

**RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION
FOR THE CHURCH LIFE**

Message 2

A Godly Family for the Church Life

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Gen. 5:22, 25-29; 6:8, 11-14; 7:1; Matt. 16:18;
Rom. 16:3-5; Philem. 1-2

I. Godliness is a living that expresses the divine reality, an expression of God in all His riches—1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 6, 11; Titus 1:1; 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:3, 6-7; 3:11:

- A. Godliness refers not only to piety but also to the living of God in the church, that is, to God as life lived out in the church—1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- B. The living of the church as the new man should be exactly the same as the living of Jesus; it should be a life according to the reality that is in Jesus—Eph. 4:17-24:
 - 1. The reality is in Jesus refers to the actual condition of the life of Jesus as recorded in the four Gospels; in the godly life of Jesus there is truth, reality—v. 21, and note 1.
 - 2. Jesus lived a life in which He did everything in God, with God, and for God; God was in His living, and He was one with God—John 14:9-10; 16:32b; 5:30; 6:57; 10:30.
 - 3. We, the believers, who are regenerated with Christ as our life and are taught in Him, learn from Him as the reality is in Jesus—3:3, 5-6; Col. 3:4; Eph. 4:20-21.

II. Noah's life and work was one that changed the age; Noah came from a godly family and learned from his forefathers all the godly things—Gen. 5:22, 25-29; 6:8:

- A. Noah inherited the spiritual blessings from his forefathers to maintain and extend God's way of redemption and life:
 - 1. Noah found grace in the eyes of God (v. 8); born into a godly family (cf. Gen. 5:429), he inherited the spiritual blessings from his forefathers and took God's way of redemption and life, including Adam's way of salvation (3:20-21), Abel's way of offering (4:4), Enosh's way of calling (v. 26), all the fathers' way of living and begetting (5:3-28), Enoch's way of walking with God (vv. 22, 24); moreover, by faith he became a righteous man in God's eyes and a perfect man who walked with God in that generation (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:9).
 - 2. Therefore, he maintained and extended God's way of life so that God could carry out His plan on the corrupted earth according to His desire.
- B. The ark built by Noah eventually not only saved him from God's judgment but also saved his family from that evil generation—vv. 11-14; 7:1; Matt. 24:37-39:
 - 1. This is a type of Christ's salvation that not only delivers us out of eternal perdition but also saves us from the corrupted generation—Acts 2:40; cf. Gal. 1:4.
 - 2. Whoever is saved will by no means perish; however, we need the further and higher salvation that saves us from the corrupted generation; this salvation is the corporate Christ whom we are building—Gen. 6:11-14; 7:1; Acts 2:40-42; 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:16.

III. Among us in the Lord's recovery the most important unit is the church; after the church, the most important unit is the family—1 Tim. 3:15-16; Titus 1:5-9; 2:3-5:

- A. Next to the church, the family is the most important unit in society; without a proper family life, there would be no way to have a healthy society or country; a nation is constituted of families as the basic factors.
- B. We fully realize that without a proper family life it is difficult to have an orderly church life; we also realize that without a proper church life it is difficult to have a normal and proper family life; we are here for the church and also for the family.

IV. Apart from the book of Proverbs, the Old Testament does not seem to give us much teaching concerning parenting, but there are some good examples—Exo. 12:3-7; Deut. 6:7-9, 20-21; 11:18-21; Psa. 78:5-7; Joel 1:3:

- A. Adam and Eve were saved, and they passed on the word of salvation to the following generation; we also must share these things with our own children, telling them the sad story of man’s fall and proclaiming to them the good news of God’s salvation—Gen. 3:21; 4:4.
- B. “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice”; since Abel had such faith, exercised this faith, and offered a sacrifice to God in accordance with this faith, he must have heard the preaching of the glad tidings from his parents—Heb. 11:4.
- C. In the preparation of Moses, God prepared godly parents who infused him with godly thoughts after his birth; through the infusing of his parents, Moses had the godly thought and concept that he needed to rescue the children of Israel—Exo. 2:7-9; Heb. 11:24-25.
- D. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, those who were qualified and ready to take possession of the good land were younger ones, the second generation—Num. 14:29-31, 38; Deut. 1:35-36:
 - 1. The second generation did not pass through as much as the first generation did, but they received the benefit of what the first generation experienced—11:2-7; Josh. 1:1-3.
 - 2. The principle is the same with us in the Lord’s recovery today; what the older ones have experienced is being passed on to the younger ones and will be very effective in building them up and preparing them to fight with God and for God—2 Tim. 2:2.

