

WEEK 5 — OUTLINE

The Eternal Life

Scripture Reading: Matt. 7:13-14; 2 Cor. 3:6; Rev. 22:1-2

« DAY 1 »

I. The way of the Lord's recovery is the way of the eternal, divine life; we need to know the intrinsic essence of life in the Lord's recovery (Psa. 16:11; Jer. 21:8; John 1:4; 10:10b; 14:6; 1 Cor. 15:45b):

- A. The intrinsic essence of the Triune God is the eternal, divine life—God the Father is the source of life (John 5:26), God the Son is the embodiment of life (1:4), and God the Spirit is the flow of life (4:14b; 7:38-39a).
- B. The intrinsic essence of the New Jerusalem is the eternal, divine life—God the Father is the light of life (Rev. 21:23; 22:5), God the Son is the tree of life (v. 2), and God the Spirit is the river of water of life (v. 1).
- C. God builds the church to prepare the bride of Christ for the building of the New Jerusalem by the eternal, divine life, the resurrection life—the flowing, transforming, and building life (Gen. 2:22; John 19:34; Psa. 36:8-9).

« DAY 2 »

II. The eternal life, the life of the Triune God, is dispensed into the tripartite man to save the believers subjectively in this life through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification (Rom. 5:10b; 8:2, 10, 6, 11):

- A. First, this life was the divine life in the Spirit (v. 2).
- B. Second, it became the life in our spirit through regeneration (v. 10).
- C. Then from our spirit it saturates our mind for the transformation of our soul, to which our mind belongs, and becomes the life in our soul (v. 6).
- D. Eventually, it will permeate our body, ultimately issuing in the transfiguration of our body, that is, the redemption of our body (vv. 11, 23; Phil. 3:21).

III. The unique way for the daily life of God's people and for their fellowship with God and with one another is the divine life flowing in the divine nature (Rev. 21:21b; 22:1-2; 1 John 1:3):

- A. The street of the holy city is pure gold, symbolizing the divine nature, and the river of water of life proceeds in the middle of the street (Rev. 21:21b;

22:1).

- B. Where the divine life flows, there the divine nature is as the holy way by which God's people walk; and where the holy way of the divine nature is, there the divine life is flowing (2 Pet. 1:4; John 7:38-39a).
- C. The street connected to and coming out of the throne is a "fellowship street"; the divine fellowship brings God to all His redeemed people in order to bring them back to Himself as their throne for His golden administration within them (Rev. 21:18b; 22:1-2; 21:21b; cf. Ezek. 1:22, 26; 1 Kings 10:18).
- D. When we walk and move in the divine nature of God, we are brought under God's golden administration to enjoy the flow of life and the supply of life (Rev. 22:1-2).

« DAY 3 »

IV. We should live according to the principle of the tree of life, the principle of dependence, not according to the principle of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the principle of independence (Gen. 2:9, 17; Rom. 8:6):

- A. That God is our food, signified by the tree of life, means that we must depend on God continually; the tree of knowledge indicates independence.
- B. Knowledge or religion means to be good and to do good, to worship God or to work for God, without having the living presence of God (John 5:39-40; 15:5b).
- C. In the eyes of God, the greatest sin is independence; independence is a spiritual insulation, disconnecting us from the life of God (Eph. 4:18).
- D. We must learn to depend on the Lord continually, living constantly in direct contact with God (2 Cor. 1:12; Heb. 11:8; Matt. 6:28; cf. 1 Kings 7:17-19; S.S. 8:5a; cf. 2 Chron. 16:12; Isa. 50:10-11).

