

Topic One

CHURCH BOOK SERVICE WORKSHOP

An Opening Word

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

One of the hopes this weekend is to see the churches recover the function of the booksales service in their localities. We hope that there will be saints, brothers and also sisters, together with leading ones in each local church who are burdened for such a service—a service that makes the publications of the Living Stream Ministry available to the local saints, and also a service that actively promotes the reading of the publications of the ministry of the age among the local saints.

Many years ago, when you walked into a local church meeting, the first thing you would see was a wall full of books for sale; almost every church had a prominent booksales service, which was crucial for the church life. At that time, the LSM office did not deal with individual saints. Instead, all the books were sold to the local saints individually through the booksales service of each church; each church's booksales service received packages of books from Living Stream and distributed them to the saints week by week. Many churches devoted an entire room at the front of their meeting hall just to display the books of the ministry. When the ministry station began in Anaheim in 1974, four individual messages were printed every week and sent out in packages to all churches. These messages were eagerly anticipated by the saints, and they would eagerly and earnestly wait for them to arrive like infants waiting for their next feeding.

Unfortunately, this was lost over the years until nearly no churches maintained a bookroom display or a booksales service. More important than the lack of a physical display of books, the burden to promote the publications also was lost, and individual saints were left to themselves to pursue the reading and the purchasing of the publications. Part of the reason for this loss is that during the past few storms, some of the local booksales services had become a hindrance instead of a help to the distribution of the books. Some churches, because the leading ones or the serving ones had become negative towards the ministry, did not want the saints to have access to the ministry publications. Instead of being held hostage by these negative ones, the Living Stream Ministry started the Direct Mail Service (DMS), whereby saints could deal directly with LSM and LSM could mail books directly to the address of each individual saint. On the one hand, this made the ministry more accessible to the saints, but on the other hand, the booksales services in the local churches gradually felt that their function had been taken over by the LSM directly. First they stopped actively promoting the ministry, and eventually, many removed their physical displays altogether.

In the 1990's Living Stream began to publish *The Holy Word for Morning Revival*, and over the years, it has become the regular subscription for most of the saints in the Lord's recovery. We thank and praise the Lord for this, but in Brother Lee's mind, he never intended that this would be the only publication circulated among the churches to meet all their needs.

The hope today is that every church in the Lord's recovery would rise up to recover the burden of the booksales service. This is like in the time of Nehemiah when the wall of Jerusalem had been torn down and the city was left in desolation. Nehemiah rose up at night to examine the poor condition, and then he called the people together to charge them to build. The result was that some leading ones as well as ordinary citizens rose up to answer the call. Local groups within each district of the city took care of their local situation and built their own gates or their own part of the wall; soon the whole wall was finished, and the enemy was driven away. Some of these builders were elders, others were full-time serving priests, but many were just local residents. Nevertheless, each group took care of its part of the city, and they built their own gates. It did not matter that what one group built was not the same as others; they all recovered the same function. With the building of the gates and the wall, there was now a line of communication and supply to both the city armory and the city granary; that is, the supply of food and weapons could quickly be distributed to every part of the city, and the need of every district in the city could be conveyed quickly to the armory and the granary. Thus, every gate became a node or joint to serve its own district.

We hope to see in the coming days that there would be the recovery of such "gates" in each local church throughout this country. With a healthy booksales service recovered in every church, whether there are 500 or twenty saints, a healthy channel of supply and communication would be restored, and hopefully the saints would be helped to become more educated, equipped, nourished, and supplied by the ministry. Not only will there be the healthy communication between the churches and LSM, but there will be a healthy communication and blending between all the various "gates." Thus, the blessings received by one church can be shared among the other churches, and many more people will be ushered into the city through these gates in all four directions.

This cannot be the work of one "Nehemiah" alone; it must the work of the burdened ones in the whole congregation of God's people. At the same time, if such a healthy booksales service is recovered and built up in every locality, it would be a big help to LSM, to seeking believers throughout the country, and to the promotion of the ministry of the age. But as it is true with everything else, no one person or group can do it alone; it will take the whole Body to rise up and to take up this burden.

We hope to see that besides the Lord's Table meeting and the prayer meeting, every local church would have the booksales service as a high-priority service in the church to meet the internal need and for external propagation. Such a service must become a crucial part of the church life. We cannot imagine a church in the Lord's recovery without the Lord's Table meeting or the prayer meeting. In the same way, hopefully there will be healthy booksales services within each local church in the Lord's recovery. May the Lord bless His recovery, and may He bless this weekend.