V. The New Testament gives examples of households, which clearly show us that the unit of God’s salvation and service is the household:

- A. In the New Testament we see many sweet households, such as the household of Caesar (Phil. 4:22), the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:22-24), the household of Lydia (16:13-15), the household of the jailer (vv. 29-34), and the household of Crispus (18:8).
- B. In addition, there were houses in which the meetings were held, such as Aquila and Prisca’s house (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19) and the house of Philemon (Philem. 1-2).

VI. From the beginning of the Lord’s recovery in China, Brother Nee pointed out that the church needs to be built up with the household as a unit:

- A. “I would like to say emphatically that the family life of our next generation has much to do with the church life of our next generation...The church life of the next generation will be strong only if you take care of this matter well. If our next generation has terrible families, the church will suffer many drawbacks...In the coming days may God bestow His grace to the church so that many young families will be raised up in which both the husband and the wife serve the Lord and walk in His way together in one accord. How beautiful such a picture will be!”—*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 49, p. 497.
- B. “A good church life is maintained through good families. The husbands have to be good and the wives also have to be good. Then the church life will be free of problems”—p. 518.

VII. The church life is the purpose of the Christian life, and it is a great reality in the universe; hence, our family life should be brought into the church life—Matt. 16:16-19; Philem. 1-2:

- A. We need to realize that in the sight of God, nothing compares with the church; thus, apart from the church life, our family life is vanity; only when our family life is brought into the church life will it be reality—Matt. 13:45-46; Acts 20:28; Eccl. 1:2.
- B. While we need to bear the responsibility of taking care of our family, we need to see that the church is a treasure in God’s heart—1 Tim. 3:2, 4, 12; Titus 2:4-5; Matt. 13:45-46.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

**THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS—
GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH**

According to the context [in 1 Timothy 3], godliness here [1 Timothy 3:16a: “And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness”] refers not only to piety but also to the living of God in the church, i.e., to God as life lived out in the church. This is the great mystery confessed universally by believers in Christ. (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 3:16, footnote 2)

According to unconfirmed historical accounts, these six lines of poetry [in 1 Timothy 3:16] made up a song that the saints in the early church loved to sing. He refers to Christ, who was God manifested in the flesh as the mystery of godliness. The transition from the mystery of godliness to He implies that Christ as the manifestation of God in the flesh is the mystery of godliness (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20). This mystery of godliness is the living of a proper church, and such a living also is the manifestation of God in the flesh. (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 3:16, footnote 3)

[“Taken up in glory” in 1 Timothy 3:16] refers to Christ’s ascension into glory (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11; 2:33; Phil. 2:9). According to the sequence of historical events, Christ’s ascension preceded His being preached among the nations. However, it is listed here as the last step in Christ’s being the manifestation of God in the flesh. This must indicate that the church too is taken up in glory. Hence, it implies that not only Christ Himself as the Head but also the church as the Body are the manifestation of God in the flesh. When a church is well taken care of according to the instructions given in the first two chapters [of 1 Timothy]...the church will function as the house and household of the living God for His move on the earth, and as the supporting pillar and holding base of the truth, bearing the divine reality of Christ and His Body as a testimony to the world. Then the church becomes the continuation of Christ as the manifestation of God in the flesh. This is the great mystery of godliness—Christ lived out of the church as the manifestation of God in the flesh! (*Holy Bible Recovery Version*, 1 Tim. 3:16, footnote 9)

NOAH

Genesis 6:9 tells us that Noah walked with God. Undoubtedly, Noah inherited all the spiritual blessings from his forefathers, such as Adam, Abel, Enosh, Enoch, etc. and he followed his great grandfather, Enoch, to walk with God in a crooked, perverse, and adulterous generation. I do believe that he was much influenced by hearing of his great grandfather Enoch’s godly walk. Noah stood for a strong continuation of the line of life and, with much development, he carried it on further...