« DAY 4 »

V. In our service to the Lord, we must reject our natural enthusiasm, natural strength, and natural ability; our service must be life flowing out of us as a ministry of life to others (John 7:38; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 John 5:16a):

- A. We must be burning in spirit with the fire of God's life; we should not serve with strange fire, signifying the natural enthusiasm not dealt with by the cross and not in resurrection (Exo. 3:2; Luke 12:49-50; Rom. 12:11;

Lev. 10:1):

1. Strange fire in the priestly service, a sin of presumption, causes death before God (9:24; 10:1-2).
 2. The offering of strange fire might have been related to the drinking of wine; drinking wine signifies the overenjoyment of the worldly, natural, or physical, material things (vv. 8-9).
 3. When the priests are drunk, they lose the discernment of holiness and are unable to teach God's people (vv. 10-11).
- B. Our natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross to become useful in resurrection for our service to the Lord (Phil. 3:3):

« DAY 5 »

1. After being put aside by God for forty years, Moses learned to serve God according to His leading and to trust in Him (Exo. 2:14-15; Acts 7:22-36; Heb. 11:28).
2. After becoming a complete failure, Peter learned to serve the brothers by faith and with humility (Luke 22:32-33; John 18:15-18, 25-27; Matt. 26:69-75; 1 Pet. 5:5-6).

VI. In the decree of the kingdom's constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people's life and work before God (Matt. 7:13-14, 21-27):

- A. The broad way leading to destruction is according to the worldly systems, satisfying the natural tastes, to get the crowd, to maintain a career of man, and to achieve man's enterprise (13:31-33; Rev. 2:13, 20; 17:4-5).
- B. The constricted way leading to life is according to the divine regulations, fulfilling the spiritual requests to bring in God's elect and to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ, carrying out God's economy for the building up of the Body of Christ (Rom. 1:9; Heb. 11:5-6; Rev. 1:1-2, 9-10).
- C. The way that leads to a living reward in life is the Way (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22)—the way of the truth, the straight way, the way of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:2, 15, 21), the way of peace (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the way of God (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26), and the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Acts 18:25); it is slandered as the way of heresy (24:14).

« DAY 6 »

- D. The God-ordained way is to have a living and working that are always narrow and constricted, according to the pattern of the Lord's

indescribable life and ministry (John 5:19; 4:34; 17:4; 14:10, 24; 5:30; 7:6, 18):

1. We in the Lord's recovery must walk in our spirit; walking in spirit restricts us, causing us to live a normal, Christian life and making us vital, healthy believers (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 22-23; 1 Thes. 5:16-18).
2. The Lord Jesus sowed Himself as a seed of life and fell into the ground as a grain of wheat so that the life within Him could be released to bring forth many grains; we need to serve Him and follow Him in this way (Matt. 13:3; John 12:23-26; 10:11; 1 John 3:16).
3. The work that the Lord needs to produce and increase the church is the overflow and outflow of the inner life, not the endeavor of outward activity (John 7:37-39; 4:10, 14):
 - a. The important thing regarding our work is not its quantity but its quality; gold, silver, and precious stones are always small in quantity but high in quality, whereas wood, grass, and stubble are always high in quantity but low in quality (1 Cor. 3:12-15):
 - (1) Gold symbolizes God in His divine nature, silver symbolizes Christ in His redemptive work, and precious stones symbolize the Spirit in His transforming work.
 - (2) Wood signifies the human nature, grass signifies man in the flesh, and stubble signifies lifelessness.
 - b. We will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ not according to the quantity but according to the quality of our work, "of what sort it is" (v. 13).
 - c. "Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth...In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work" (Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, by Witness Lee, p. 87).

<< WEEK 5 — DAY 1 >>

Morning Nourishment

Rev. 22:1-2 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

[Revelation 21:3-4] was not spoken to the believers but to the peoples on the new earth outside the holy city. When we sang Hymns, #1348 were we singing it to the people outside the city?...[It] says nothing about the inheritance. It says nothing about the tree of life, the river of water of life, or the light of life. This hymn says that “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (21:4). When we believers are there in the New Jerusalem there is no possibility of tears....The blessing of the eternal life is not to wipe away your tears but to fill you with another kind of water. If you are filled within with the living water, tears would never come out.

