

RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION IN THE CHURCH LIFE

Lesson One

Building up a Prevailing Children's Work in the Church

Scripture references: Psa. 127:3; Heb. 11:7; 2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:7-16; Rom. 16:1, 12-13;
1 Tim. 4:12; Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:14-22

- I. We expect the children's work among us to be very prevailing; therefore, we need to have a proper realization and preparation for this work—Gen. 1:28; Psa. 127:3:**
- A. When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old; these are the target of our children's work.
 - B. The saints can open their homes for children's meetings; we need many brothers and sisters to open their homes; how beautiful this service will be and how much the Lord's work will be propagated—Acts 2:46; 6:7a.
- II. The responsible brothers and the co-workers in every place must see the importance of the children's work in God's family; this should be a great matter to us—Heb. 11:7; Psa. 127:3; Gen. 33:5b; Dan. 1:3-4; Matt. 24:45; 25:16; Rom. 9:23; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Acts 16:31-32; Eph. 4:12-16; 1 Tim. 4:12:**
- A. No family will disregard its children; as a priority a family looks after its children, raises them, and teaches them; hence we must serve the many children in God's family—Psa. 127:3; Eph. 6:4; Matt. 19:13-14.
 - B. The co-workers do not need to be personally involved in doing the children's work; they can meet with the leading sisters in a locality and entrust the burden for the children's work to them, and they can encourage them—Phil. 1:1c; Rom. 16:1, 12-13.
 - C. The elders must lead the church to receive a burden for the children's work; the church should concentrate its effort on this work—1 Tim. 2:1-4; Gal. 1:4; 1 Thes. 2:7-11; Rom. 10:17; Acts 16:31-32.
 - D. All the churches must have a children's work; if we work with these children, they will all be young brothers and sisters after six to seven years—Eph. 4:12-16; Zech. 4:10; cf. Matt. 25:16.
 - E. We cannot continue to work as we have in the past; we must change our ways; in the past we neglected the work with the children.
- III. In carrying out this work, first, a number of sisters should rise up to lead the children's work; the elders should also appoint some sisters to take up this responsibility—Rom. 16:1, 6, 12-13; Mark 15:41:**
- A. A number of older sisters must receive this burden, over ninety percent of the children's work requires the sisters' participation; otherwise, there is no way for the children's work to succeed—1 Tim. 5:2a; cf. Col. 4:17.
 - B. The sisters in every church should be persistent to promote the burden for the children—cf. Luke 18:1-8; 1 Sam. 1:11:
 - 1. On the one hand, they should not give the brothers any peace, and on the other hand, they should learn not to assume the leadership but to be full of patience, knowing when to proceed and when to wait—1 Cor. 11:3; John 7:6; cf. Matt. 15:21-28.

2. The sisters should be persistent to develop the children's work in the church; furthermore, according to the leading of the Lord, they should fellowship with other sisters who are serving—1 Cor. 15:10a; 1 John 1:3, 7; 1 Cor. 12:21-22.
 - C. The sisters should also bring the children to the meeting; every week the sisters should consider how to bring the children to the meeting.
 - D. We must use the young sisters to lead the children's meetings; the church should train the teachers so that the young sisters learn to teach and lead the children—2 Tim. 2:2.
 - E. Many of the sisters love the Lord, but they need to find the way to do something for the Lord; if we bear the little ones as fruit, the Lord will add them to our account—Matt. 25:14-30; 2 Pet. 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:19:
 1. Only eternity will reveal the result of this; perhaps out of a group of children for whom we are caring, some will become apostles—2 Tim. 3:15; 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17.
 2. Therefore, I encourage the sisters to do this good work; all the housewives can bring children to the meetings, and the younger sisters can be trained to cooperate with them to bear these little ones as fruit.
- IV. We also need the help of the young people in the children's work; this matter must be developed—1 Tim. 4:12:**
- A. There are quite a large number of children in every locality; as soon as we begin the children's work, the young people will begin to function; they can all take part in serving the children:
 1. We can ask the brothers in the church to perfect the junior high and high school brothers and sisters to assist in teaching the children.
 2. With regard to the children's work, even though the junior high and high school students can teach in the children's meetings, the children's work will be carried forward by the full-timers, because they will prepare teaching materials and make a schedule.
 - B. The young people need to give themselves to this work, and this will give everyone an opportunity to practice speaking.
- V. The elderly saints may use their homes; after the children get home from school, the elderly saints may open their homes and prepare some snacks to welcome them:**
- A. They may sing with the children, tell them stories, and lead them to know God.
 - B. Gaining people in this way is very safe, because they are taught by us and receive the gospel from us from their youth; thus, they should be very solid.
 - C. I hope that from now on the elderly saints would pick up the burden and take the lead to do this in their homes; the effect will be very promising in the long run.
- VI. When the entire church is mobilized in this way, all the brothers and sisters will have an opportunity to serve; some can open their homes, others can bring the children to the meetings, and still others can teach the children; when all the saints endeavor in one accord for the Lord's heart's desire, the profit will be immeasurable—Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:14-22; Eph. 4:7-16:**
- A. We should take action immediately; all the churches should encourage the saints in this matter, and we should pray for this matter—Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Tim. 2:1.
 - B. All the saints want their children to receive spiritual help; even dormant saints want their children to receive spiritual guidance.