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Anaheim, CA

Topic One

THE VISION AND BURDEN OF A HEALTHY BOOK SERVICE

Fellowship Concerning the Book Service

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 2:4; Matt. 24:45; Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:103; Acts 6:7

I. In 1 Timothy 2:4 Paul says that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth”; we should not merely have the knowledge of the truth, but the full knowledge, the complete knowledge, the perfect knowledge, of the truth—1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17:

- A. Knowing the truth requiring others' explanation and the Lord's opening of our minds—Acts 8:30-31; Luke 24:44-45.
- B. We all know that it is not easy to understand the Bible; however, through the Life-study messages and the publications in the Lord's recovery, we can understand the central thought of every book in the Bible, and we can be clear about the true meaning of every chapter and verse—Psa. 119:130.
- C. I hope that we would receive the burden to thoroughly study the truths of the Lord's recovery and to spread these truths.

II. In order to deliver these truths into the hands of God's children, we need to go out to visit people and to supply them, and we need the serving ones in all the localities to faithfully labor in the book service in the churches to diligently distribute the food to the saints—Matt. 24:45:

- A. Even the wonderful truth of the excellent gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ requires us to speak much with all our heart and to preach diligently so that people will receive and believe it—Col. 1:28-29; 4:12; Rom. 15:16.
- B. We have a heart to serve the Lord and that we have obtained His mercy to serve Him in His word; we must have a proper attitude and be positive and aggressive, doing our best to urge people to read His word—Rom. 12:1, 11; Col. 1:28-29.

III. The most important burden of the book service is not to care for the inventory of books but to study and find a way to spread every book into all the homes of the saints in your locality and, once the books are in the homes, to find a way to deposit their contents into the saints' hearts—Col. 3:16:

- A. The primary matter is not to promote the books but to stir up the saints' interest in pursuing the truth and to encourage them to enjoy reading the spiritual publications—Psa. 119:103:
 1. We should help the saints to build up a practice or a habit that every day they would spend at least thirty minutes in the Word.
 2. Encourage the brothers and sisters to build up the habit of reading spiritual books after every meal and before going to bed; they will gain a great benefit from reading in this way—Acts 17:11-12; Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:2.
 3. I hope that the elders in each locality will give the saints some help and encouragement so that each household will have a supply of spiritual books: The saints can place a copy in various places within their homes—on their dining table, on their nightstand, on their bathroom counter, and in their kitchen—to

make enjoying the Lord's word in every place convenient for all the members of their family and even for their guests—Psa. 119:105.

4. These books are full of God's rich grace; it would certainly be beneficial for each household to place them throughout their home—19:9-10.
- B. We must see that serving in book sales is really to be the Lord's co-worker, to promote His truth, and to spread His divine economy and divine speaking to the whole earth—1 Cor. 3:9; Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.

THE VISION AND BURDEN OF A HEALTHY BOOK SERVICE

Promoting the Reading of the Ministry Publications among the Saints

1. Helping to Promote the Standing Order:

"I hope that all the churches in all the localities, which have received the supply in the Lord's word from this ministry, will do their best to help the publication of the ministry in the matter of standing orders...We encourage the brothers and sisters to sign up for standing orders so that we can print books in larger quantities but at a cheaper cost, which benefit everyone" (The Collected Works of Witness Lee [CWWL], 1984, vol. 5, "The Faithful and Diligent Spreading of the Truth—Concerning the Publication Service," p. 189).

2. Encouraging the Saints to Build Up the Habit of Reading:

"We also want to encourage the brothers and sisters to build up the habit of reading spiritual books after every meal and before going to bed. They will gain a great benefit from reading in this way.

"I hope the elders in each locality will give the saints some help and encouragement so that each household will have a supply of spiritual books. The saints can place a copy in various places within their homes—on their dining table, on their nightstand, on their bathroom counter, and in their kitchen—to make enjoying the Lord's word in every place convenient for all the members of their family and even for their guests. These books are full of God's rich grace; it would certainly be beneficial for each household to place them throughout their home" (pp. 189-190).

3. Leading the Saints to Become Addicted to Reading the Truth:

"We should lead the saints to become addicted to reading the truth. We should consider reading the truth to be more important than eating and drinking. If we do this, this truth in the Lord's recovery will greatly increase and be victorious; furthermore, the number of people in all the churches will spontaneously multiply (Acts 6:7)" (pp. 206-207).