We all must take heed to our own preaching, our own teaching, our own so-called ministry. We must ask whether the principle of life has been changed or not. We must know the intrinsic essence of life in the Lord's recovery. (Elders' Training, Book 2: The Vision of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 72-74)

Today's Reading

We must see the contents of the New Jerusalem. From the throne of God and of the Lamb in the center of the city flows a river of water of life and in this river of life grows the tree of life. Also, the entire city is enlightened by the light of life. These three items are the intrinsic essence of the Triune God. The intrinsic essence of the Triune God is the divine life. The divine life will be the river (22:1), the divine life will be the tree (22:2), and the divine life will be the light (22:5). We will drink the river, we will eat the tree, and we will live in the light. These three items are of the intrinsic and basic essence of the Triune God. The light mainly denotes God the Father. Revelation tells us that in the New Jerusalem there is no need of the light of a lamp or of the sun because the Lord God will be the light and Christ the Lamb will be the lamp (21:23). The tree of life refers to God the Son and the river of water of life refers to God the Spirit. This is the Divine Trinity in the divine essence for our living and enjoyment in eternity.

The basic, intrinsic essence of the New Jerusalem is the divine life. The divine life with God the Father is the light, with God the Son is the tree, and with God the Spirit is the river. The light is for us to live in, the tree is for us to feed on, and the river is for us to drink of. This will be our living and our enjoyment of the intrinsic essence of the Triune God for eternity, and He will abide in us and we will abide in Him. There is a miniature of this mutual abiding in John 15: “Abide in Me and I in you” (15:4). This abiding in John 15 will be expanded and developed into the New Jerusalem, which will be the consummation of the divine mutual abiding. We abide in Him and He abides in us for eternity. We will serve Him and He will be served by us, and this will be the eternal kingdom, the eternal realm of the divine life. (Elders' Training, Book 2: The Vision of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 61-62)

The Father is the source as the light, and the Son is the Redeemer for us to receive. If we would confess all our sins and admit and recognize that He died on the cross for our sins, right away there would be a flow within us. This is the Spirit, and within this flow is the tree of life growing in us as the life supply for us to feed upon day by day....This will metabolically transform us. This transforming life is also a life of building...[to build] us together with others. (The Tree of Life, p. 150)

The life seen in Genesis 2 is the flowing life, the transforming life, and the building life. This life flows within us, transforms us, and eventually builds us up as the bride of Christ. (CWWL, 1969, vol. 2, “The Crucial Revelation of Life in the Scriptures,” p. 402)

Further Reading: Elders' Training, Book 2: The Vision of the Lord's Recovery, chs. 5-6; The Crucial Revelation of Life in the Scriptures, ch. 2; Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, msg. 3

« WEEK 5 — DAY 2 »

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.

11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.

The spiritual life revealed in Romans 8 is fourfold. First, it was the divine life in the Spirit (v. 2). Second, it became life in our spirit through regeneration (v. 10). Then from our spirit it saturates our mind for the transformation of our soul, to which our mind belongs, and becomes the life in our soul (v. 6). Eventually, it will permeate our body and become the life in our body (v. 11), ultimately issuing in the transfiguration of our body (Phil. 3:21), that is, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23). (Rom. 8:2, footnote 3)

Today's Reading

In the middle of this street is the river of water of life (Rev. 22:1-2), which indicates that when you take the way according to God's nature, the life of God flows within you. The divine life flows in the divine nature as the unique way for the daily life of God's redeemed people. If I do not buy a tie according to God's nature, there is no flow of life within me. However, if I buy a tie according to God's nature, I sense the flow of life. If a husband is going to divorce his wife, this is against God's nature, and this will lead to spiritual death. However, if this husband would live with his wife and love her according to God's nature, the river of life would flow within him. Whatever we do according to God's nature, we immediately have the deep sensation of the flow of life watering us.

The one tree of life growing on the two sides of the river (Rev. 22:2) signifies that the tree of life is a vine, spreading and proceeding along the flow of the water of life for God's people to receive and enjoy. The fruits of the tree of life will be the food of God's redeemed for eternity. They will be continually fresh, produced every month, twelve fruits yearly. This means that when we walk and move in the divine nature of God, we not only sense the flow of life within us but also sense the supply of life, the nourishment of life, the spiritual food. When you take the divine way, the street of God's divine nature, you have the life flowing in you, and you also have the life supply nourishing you. Day by day, as we are living such a life and walking according to God's divine nature, we enjoy the water of life and the tree of life as our supply. We all need a day-by-day experience of the divine street of gold with the river of water of life and the tree of life in its middle, signifying that the life water and the life supply flow in the divine way. (God's New Testament Economy, pp. 375-376)

On the street there is the traffic, the going and coming. First, the street is for God's going and coming, which are for God's administration. Eventually, this street becomes a "fellowship street." This fellowship is between the redeeming God and His redeemed people. The redeeming God and His redeemed people must have going and coming fellowship. Not only so, God's redeemed people must have going and coming fellowship among themselves.