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Lesson Two

How to Lead the Young People (1)

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:55; Matt. 18:10; Luke 15:20, 4; 24:15, 28-29

I. If we want to help the young people, we must have an interest in them:

- A. Do not find their faults at first; if you do, you cannot help them—Luke 9:55; Matt. 18:10:
 - 1. Some have a special liking for the young people whom they consider good, but they purse their mouths and shake their heads when they see those whom they think are not good; this is wrong.
 - 2. Often times God will prove to us that our evaluation of those whom we think are good is inaccurate; instead, those whom you consider not good may be greatly used by God.
- B. Regardless of whether the young people are good or bad, we need to treat everyone the same, and we need to like them and be concerned for them:
 - 1. Play a game with them, and then talk to them about the Lord Jesus when the game is over; this is genuine capability.
 - 2. However, if you cannot talk to them about the Lord Jesus because He is gone after you play ball, then your spirituality is false.
- C. If we want to help the young people we need to be interested in them; do not be concerned about their mistakes and do not condemn them at all—cf. Luke 24:13-35.
- D. We should give the young people the feeling that we are their good friend, that we sympathize with them, and that we are interested in them and in their affairs.
- E. We all need to have the loving and forgiving heart of the Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ—15:20, 4; 2 Tim. 1:7:
 - 1. Do not classify people, because no one can tell what they will become.
 - 2. The spirit that God has given us is a spirit of love—v. 7.
 - 3. The church is not a police station to arrest people, or a law court to condemn people, but a loving home, a hospital and a school.

II. Learn to contact the young people; helping the young brothers and sisters depends not on our ability to give them messages but on our regular, frequent contacts with them; remember not to talk about spiritual things at the initial contact with them:

- A. When you contact the young brothers and sisters, do not begin by asking, “How many chapters of the Bible have you read today? Have you prayed?”
- B. Such questions should not be brought up until you have had many contacts with them, maybe even after eight or ten times.
- C. If you do it prematurely, it is easy to cause a negative reaction; if you mess up the whole thing, he may not receive the Lord for his entire lifetime.
- D. Do not stir up his negative feeling by talking to him right away about reading the Bible or praying.
- E. You must wait until we have more contacts with him and he feels that he likes you and that you also like him.

F. Once you have touched his feeling and earned his trust, then you can begin to talk about spiritual things.

III. Emphasizing practicality instead of stressing doctrines; when we help the young people, give them something practical:

A. We should not put too much emphasis on doctrines, not only when we have personal contact with them but also when we are preaching the gospel or giving messages to them:

1. If we give them only some doctrines and they come only to listen, there will not be much effect.
2. The more we speak doctrines, the more the young people become dead, cold, and backsliding.

B. Because young people have many practical problems, we need to sense their feelings beginning with these problems:

1. We need to spend some time to study the problems of the young people in their practical living, including problems both before and after their salvation.
2. Based upon our studies, when we preach the gospel or speak a word of edification to them, what we speak is practical and is related to the practical matters that we have touched in their lives.

