

## FELLOWSHIP REGARDING THE CHILDREN'S WORK (1)

### I. The children's meeting is also needed. This is also a meeting of the local church in the aspect of the work.

- A. This work requires that a few brothers and sisters specifically come forth to do this work.
- B. Sisters are perhaps more appropriate.
- C. If the children's meeting is carried out properly, it will also provide a good opportunity for more people to believe in the Lord.
- D. This meeting needs to be strong.

### II. Proper materials are needed for the children's work.

- A. [Some brothers and sisters among us who are especially experienced with and burdened for the children] should come forth and give us some materials so that the children in various localities may receive the benefit.
- B. Some places use the Bible to teach the children to read and to memorize. The songs that they sing are composed from Bible verses.
- C. Regarding the use of pictures: take heed that this does not lead to deviations:
  - 1. Using pictures of the Lord Jesus is especially inappropriate.
  - 2. Pictures of flowers and birds do not present any problem.

### III. A hope and a prediction:

- A. "I hope that there will be a few brothers and sisters who will come forth to prepare some materials for the brothers to take care of the children."
- B. "When the number of saved ones in various localities increases, spontaneously the children's meeting becomes very crucial, because they are our next generation."

(Taken from *Church Affairs*, by Watchman Nee, pp. 96-97. Message given in 1948; published by Living Stream Ministry.)

### IV. Things to consider with children's meetings:

- A. The content of the children's meeting should never be the same as the content of the gospel message [during the gospel meetings].
- B. For example, the gospel message may be on vanity or the futility of work in salvation. We cannot speak this to the children, because such topics are unsuitable for their age.
- C. We should tell the children Bible stories. Use Bible stories to show them the proper standard of human life:
  - 1. Use the stories in the Bible to teach the children some lessons they can apply in their daily life.
  - 2. We cannot tell them too many Bible stories, otherwise they will only go home with a bag of stories.
  - 3. [The point here is that whatever stories we tell them must have a practical, living application to the daily lives of the children.]
- D. [In using Bible stories] we have to beware of two things:
  - 1. First, there is the possibility of [giving] premature spiritual knowledge. This will not help them.
  - 2. Second, we can give away biblical truths too cheaply:
    - a. Some teachers tell children teachings that are too high and too spiritual. For example, they may teach the children to pray, "Help us, Lord, to deal with our flesh. May Your cross work on us."

3. Other teachers treat spiritual things too lightly in an attempt to make the children understand. Their speaking does not do justice to the spiritual weight of their subject. This also is wrong. This gives away the truth too cheaply.
- E. The teachers of the children's meetings have to be very careful with their behavior and attitude:
1. Their attire should be neat and simple. They should not wear flashy clothing, hair styles, or make-up.
  2. Frivolous words and jokes and improper conduct and gestures should be avoided.
  3. The brothers and sisters who act as teachers should be very careful and sober in their character and conduct.
  4. The teaching material is not that important by comparison; teachers sometimes set improper examples for children, and this damages the children for their entire life.

(Taken from *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 62, pp. 409-410. Message given in 1950 by W. N. and W. L.; published by Living Stream Ministry.)

## FELLOWSHIP REGARDING THE CHILDREN'S WORK (2)

### I. The children's work has many aspects; there is not a definite "way" to take care of the children's work. There should not be only one aspect to the children's work.

- A. There should be many locations for the children's work:
  - 1. According to our study, the most effective way ... is for every saint to open his home and have a children's meeting in his home.
  - 2. Every home may be used for children's meetings. The older sisters whose children no longer live at home are often burdened for the children.
  - 3. They can invite five or six children from the neighborhood to have a children's meeting. They do not have to worry about how to have the meeting, because the church will prepare material for them.
  - 4. Having a children's meeting only in the meeting hall will be a great hindrance to its further development. The children may not all be able to travel to the meeting hall, and the meeting hall may not have sufficient space for the meeting.
- B. Having many purposes:
  - 1. We [the saints] can open our homes once or twice a week, even on Saturday afternoons and during vacation time, to invite children to our homes to have children's meetings.
  - 2. We can also contact the children's parents and preach the gospel to them and to their relatives. This is the principle of our gospel work. The more people we contact the better. In this way, over a period of time there will spontaneously be an effect.
- C. Having many ways:
  - 1. The households with children can take the initiative to open their homes and ask their children to invite other children in the neighborhood. The children can watch the children's videotapes [prepared by the ministry], sing children's songs, or listen to a story. This is the way to have a children's meeting once a week.
  - 2. This is one of the many ways we can use to preach the gospel. This is also the way to gain something long-term. We hope that the whole church will hear this fellowship and take action.
- D. Having different meeting times:
  - 1. It is best to have different meeting times for the children's meetings. The schedule should be flexible. The meetings do not have to be on the Lord's Day. Saturday afternoon is also a good time.