Genesis 6:8 says, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Finding grace in the eyes of the Lord is not a small thing. What does “finding grace” mean? Notice that this verse does not say that God was gracious to Noah, or that the Lord granted grace to Noah. No, it says that Noah found grace. Remember that Genesis is a book filled with spiritual seeds. Here, in 6:8, we have the first mention of grace in the Bible. Noah was able to be what he was because he found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Hebrews 4:16 tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need. When I was young, nearly every day in my prayers I would say, “Lord, I am coming to the throne of grace. At Your throne of grace I find grace for my timely need. Lord, I need Your grace every minute. I not only need Your grace every year, every week, every day, and every hour, but every minute. Without Your grace, I simply cannot bear anything.” Today I still need the Lord’s grace every minute. Perhaps in a few minutes my folks will give me a difficult time, or else one of the brothers will come to bother me. Perhaps I will receive a phone call from a sister. So, I keep on telling the Lord, “Lord, I need Your grace every minute. I know that You are gracious and that You have grace ready for me. Lord, since grace needs my cooperation, I kneel before the throne of grace to find grace to meet my need.” Many times we simply cannot stand our situation and we cannot face what is happening to us. However, there is a place called the throne of grace. Come boldly to the throne of grace that you may find mercy and grace for your time of need.

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Do you believe that, by himself, Noah was able to find grace in the eyes of the Lord? I do not believe that he did this by himself. The flood came 1,656 years after Adam was made. Adam lived for nine hundred thirty years. This leaves seven hundred twenty-six years from the year Adam died to the year the deluge came. When Adam was six hundred twenty-two years of age, Enoch was born and he lived as a contemporary of Adam for three hundred and eight years. After Adam died, Enoch still lived another fifty-seven years before he was taken by God. Sixty-nine years later Noah was born. So, Noah was born only one hundred twenty-six years after Adam's death. When Enoch was sixty-five, he begat Methuselah and then lived for another three hundred years before he was taken away. Methuselah lived for nine hundred sixty-nine years, dying in Noah's six hundredth year, the year the deluge came. Undoubtedly, Enoch learned the things of God from his forefathers, perhaps even learning directly from Adam. The fact that Enoch named his son "Methuselah," which means "when he is dead, it shall be sent," proves that he taught his son concerning God. Methuselah must have taught his son, Lamech, and Lamech his son, Noah. Noah came from a godly family and learned from his forefathers all the godly things. Thus, he came to realize his need for grace. His generation was corrupt and filled with violence. The human race had become flesh. Noah lived in a crooked, perverse, and evil generation. Nevertheless, his parents and grandparents taught him the things of God, and he realized that he needed God's grace. (*Life-Study of Genesis*, msg. 28, pp. 374-376)

Noah was born into the human race that was corrupt to the uttermost, and he lived among that race. At that time, men abused their fallen bodies and became flesh. They were full of lusts (Gen. 6:3a, 5). As a result, the fallen angels joined themselves to man through illegal marriage, so that the human race was no longer pure but became a mixture of the human nature with fallen spirits (Gen. 6:2, 4). That was the most evil thing in the eyes of God, and He could not tolerate it.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of God (Gen. 6:8). Born into a godly family (cf. Gen. 5:4-29), he inherited the spiritual blessings from his forefathers and took God's way of redemption and life, including Adam's way of salvation, Abel's way of offering, Enosh's way of calling, and Enoch's way of walking with God. Moreover, by faith he became a righteous man in God's eyes and a perfect man who walked with God in that generation (Heb. 11:7; Gen. 6:9). Therefore, he maintained and extended God's way of life so that God could carry out His plan on the corrupted earth according to His desire. (*Truth Lessons*, Level Two, vol. 2, ch. 17, p. 44)

The ark saved the whole family of Noah from the pounding and drowning of the flood. This is a type of the salvation of Christ that saves God's elect from God's punishment. In the days of Noah, people were befuddled by eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage; they did not know that judgment was coming, until the flood came and destroyed them all (Luke 17:26-27). Likewise, people today are befuddled by the necessities of this life and do not know that God's judgment will come upon them by the Lord's appearing. Just as Noah was saved by the ark that was built by his work, so we must also work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12) that at the Lord's coming we may be saved from God's punishment and not suffer the plagues that the world will suffer.

The ark built by Noah eventually not only saved him from God's judgment but also saved his family of eight from that evil generation. This is a type of Christ's salvation that not only delivers us out of eternal perdition but also saves us from the corrupted generation. Whoever is saved will by no means perish. However, we need the further and higher salvation that saves us from the corrupted generation. This salvation is the corporate Christ whom we are building. We need not only to preach the individual Christ but also to build the corporate Christ, the church. This Christ may be considered today's ark. Through this Christ as salvation thousands of people have been saved not only from God's judgment but also from the crooked and perverted generation...