The divine fellowship brings God to all His redeemed people, to all the twelve gates, to bring all His redeemed people back to Himself. First, the street goes from the throne to the twelve gates. Then it comes from the twelve gates to the throne.

Connected to His throne is a street on which you should walk, and that street is His administration. From the day you repented, you have felt that there is a throne and a golden street, a golden administration, within you. Then you began to do things according to the gold, according to the nature of God. This is because both the throne and the street are built on the gold as the nature of God. (The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, pp. 12-14)

Further Reading: Life-study of Romans, msg. 62; God's New Testament Economy, ch. 36; The Application of the Interpretation of the New Jerusalem to the Seeking Believers, msg. 1

<< WEEK 5 — DAY 3 >>

Morning Nourishment

Gen. 2:9 And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

The tree of life...denotes God Himself as life. The content of the tree of life is life. It is life, simply, purely, and absolutely. The nature of this tree and the result of this tree are also life. Life is the content, nature, and result. Everything is life.

The principle of the tree of life is dependence....We may graduate from studying, but we should never graduate from eating. Furthermore, we cannot graduate from drinking water or from breathing air. I encourage you to study well and to graduate from school as soon as possible. However, I would never encourage you to graduate from breathing, for if you do that you will die. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 162-163)

Today's Reading

Eating makes us very dependent. Because we must eat many times a day, and not merely one time for our entire life, we are very dependent. Eating indicates dependence. That God is our food, signified by the tree of life, means that we must depend on God continually. We must come to Him in order to feed on Him again and again. However, the tree of knowledge indicates independence. Once we learn how to use a computer in school, we do not need to go back to school to learn the same thing again. The knowledge we gain makes us independent.

In Genesis 2 the tree of life and the tree of knowledge were set up as two principles by which man could live. If we take the tree of life, we depend on God. If we take the tree of knowledge, we do not depend on God. Rather, taking the tree of knowledge makes us independent of God. In the eyes of God, the greatest sin is independence. We must learn to depend on God continually. To exercise our independence is sinful. In family life and in the church life, dependence is beautiful, but independence is ugly. To exercise independence is the principle of death. To take the tree of life is life, but to take the tree of knowledge is death. (The Triune God to Be Life to the Tripartite Man, pp. 11-12)

Anything we do in dependence upon the Lord is in the principle of the tree of life. Anything we do independently of the Lord is in the principle of the tree of knowledge.

To be independent of the Lord means to have an insulation separating us from the Lord, an insulation which cuts off the flow of divine electricity....Independence is a spiritual insulation, disconnecting us from the life of God. Do not think of yourself as an expert in spiritual matters. Regardless of how long electricity has been applied, it still needs application without insulation. It is the same in the spiritual realm. Never say, "I have much experience in Christ. I have been exercising my spirit for years and I don't need to do it any more." We should never adopt this attitude. We need to depend on the Lord continually. Never be independent of the living Lord. One second of independence means death.

Knowledge or religion means to be good and to do good, to worship God or to work for God without having the living presence of God. Anything good done for God without His presence is religion. A certain thing may be both life and knowledge to us. If we experience the presence of the living God while doing it, it is life. However, if we do it without God's presence, it is simply dead knowledge. No way or method can help us. We need the living God.

What is life? Life is God Himself. What is the principle of life? The principle of life is to be dependent on God for everything. If you depend on God, everything is life. (Life-study of Genesis, pp. 171-172, 176-177)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msgs. 13-14; CWWN, vol. 6, "Two Principles of Living"; The Triune God to Be Life to the Tripartite Man, ch. 1

<< WEEK 5 — DAY 4 >>

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 12:11 Do not be slothful in zeal, but be burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

Phil. 3:3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Strange fire in the priestly service causes death before God [Lev. 10:1-2]....Maybe [what] the two sons of Aaron did [was] with a good heart, with a good intention, but still they were burned to death. The offering of strange fire caused death to these two priests before God.