### II. Crucial matters:

- A. The way to carry out the children's work depends on the brothers taking the lead in the children's work.
  - 1. If some saints are designated to prepare teaching material, the saints will not need to labor that much. We can give only some principles related to the children's work. It is up to the saints to carry them out. We also need the elders to promote this matter.
  - 2. We need to prepare material for the children's meeting. We should not have children's meetings without preparation. The brothers taking the lead in the children's work need to write and compile material. They need much prayer and fellowship to know the content and to write lesson plans.
  - 3. We need to prepare material, but the saints can decide the best way to use it. The meetings should not be monotonous; they can be conducted in many ways.

B. Needing the prayer and the coordination of the saints:

1. The children's meetings should be in many locations, at different times, and use different methods. Moreover, the teachers must have a goal. We are taking this way to nourish our children and gain many more children so that the gospel can be preached to their unbelieving families.
2. We hope that all the saints will pray concerning this matter and not take it lightly. We especially hope that the older sisters can open their homes and gather some children to have children's meetings once a week.
3. It should not be too difficult. There will be results. This requires everyone's cooperation.

(Taken from Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 5, Concerning Various Aspects of Church Service, by Witness Lee, pp. 86-90. Message given in 1985 in Taiwan. Published by Living Stream Ministry.)

## **FELLOWSHIP REGARDING THE CHILDREN'S WORK (3)**

### **THE GOAL OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK IS TO PRODUCE CHILDREN WHO BECOME SEEDS OF THE GOSPEL**

Scripture reading: 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15; Acts 16:1-3a; Prov. 22:6s

- I. Since the children spend most of their time at home under their parent's care, the most basic aspect of the children's work is the aspect of the parent's labor on the children in their homes:**
  - A. The most important influence in the children's lives is the pattern they set before them in their living.
  - B. During the years before and during elementary school the parents can labor on a few areas with their children:
    1. Being a pattern to them of persons who love the Lord and live unto Him, expressing His divine attributes in their human living at all times.
    2. Building up the children's character (honoring father and mother, loving sisters and brothers, respecting authorities and older persons, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, generosity, etc. (many of these points are pointed out by W.N in Vol. 2 of Messages for New Believers, chapter 33, Parenthood).
    3. Building up the family altar—spending a short, sweet, intimate, special, quality time with the children in:
      - a. Conversation, listening to them, their concerns, problems
      - b. Prayer, simple, short, sincere, for their needs, for others.
      - c. The Word—short, not “heavy”
      - d. Telling stories from the word, or other stories, that may inspire them regarding their humanity and character.
- II. Using homes as a place to have neighborhood meetings in order to bring an increase into the church by gaining other children and their families.**
  - A. To produce our children as “seeds of the gospel” we need to work with them gradually and continually. It is not overnight. The love, trust, and desire to bring their friends to the Lord must be built up within them, it should not be a pressure or requirement forced upon them.
  - B. A healthy and positive home atmosphere is the best way to begin.
  - C. An attractive, small, weekly gathering of the children's friends and neighbors can be started.
  - D. The meeting time should be short, about 1 hour at most. This time should be divided into periods of about 15 minutes for receiving the children, singing, telling a story and enjoying a snack. Some places also do a simple craft.
  - E. The simple care or telling of a story from the Bible in which some point of character is brought out is the preaching of the gospel to the children. We are not doing a quick “child evangelism” work, but a gradual long-term labor to produce them as seeds of the gospel.
  - F. We want the children to feel so happy that their friends want to come for a sweet enjoyable time at their house.
  - G. The happiness of the children will surely reach their parents, and then the gospel labor should spread to reaching the children's parents and family

### III. Concerning the children's work in the church.

**We need more fellowship in order to understand the fellowship brother Lee has given us, much of which is not easily available for us, or is not in print yet. Some of the crucial points are pointed out below:**