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Lesson Three

How to Lead the Young People (2)

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 13:7; Matt. 19:26; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 1 Thes. 2:11;
2 John 12; 3 John 14

IV. We must have positive faith in every young person—1 Cor. 13:7; Matt. 19:26; 2 Cor. 5:7:

- A. Having a positive faith means that with the good ones you believe that they will get better, and with the ones who do not seem to be good, you believe that they will become good.
- B. We are all Adam's descendants, a fallen race; even the children of godly people are fallen; you cannot judge a young person's future based on his situation today:
 - 1. We cannot say that to be fallen is right, but please remember that all those who truly know God's salvation were once fallen people.
 - 2. If a person has been preserved since his birth and has never lived in a fallen way, he cannot have a deep experience of God's salvation.
- C. Whether the condition of the young people is good or bad, is not trustworthy; all those who have some experience in the young people's work will not trust in the young people's condition but fully believe that God will gain them one day:
 - 1. Today you may consider a certain young man very bad, but one day he may become very good, contrary to your view.
 - 2. In the same way, today you may think that a certain young man is very good, but some day he may become very bad.
- D. This will deliver us so that we will not work only on the young people whom we consider good and put aside those whom we consider bad; do not believe either in their good condition or in their bad condition; believe only in God's work:
 - 1. Actually, sometimes it is hard for those who are consistently good to have spiritual perception, and often their growth is slow.
 - 2. If you spend time on those seemingly bad ones to turn them around, their spiritual understanding will be opened immediately after they have made a turn.
 - 3. This shows that those of us who do the work among the young people should not trust in their present condition.
 - 4. No matter how bad one may be, we still believe God's work can turn him; because we have such a positive faith, we pay attention to every young person.

V. Those who have a desire to do the young people's work need to learn how to match and adapt to the young people—1 Cor. 9:19-23:

- A. Do not ask them to adapt to you; you need to adapt to them to such an extent that you are like glue:
 - 1. We who do the young people's work should be like glue, so that it does not matter if a young person is soft or hard or if he is three-dimensional, flat, or a surface with bumps and dents; we still need to stick to him.
 - 2. We have to go along with the young people and accommodate ourselves to them; we must bring people in not by our zeal but by our gentleness—learn to be as yielding as paste.

- B. It seems very hard to do the young people's work because the young people are too busy to care about pursuing the Lord; if they are busy with entering a higher school, then we work on them by going along with them in their preparation for this matter:
 1. If we are doing a real work, then even if a young person flies to the sky, we will follow him there to adapt to him.
 2. The young people being too busy is not the problem; the real issue is their interest; if they are interested in something, no matter how busy they are, they will have time for it.
- C. When you go to reach people, do not contact them according to your tradition, background, or disposition; look to the Lord, that you will be able to enter into their condition and situation.
- D. Learn to accommodate their character, age, disposition, and way of doing things and contact people according to their situation and condition and not according to your disposition or tradition.
- E. From the Bible we can realize that for others' profit, we must learn to accommodate their character, their age, their disposition, and even their ways of doing certain things.

VI. Paying attention to personal contact; the power and effect of doing a personal work with the young people are many times greater than the meetings:

- A. The emphasis of a genuine work with young people is individual contact—1 Thes. 2:11; 2 John 12; 3 John 14:
 1. Big meetings do not have much effect on young people; when you gather them together, usually all you can do is give them a message and at most a little work of revival.
 2. It seems the way of personal contact is fragmentary and wastes a lot of time; seemingly, this way is less effective than holding big meetings where you can speak to hundreds of people at once.
 3. If all you have is meetings, the young people's work will end up with something that is only on the surface, like loose sand without foundation; it will not be able to produce any solid ones.
- B. We speak too much, preach too much, and teach too much with very little visiting; most people are gained by face to face contact, and most people are retained and built up by such personal contact.
- C. In the matter of personal contact, skills are needed; if you practice this matter seriously, gradually you will gain experience and insight:
 1. You will know which one among so many young people should be contacted and gained first; after one has been gained, he will go to others up in the same way.
 2. Even if there are no big meetings, many can still get saved and many can be raised up to love the Lord and no matter what you speak they will receive it; then the meetings will be one hundred percent effective, and you will be able to gain solid young people.
- D. When you have personal contact with young people, on the one hand, you need to have broad contact with them, treating every one of them equally; on the other hand, you need to have specific contact:
 1. Among so many young brothers and sisters, you need to feel and see which ones, once they are gained, will have impact on others.
 2. Then you should spend your effort on them first and help them to love and pursue the Lord; once they are raised up, they will influence the other young brothers and sisters.

