbelievers (Luke 4:18; Acts 2:14-40; 1 Cor. 1:17), taught the truth (Luke 20:21; 1 Tim. 2:7), and ministered Christ as life to the believers that they might grow in the Lord (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6). Paul's ministry presented to people the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel (Eph. 3:8) and brought them to know Christ as their life (Col. 3:4) and to know the cross as the center of God's work (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul said that he travailed until Christ was formed in the believers (Gal. 4:19) and labored to present every man full-grown in Christ (Col. 1:29). Even if we are successful in proselytizing, that is "gaining" someone to be in a local church, yet we do not help them to know the Lord subjectively and experientially, we have accomplished nothing as far as the building up of the Body of Christ is concerned. Rather than simply "gaining" increase for the local churches, our burden should be to serve the Lord according to the pattern of the New Testament ministry.

Our Way—Prayer, the Spirit, and the Word

Our way of laboring must also be pure. We should not trust in any shortcuts such as methods or gimmicks. Rather, we should seek to carry out the Lord's burden through prayer, the Spirit, and the Word.

If we read through the entire book of Acts, we can see that the way they took to carry out God's move on this earth to fulfill His New Testament economy was entirely by three main substances—prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Not only in Acts but also throughout the entire New Testament, prayer, the Spirit, and the Word were used for the carrying out of God's economy. (*Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move, 21*)

The Lord Himself was a man of prayer, was full of and did things by the Spirit, and was full of and could livingly apply the Word of God (Luke 5:16; Luke 4:1; Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:4, 8, 12). Likewise, the apostles went by prayer, in the Spirit, and with the Word (Acts 1:14; 2:4; 6:4; 2:22-36). If we take this way, what we give people will be solid and substantial. If we take other ways, not only will we cheat those whom we contact, but we will give ground to criticism by others and dissension within the church. Thus, Brother Lee said:

Take the unique way of prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Do not think of anything else, and do not use any gimmicks. Get yourself constituted, qualified, and equipped. Then go out in your prayer with the Spirit presenting the Word. Many will get convinced. The seeking people are eager to listen to someone who can tell them what the reality of human life is. This is what they need, and this is what we have. We need many saints to go and present the divine truths that the Lord has shown us to the needy people. Do not think of taking a way other than prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. Any other way will cause dissension and division. (132)

The Need—Genuine Concern and Proper Patterns

Every aspect of our contact with people, including our concern for them, should be genuine. Brother Lee said, "Brother Nee told us that in preaching the gospel we need to have a genuine concern for others. As long as we have the proper concern for people, we are well on our way to be qualified to be used of God for their salvation" (*Life-study of Second Corinthians, 383*). The same is true with regards to caring for young believers. Writing to the young church in Thessalonica, Paul described his care for them as a nursing mother and as an exhorting father (1 Thes. 2:7, 11).

As we contact younger believers, we need to nourish them not only with the truths in the Word of God but also with a living that is a pattern (1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7). Brother Lee said, "To give the new believers and young ones a lot of teaching is not the proper way to take care of them. The proper way to foster them is to show them a pattern. By showing them a pattern you water them, supply them, nourish them, and cherish them. This is fostering" (*Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, 110*). According to John 15, fruit-bearing is an organic term pointing to the overflow of life (vv. 2, 4-5, 8). This means that fruit-bearing depends not only on our work but even more on our person and our living. If we are proper in our person and our living, that will be reflected in our work and will draw seeking ones to imitate us and to become patterns to others themselves (1 Thes. 1:6-7).