The ark saved Noah and his whole family from the evil generation and ushered them into a new age that they might live an altogether new life for God and before God. In like manner, Christ's salvation also saves God's chosen people from the corrupted generation and ushers them into a renewed age, into the new realm of resurrection. Noah and his household passed through the flood waters by being in the ark. After the flood, the ark rested on the mountain of Ararat. Their passing through the flood was a type of baptism; the ark's resting upon the mountains was a type of Christ's

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resurrection; and the living of Noah's family of eight after the flood was a type of the church life. Through baptism we buried the old community and the old society, and in resurrection we have entered into another community, another society, which is the church life. (*Truth Lessons*, Level Three, vol. 1, ch. 4, pp. 42-44)

THE FOCUS OF THE CHANGE IN SYSTEM— THE HOUSEHOLD

The focus of the change in system is the household. In the New Testament we see many sweet households, such as the household of Caesar (Phil. 4:22), the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:22-24), the household of Lydia, a seller of purple-dyed goods (16:13-15), and the household of the jailer whose name is unknown (vv. 29-34). There was also the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16) and the household of Crispus (Acts 18:8). In addition, there were houses in which the meetings were held, such as Aquila and Prisca's house (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19), the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15), and the house of Philemon (Philem. 1-2). These examples clearly show us that the unit of God's salvation and service is the household.

Even in the Old Testament, in the two great types of salvation, the household is the unit of salvation. The first is the type of the flood, in which the eight members of the house of Noah entered into the ark and were thus saved from God's judgment on the world (Gen. 7:1; Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5). The second is the type of the passover, in which each Israelite household took a lamb, killed it, put the blood on the doorposts and the lintel of the house, and ate the flesh of the lamb. It was not a lamb for each person but a lamb for each household as a unit (Exo. 12:3-8). In the past we have ignored these clear truths of the Bible; we were influenced by Christianity and were distracted and carried away.

From the beginning of the Lord's recovery in China, Brother Nee pointed out that the church needs to be built up with the household as a unit. I received this matter from him and brought the practice to Taiwan. In addition, I introduced the practice of the "groups." However, in 1984 when I returned to Taiwan, these two practices were almost non-existent. We were under the influence of the nations and were following their customs (2 Kings 17:33) to walk in the way of the denominations in Christianity by copying their practice of big meetings, in which one man speaks while all the rest listen. This practice brings forth the "clergy" and the "laity," which prevents the functioning of the saints. Seeing this, I want to bring out a specific way for our practice at this crucial time. (*CWWL*, 1986, vol. 3, "The Furtherance of the New Way for the Lord's Recovery," ch. 1, pp. 488-489)

BRINGING OUR FAMILY LIFE INTO THE CHURCH LIFE

The church life is the purpose of the Christian life, and it is a great reality in the universe. Hence, our family life should be brought into the church life. We should help all the members of our family to be not only saved but also brought into the church life. This is a matter of spiritual warfare.

We need to realize that in the sight of God, nothing compares with the church. Thus, apart from the church life, our family life is vanity. Only when our family life is brought into the church life will it be reality. While we need to bear the responsibility of taking care of our family, we need to see that the church is a treasure in God's heart.

In order for the saints in the church life to meet the Lord's requirements, they need to realize that in the sight of God, the genuine church life is the kingdom of God. Romans 14:17 says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Because the context here deals with the church life in the present age, this verse is a strong proof that, in a practical sense, the proper church life is the kingdom of God.

Although many Christians appreciate the Lord's charge in Matthew 6:33 to seek first the Father's kingdom and His righteousness, few realize that the kingdom of God in this age is the church life. This is confirmed by the Lord's word in Matthew 16:18-19, which says, "Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the

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kingdom of the heavens.” In these verses kingdom of the heavens is used interchangeably with church, indicating that the genuine church is the kingdom of the heavens in this age. For this reason Matthew 18:17 reveals that the believers are to obey the church. If a brother sins, we first need to deal with him in love (v. 15), then by two or three witnesses (v. 16), and finally through the church with authority. Verse 17 says, “If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector.” If a believer refuses to hear the church, he will lose the fellowship of the church. The Gospel of Matthew, a book on the kingdom, reveals that the church life is the practical kingdom of God on earth in the present age. If we are sincere with the Lord about seeking first the kingdom of God, we must be in the church life. Apart from the church life we cannot be in the kingdom of God in a practical way.

Furthermore, the church meetings are crucial because the church life is practically expressed by the church meetings. Without the church meetings, the church is something ethereal; it cannot be manifested in a practical way. The church meetings constitute the practical church life. Thus, we should not come to the church meetings empty-handed. Rather, we should come with a portion of Christ and offer it to God and share it with others by functioning in the meetings. (*CWWL*, 1982, vol. 1, “Miscellaneous Messages in Anaheim,” ch. 7, pp. 29-30)