- A. We do not want to do a "Sunday school" type of work, that is:
  - 1. We do not want to strongly promote the idea of separation of levels, of different "grades" as in a school. Rather, we want to strengthen the feeling in the children that they are all members of the same church family.
  - 2. On the negative side, we do not want to strongly promote the idea of learning "Bible lessons," of academic learning, of memorizing many verses, of giving much Bible knowledge or religious thoughts or concepts. Nor do we want to "reward" their "achievements" or "punish" in any way those who are not good "achievers." A proper recognition of good conduct or performance is normal but we do not want to do anything that builds up their pride or ego. We do not consider the serving ones as "teachers," as in a school. Rather, we want to provide a positive, encouraging, happy family environment to encourage the children, and promote their faith in the Lord, their love for the Lord, and the desire to live out the best human character.
  - 3. On the positive side, we want to cultivate the children's affection for the Lord through singing. Cultivating a love in the children for singing is probably the strongest factor that will inspire and attract them. The songs need to be appropriate for the children, at the level of understanding and experience for their age. Brother Lee suggests three different levels for songs, with at least 50 songs in each level.
- B. Three primary goals of the children's meeting on the Lord's day:
  - 1. Provide an attractive atmosphere for the children to be cared for and nourished with the Word of God in a way that corresponds to their capacity and need, applying it to them particularly in order to build up their humanity and character. This can be best accomplished by telling them stories.
  - 2. Provide an option to the parents so that their children may receive enjoyable care and meaningful education at their level instead of requiring them to endure meetings of the church where the discussion of truths is beyond their capacity to understand. Such an experience becomes a suffering to the children and a distraction to their parents. The church cannot and should not tell the parents what they have to do with their children during the meetings, but it can provide care for their children during the meeting times, or certain times during the meetings.
  - 3. Provide a way so that more parents can be in the church meetings and receive an adequate supply from the ministry of life and fellowship with the saints.
    - a. For this reason we do not want to occupy more serving ones than is necessary on the Lord's Day.
    - b. For this reason we do not want many levels of "classes," which would require more serving ones; rather it is better to divide the children up into as few levels as is necessary, perhaps two or three. By thus grouping the children together we also hope to provide an atmosphere more of loving care for the children than that of many "classrooms" for teaching Bible academics.
- C. It is recommended that the church also support the children's work by providing children's meetings on days other than on the Lord's Day. In this way more saints can participate in the service, more serving ones can be perfected, and more parents can participate, without missing out of the fellowship of the church on the Lord's Day meeting.

**FELLOWSHIP REGARDING THE CHILDREN'S WORK (4)**  
**THE PURPOSE, THE ASPECTS AND THE RESPONSIBILITY**  
**OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK**

Scriptural reading: Eccl. 12:1a; Joshua 24:15c; 2 Cor. 4:7; John 21:15

**I. The purpose of the children's work:**

- A. Cultivate a proper humanity and character in the children, that is, to form a more useful vessel for the Lord while the "clay" is still moldable.
- B. Foster in the children an attraction toward the Lord and a good taste for meeting, to such a degree that they would feel confident and joyful to invite their friends and acquaintances.
- C. In this normal and gradual way after the children receive salvation they may be produced as "gospel seeds", during their junior high, high school, and university years.
- D. Gain the children's friends and the families of their friends for the Lord and for the increase of the church.

**II. The most crucial need to carry out the children's work, or any work, is that a desperate group of saints would consecrate themselves to meet together regularly for prayer, fellowship, coordination and seeking the Lord's guidance regarding how to go on each week.**

**III. There are three aspects to the children's work, and each one is important:**

- A. A daily quality time should be developed between the parents and the children, with a spiritual character. Watchman Nee called this the building up of a "family altar." This is foundational.
- B. Weekly neighborhood children's meetings should be developed to which the children's neighbors, friends, schoolmates, relatives, or children in the church can be invited. This may be coordinated by burdened families.
- C. The children's meeting carried out under the leading and supervision of the church, whether on the Lord's Day or some other time.

**IV. The children's meeting under the responsibility of the church:**

- A. The children's meeting on the Lord's day:
  - 1. Make a definite arrangement for the children's work:
    - a. The responsible brothers must become involved in order to oversee the work and provide a covering for the serving ones, but not to coordinate the work and carry it out. If they themselves become too personally and directly involved in the work it is possible that they will suppress the function of others.
    - b. There should be two or three sisters who coordinate, to carry out the work in this area of service.
    - c. The responsible brothers must be fully aware of every one who serves with the children's work; no one should simply add themselves to the work or be involved without the approval of the responsible brothers, since the children's work in the church is under the fellowship of the work. The serving ones may be parents, young brothers and sisters, or saints who feel a burden to help. The sisters are especially useful in carrying out this work. Brother Lee said 90% of the children's work should be in the sister's hands.
    - d. The serving ones must be perfected continuously. This should be done by the responsible brothers or with the help of coworkers.