4. Finding Ways to Promote the Truth:

"We must have a proper attitude and be positive and aggressive, doing our best to urge people to read His word. If we do not find ways to promote the truth or pray, how can the Lord's word be spread? If we take the Lord's word lightly, how can we have boldness to promote the publications among the saints?" (p. 207).

5. Being Jealous to Change the Atmosphere to Make Reading a Priority:

"Some brothers and sisters spend more time reading the newspaper and watching television than they do reading the ministry publications; this really grieves me. I hope that we could have a jealous heart for the Lord and change the atmosphere so that everyone would have a desire to read the Bible, and each household would make reading the spiritual publications a priority..."

"Despite the fact that the co-workers frequently go to help the churches, their true, long-term help has come from the supply of the publications" (p. 207).

6. Stirring Up the Saints' Interest in Pursuing the Truth:

"Please pick up a burden to return to your localities, fellowship with the elders, and consider this to be an important matter. The primary matter is not to promote the books but to stir up the saints' interest in pursuing the truth and to encourage them to enjoy reading the spiritual publications. This will depend on the way that we do it." (pp. 207-208)

7. Diving into and Bathing in the Life-studies to Be Immersed and Soaked in the Truth:

“If we have a clear view and know the Bible, the condition of today’s Christianity, the truth, and the mercy given to us by God, we would **spend our whole life being immersed and soaked in the truth. Then we would surely have the burden to propagate this truth as much as possible among the brothers and sisters in the churches. We would endeavor to create among the brothers and the sisters an atmosphere of desiring the truth and the Life-studies...** I hope that we could all learn to appreciate the Life-studies by **diving into them, bathing in them, and allowing the light of the truth to penetrate us.** Only then will we be able to spread the blessings and benefits that we have received, thereby **creating an atmosphere in which the saints desire the truth and the Life-studies**” (pp. 172-173).

8. Bringing in a Real Revival:

“The Lord’s word will require that we bear the responsibility to **labor willingly to zealously encourage and urge everyone in all the local churches to pursue the truth and read the spiritual publications.** In this way the Lord’s truth will spread widely, and **there will be a real revival**” (p. 208).

“If all the six hundred churches on the earth would **seriously read the Life-studies and thoroughly study** the truths contained in them, I absolutely believe that **a great revival would begin** not only among us but even on the whole earth” (p. 172).

“I absolutely believe that **if any local church promotes the Life-studies in this way**, it will be revived. If all the saints in a locality practice for one year to read the Life-studies to receive the life supply and study the truth for small group meetings, message meetings, and shepherding and helping others by fellowshipping with them, **the church in that locality will surely be revived.** This is because there is nothing more powerful than the word of God as the truth of God” (pp. 174-175).

9. Fighting Against Satan to Gain Ground for the Truth to Go Forth:

“Satan will resist this matter; hence, we must focus on this matter and **be ready to fight against Satan to gain this ground** so that God’s truth may have a way to go forth.” (p. 175)

10. Giving the Saints Direction, Encouragement, and Incentive:

“We should **help the saints to build up a practice or a habit that every day they would spend at least thirty minutes in the Word...** I think we need to **remind them week after week**, and sometimes the elders need to **give the saints some direction, some encouragement, and some incentive.**

“Many of you leading ones have never encouraged the saints in the last five years to get the truths in the way of using the Life-studies. You leave the matter of the saints’ getting into the Life-studies altogether up to them. You do not seem to care whether this is a dying matter or a living matter. This way of getting into the truth has become an orphan with no father and no mother, with no fostering. This has been the situation, and in some of the local churches, your problems all have been due to this one thing...as leading brothers try your best in your locality to **stir up an atmosphere and to create a hunger and thirst in the saints after the Lord’s truth**” (*Elders’ Training, Book 3: The Way to Carry Out the Vision*, pp. 105-107).

11. Hastening the Lord’s Return and Preparing the Bride:

“I hope that we could live to be eighty or ninety, even to over a hundred, so that we might be able to see the fulfillment of all that we have fellowshipped today. I wish to live on this earth and witness with my own eyes the truth of the Lord not only being printed into books through our hands, but also being sent through us to every part of the world_and prevailing in every place. I absolutely believe that this will hasten the Lord’s return because it is through this that the Lord will prepare His bride. I hope that we all can see the manifestation of such a situation” (*The Economy of God and the Mystery of the Transmission of the Divine Trinity*, p. 163).