- E. “Brothers, I say again, the Lord has a great need for the young people. This generation needs many young people to rise up in a strong way to receive the Lord’s salvation and be led by the Lord to become useful vessels in His hands.”—*How to Lead the Young People*, p. 37

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Lesson Four

The Person, Living and Responsibility of the Parents

Scripture reading: 1 Thes. 1:5; 2 Cor. 6:1; John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1-2; Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:10; Deut. 6:7; Psa. 78:5-7; Joel 1:3; Acts 2:38-39; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Gal. 6:7-8

I. God pays more attention to what we are than to what we do or to what we can do; He cares for the kind of person we are and for the kind of life we live—1 Thes. 1:5:

- A. In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way and the person is the Lord's work—John 5:19; 6:57; Phil. 1:19-26; Acts 20:18-35; Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-37.
- B. The head of the household manages the family by his person; it is the person that manages the family, not a method that does it—2 Cor. 6:1, footnote 1; Rev. 21:16:
 - 1. To do anything, first there is the need of a person to do it; next comes the method; there is no need for a good method of administration; rather, there is the need of a good person for administration—Exo. 4:10, footnote 1.
 - 2. As soon as we become involved with methods we fall into pretense; genuineness denotes a consistency within and without—cf. 32:19-21.

II. We need to see that we are God-men, born of God and belonging to God's species; this is the beginning of the God-man living—John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:2:

- A. We are regenerated of God the Spirit to be spirits—gods (John 3:6b) belonging to the species of God to see and enter into the kingdom of God—John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-6; 1 John 3:9:
 - 1. If we realize that, as children of God, we are God in life and in nature, we will be radically changed; the atmosphere and everything related to us will also be changed—John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:2.
 - 2. If all of today's Christians realized that they were God in life and in nature, the whole world would be different—Acts 17:6.
 - 3. When we think of ourselves as God-men, this thinking, this realization, revolutionizes us in our daily experience—Eph. 4:22-24.
- B. We need to have a God-man living in our married life—Phil. 1:19-21a; 3:10:
 - 1. "Do we live Christ at home with our husband or wife and with our children? We need a real revival to be God-men who live a life of always denying ourselves and being crucified to live Christ for the expression of God"—*Life-study of 1 and 2 Chronicles*, p. 77.
 - 2. "We need to be careful in every detail. For instance, when we talk to our spouse, we have to talk according to the spirit. We need to walk in all things according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4). We need to be warned and be on the alert that whatever we say, whatever we do, whatever we express, our attitude, our spirit, and our intention must be purified by the life-giving, compound, all-inclusive Spirit"—p. 49.

III. 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 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. Noah inherited all the godly ways of his forefathers: Noah inherited Adam's way of salvation, Abel's way of offering, Enosh's way of calling on the name of the Lord, and also inherited Enoch's way of walking with God—Gen. 3:21; 4:4, 26; 5:22.
- D. 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.
- E. 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. What the older ones experienced was very effective in building up the younger ones; therefore, God could prepare from the second generation more than six hundred thousand men with a rich inheritance and strong background who were qualified to be formed into an army to fight for God's kingdom—Deut. 1:10-11.
 3. 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.

IV. The New Testament pays much attention to teachings for parents and does not pay that much attention to teachings about being children; both Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3 put more emphasis on parents than on children—Acts 2:38-39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15:

- A. In summarizing the words in the Bible concerning parenting, the main thing parents should do is nurture their children in the teaching and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to anger or discourage them; this means that parents must exercise self-control and must not be loose in any way—Eph. 6:4; 1 Thes. 2:7.
- B. Timothy's faith dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and was transmitted to him—2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Eph. 6:4.
- C. Mary's poetic praise is composed of many quotations from the Old Testament indicating that the Lord Jesus grew up in a family that was filled with the knowledge and love of God's holy Word—Luke 1:46-55.

V. We must realize that the Christian life is a life of sowing; everything we do is some kind of sowing, either to the flesh or to the Spirit—Gal. 6:7-8:

- A. Everything we say to our children and do with them is a seed sown into them—cf. 2 Tim. 3:10.
- B. In the church life we are constantly sowing tiny seeds; to be careful in our sowing is to be watchful concerning our living—cf. Heb. 13:7.

VI. God's ordained principle is that a father must live a life that is a pattern, an example to his children; nevertheless, we must realize that the way our children turn out ultimately depends on the Lord's mercy—Rom. 9:10-13; Eph. 6:4:

- A. Therefore, we must do our duty to live a proper life as an example to our children, but we should not be discouraged or proud because of how our children turn out; Jacob and Esau were twins, but Romans 9:10-13 shows that their destiny depended on God's selection.
- B. The best and most proper way to be parents is to live as an example to our children and pray for the Lord's mercy.
- C. If our living establishes a proper standard, we are not liable if our children behave badly; however, if we do not live as a pattern, our children's bad behavior is our responsibility.
- D. In order to be a good example, we must love the Lord and His Word, deal with sins, hate the self, and learn the lessons of the cross; this will be an example not only to our children but also to all the saints.