- e. If children are present when the church has meetings, the minimum responsibility of a church is to at least provide a safe and healthy environment for the children under the supervision of responsible persons.
  - f. If there is more capacity, a children's meeting with more content and goals can be developed.
2. Gather all the children:
    - a. Prepare a list of all the names and ages of the children in the families that meet in the church, including their contact information (telephone, address, etc. ), names of the parents, their brothers and sisters, grade in school, etc.
    - b. Encourage all the parents to cooperate:
      - 1) By bringing their children.
      - 2) By serving with the children.
      - 3) By making contact with the children and families that do not attend.
      - 4) Encourage the children to bring their friends and neighbors.
  3. Have a time for opening:
    - a. With some enjoyable singing to open up the children.
    - b. Teaching them new songs; never allowing the singing time to become routine or boring.
    - c. In two different levels if it is necessary.
  4. Have a time to give refreshments.
    - a. They should be simple, not elaborate or expensive.
    - b. It is not good to give heavily sugared treats.
    - c. This is a good time to informally talk to the children and open the way to tell them a story, relating it to what they speak.
  5. Have a time to tell them a story:
    - a. Do not make this a formal time; a story is different than a lesson in this sense. Interact with the children, always remembering that the goal of this time is not to just teach them a topic that you want them to learn this week, but to impart something into them that touches them and impresses them, something that has to do with their daily life, their humanity, their character, and their relationships with others. Since we will have many opportunities to be with them, the most important thing whenever we meet with them is to be sure that they are attracted and that they feel encouraged to come back to the next meeting.
    - b. To tell a story requires a good preparation (even more than a lesson!). Without adequate preparation whatever you say will only impart mental information, without much "inspiration" or living, practical application to the children.
    - c. Use visual aids or illustrations to help the children understand better; perhaps you could bring a flower, a drawing, a map, a photo, a small animal. The younger they are the more they need this kind of help in order to arouse their interest.
    - d. Do not go beyond their capacity to pay attention.
    - e. "Seal" the lesson with an appropriate Bible verse, or part of a verse. Help them to memorize it or part of it.
  6. It may be good to have a time for arts and crafts:
    - a. Arts and crafts can help further "seal" the point of the story in the children's understanding. They are also useful in keeping their attention (Deut. 6:9).
    - b. The arts and crafts should be appropriate for the children's age and interest. They should not be elaborate or expensive.



- c. Arts and crafts can help the serving ones to interact with the children in a practical way and thus help in the development of their skills and character.
- B. The children's meeting on other days of the week.
  - 1. The idea of "Sunday school" relegates all the children's work to one time each week: Sunday morning. However, the children's work is more than just providing one meeting per week for the children, it is a shepherding work that must be borne by the serving ones at all times.
  - 2. To shepherd the children may require personal contact with them during the week.
  - 3. Other days in the week may be used to have children's meetings, according to the schedule of the children and their families. Oftentimes the children's meetings are richer and sweeter when they are not held only on the Lord's Day morning when the church meets. (Perhaps the children feel that attending the children's meeting during the week is more a voluntary matter than just an "obligation" forced upon them.)

## FELLOWSHIP REGARDING THE CHILDREN'S WORK (5)

### BUILDING UP A "FAMILY ALTAR"

Scriptural reading: Matt. 19:14; Eph. 6:4; 3:20-21; Pr. 22:6

Brother Watchman Nee taught that the building up of a "family altar" was very necessary in order to lead the children to the knowledge of the Lord.

**I. The practice of the "family altar," that is, the family meetings for prayer and reading the Bible, includes talking with the children about their daily life, having fellowship with them, reading the Bible or some other proper book with them, and having genuine prayer with them, according to what is in their hearts.**

- A. Of course, a proper care of the children in all the other important aspects of their lives (as W.N. describes in points A-G in chapter 33 of *Messages for New Believers*, Vol. 2) is the basis of such times together. To build up a spiritual "family altar" requires the adequate human care as a base. If the human aspects concerning the children's care is lacking it is not possible to build up something spiritual. It is necessary to first mend whatever is necessary and build up something positive in the human relationship between the parents and the children BEFORE attempting to implement spending time together to build up a "family altar."
- B. To build up a "family altar" should not be a new "fad," but a permanent practice in the homes of all those who have children.

**II. The "family altar" should be at the children's level:**

- A. Positively: These are times of genuine prayer and Bible reading as well as honest dialogue together.
- B. Negatively:
  - 1. Some family meetings fail because they are too long or too deep.
  - 2. Sometimes the children do not understand why they are sitting there.
  - 3. In some meetings they talk about deep doctrines.
  - 4. Such meetings become a true suffering for the children.
  - 5. Even so, many parents are not sensitive to the children's feeling.

**III. We must encourage and attract our children in order to build up a "family altar":**

- A. Positively: The parents need to think up some ways to attract and encourage their children to participate in such meetings.
- B. Negatively:
  - 1. One problem in many home meetings is that there is not enough expression of affection.
  - 2. Sometimes the children are not attracted to come to such meetings by the father or the mother, but a "whip" is the only motivation for them to keep coming.
  - 3. They don't want to participate in such meetings, but they only come because of the threat of the "whip." If there were no "whip" they would not come. This will never work out well.
  - 4. Never punish the children for not participating in the family worship hour. If you beat them once, you may create a problem in them for the rest of their lives.
  - 5. Parents must attract their children to the family worship hour. Do not force them to come. This will only result in terrible consequences.

**IV. To build up the “family altar” we suggest that there be a time together in the morning and in the evening. [As is true with any practice, nothing should be taken in a legalistic, rigid manner. All practices must be carried out according to the Spirit’s leading and the actual circumstances in which they are applied.]**

**A. Positively:**

1. Rise up a little earlier in the morning.
2. Spend a time together with the children before they go to school.
3. Your meeting should be brief, full of life and never long.
4. Never take more than fifteen minutes nor make it less than five minutes.
5. Ask each one who is present to read a verse.
6. The father should take the lead to choose a few phrases and speak something about them. If the children can memorize something, ask them to memorize. Do not require them to quote the whole verse. Simply ask your children to remember the meaning of just a phrase. [This means that we do not want a classroom atmosphere.]
7. At the end of the meeting, say a prayer asking for God’s blessing. Pray about the things that your children can understand.
8. After saying a prayer, send them to school.
9. Each time you sit down to eat, you should sincerely thank the Lord for the food.
10. The evening meetings may be a little longer and should be led by the mothers.
11. It is not necessary to read the Bible in the evening, but it is necessary for the family to gather together.
12. In particular, the mother should gather the children together and speak to them.
13. With the presence of the father, the mother should encourage each child to speak.
14. Ask them if they had to face some problem that day. Ask them if they fought among themselves and if there is something that is bothering them. The mother has failed if she has allowed some barrier to come between she and her children.
15. The children should feel free to speak with all confidence.
16. The mother should learn to bring out what the children have in their hearts.
17. If they do not want to talk today, ask them again the next day.
18. Guide your children. Let them pray a little and teach them to say a little more. This meeting needs to be full of life.
19. Ask them to confess their sins, but do not force them to do so.
20. The children should pray one by one.
21. Finally, conclude by saying a prayer yourself, but do not pray long. You’re your prayer is too long the children will become bored.,
22. Feed them according to their capacity. Once you try to do too much you will overburden them.

**B. Negatively:**

1. Do not say deep or lofty prayers. Do not pray long prayers, be simple.
2. There should be no pretension. Some children learn to pretend because of the pressure their strict parents put upon them.
3. Children do not tell lies, but you force them to lie.

**V. Paying attention to their repentance:**

- A. Explain what it means to sin, and that we all sin (even Mom and Dad!).
- B. You should pay the proper attention to the matter of the importance of repentance, and then lead them to the Lord. After a certain time has passed, you may ask them to receive the Lord.

## **VI. The atmosphere in the family being love:**

- A. If the parents learn to be friends to their children and if the children feel comfortable in putting their confidence in their parents, there will be very few problems in the family life.

(This outline was developed from chapter 33 of *Messages for New Believers*, Volume 2, Parents, by Watchman Nee; published by Living Stream Ministry; it is recommended that the reader digest and assimilate the entire chapter.)