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Lesson Five

The Importance of the Children and Young People's Work for the Future of the Lord's Recovery

Scripture Reading: Rev. 22:12, 20; Luke 18:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1:5; 2:2

- I. We all need to know what age we are in, what the present revelation is from God, where we should be, what we should do, and what flow we should enter into; time is short, and the day of the Lord's second coming is approaching—Rev. 22:12, 20; cf. Matt. 24:37-39; 2 Tim. 3:1-3.**
- II. We cannot continue to work as we have in the past; in the past we neglected the work with the children and the young people, and we highly regarded a general work—Luke 18:16-17:**
 - A. "Your eyes have to be open. Do not be too busy outwardly. You should work on the young people, the junior highers, and the high schoolers. You should also work on the children until each week there are at least ten thousand children being taught by us. Those who are six or seven years old now will be high schoolers in ten years. If you are willing to do this, you can definitely succeed"—*The Ultimate Significance of the Golden Lampstands*, p. 55.
 - B. No family will disregard its children; as a priority a family looks after its children, raises them, and teaches them; hence, we must serve the many children in God's family—2 Tim. 3:15; 1:5.
 - C. All the churches must have a children's work; if we work with these children, they will all be young brothers and sisters after six to seven years.
 - D. The co-workers must lead the church to receive a burden for the children's work; the church should concentrate its effort on this work.
- III. We must let God open our eyes to see the preciousness of the young people and their importance in God's hands—cf. Dan. 1:2, 4; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:12:**
 - A. In whatever a person does, the most important thing is to have a heart—2 Cor. 6:11; Col. 3:23:
 1. If you want to do this work, you must like the young people, care for them, and be concerned about their affairs; this may be considered the minimum "capital" required for the young people's work—Matt. 19:14.
 2. If you have no interest in the young people and have no heart for them, doing the young people's work only out of reluctance, then it is useless—v. 13.
 3. Some brothers and sisters are doing it out of their preference; but here we have to say that it is not weighty enough to do the young people's work with such a heart—1 Kings 4:29.
 - B. When we see the importance and value of a certain matter, then spontaneously we have a heart for it—2 Tim. 2:2; cf. 1 Thes. 3:8.
- IV. The future of the church hinges on the young people—2 Tim. 2:2; cf. Deut. 1:38:**
 - A. If we read through the Bible carefully, we will discover a fact: it is not easy to find a case showing that God called an old person to do a new thing or a thing of great consequence—1 Sam. 3:1, 4; Dan. 1:4, 8; Matt. 4:18-20:

1. We can say that virtually everyone used by God to begin a new thing or chosen by God to turn the age was a young man—Deut. 1:38.
 2. Nearly every work that the young people were called by God to do was a work that turned the age; for the carrying out of all these works of great consequences, God always called young men—1 Sam. 3:1, 4.
- B. For usefulness in the Lord's hand, for the spread of the Lord's kingdom, and for the propagation of the Lord's work, the responsibility undoubtedly falls on the shoulders of the young people—cf. Acts 2:14-41.
- C. If the Lord delays His coming back for five, ten, fifteen, or twenty years and He wants to accomplish something, the commission will have to be entrusted to the young people—Matt. 24:14; 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:5:
1. Nevertheless, the conditions today, such as the “greenness of the crops,” the desolation of the church, and the scarcity of overcomers, tell us that the Lord cannot come back so soon—1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-13.
 2. Therefore, seeing such a situation, we believe that there may be still a considerable amount of time in which the Lord wants to accomplish something on the earth—2 Pet. 3:9.
 3. Twenty years from now those who will be useful to the Lord are those who are in their twenties or younger today—2 Tim. 3:14-15, 17:
 - a. There must be a group of young people who are saved to receive proper spiritual help today, so they can gain the experience and be used by the Lord in the future—2:2.
 - b. If there are no young people gained by the Lord today, after our departure there will be no one to succeed us; then there will be a gap—cf. Deut. 1:37-38.
 4. If there are young brothers and sisters raised up by the Lord, and if we are preserved to give them an absolutely positive leading instead of erroneous limitations, then there is no need to wait until the Lord takes us away; even today they can become useful in the Lord's hands—2 Tim. 3:10; 1 Cor. 16:10.
- D. The future of the work and the usefulness in the future, no doubt, are with the young people; from the view of the future of the work, we should put our emphasis on the younger ones—cf. Deut. 1:38.