We all need to serve, to function, and to use our one talent, our gift. But we must be careful not to serve in a natural way, with our natural hotness. Of course, the Lord wants us to be hot in the spirit, not cold or lukewarm. But we have to be hot in our spirit, not in our natural life. In Romans 12:11 Paul tells us to be “burning in spirit, serving the Lord.” Any hotness in our natural life is strange fire to God, and this brings in death. (CWWL, 1979, vol. 2, “Basic Lessons on Service,” pp. 107-108)

Today's Reading

According to Leviticus 10, the offering of the strange fire might have been related to the drinking of wine. Right after Nadab and Abihu's death, God charged the priests not to drink wine [vv. 8-9]....Every logical reader would consider that probably the two sons of Aaron offered strange fire to Jehovah because they were drunk. They drank too much wine.

Drinking wine, in the Bible, signifies the overenjoyment of the worldly, natural, or physical, material things. In other words, if we overly enjoy anything of this world, this always makes us drunk. When we are drunk, we are excited and out of control, doing things without regulation. It might have been that the two sons of Aaron were drunk, so they were excited and went beyond themselves to do something without being regulated. This means that they offered strange fire in a presumptuous way. The offering of strange fire was a sin of presumption. They presumed to do some- thing for God. Actually, that was not a real offering to God but something of their presumption against God's regulation.

People do presumptuous things because they have overenjoyed something. They are drunk. When the priests are drunk, they lose the discernment of holiness (Lev. 10:10), and they are unable to teach God's people (v. 11). When we lose our discernment because we are drunk, we are not being regulated; so we surely cannot teach others so that they can be regulated.

The natural strength and ability need to be dealt with by the cross. To overcome and deal with sin is not as hard as this. To overcome our natural strength and ability is a great, subjective lesson; it is more subjective than dealing with sin. In a certain sense, our natural strength and ability equal our self, our natural constitution. Our natural strength and natural ability are the embodiment of our self. This is why after the denial of the self we need a lesson on rejecting the natural strength and ability and dealing with them by the cross.

The natural strength and ability are useful if they are dealt with by the cross. After being dealt with by the cross, they are in resurrection.

In resurrection something divine has been wrought into our strength and ability. Even some divine element has been wrought into our eloquence. When we speak, we need to have our eloquence dealt with by the cross. The cross always works the divine element into the person it deals with, bringing God into him. If you have never been dealt with by the cross in your eloquence, that is the natural eloquence with nothing divine. But if your eloquence has been dealt with, that kind of eloquence is in resurrection and is full of the divine element. In the natural eloquence there is no God. But the “dealt with” eloquence in resurrection is full of God. After being dealt with, our strength and ability become useful in resurrection for our service to the Lord. (CWWL, 1979, vol. 2, “Basic Lessons on Service,” pp. 108-109, 142-143)

Further Reading: Basic Lessons on Service, lsns. 14, 20

« WEEK 5 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

Acts 7:30 And when forty years had been fulfilled, an Angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in the flame of a thornbush fire.

Heb. 11:28 By faith he [Moses] instituted the Passover and the pouring out of the blood so that the one destroying the firstborn would not touch them.

The case of Moses is the best one to illustrate the matter of rejecting the natural strength and ability. No other person in the Bible is as good as Moses in this aspect....Acts 7:22 tells us that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and works. He came out to work for God, to rescue God's people from the tyranny of Pharaoh....Moses did something for God's people according to his own will (vv. 23-26). He was full of assurance that he could accomplish something, but he was carrying out his will, not God's will....God purposely and sovereignly put Moses aside for forty years (Exo. 2:14-15; Acts 7:27-30).

In those forty years Moses learned to serve God according to His leading and to trust in Him (vv. 34-36; Heb. 11:28). Moses eventually became a person who did nothing according to his will. He always acted according to the Lord's leading. The Lord led him, and he followed. He had no faith in his ability. Although he was very capable, he did not use his natural ability. His natural ability was dealt with, so it became an ability in resurrection. The ability in resurrection corresponds with God's move. If our ability is not dealt with, it is separate from God's move. But after being dealt with by the cross, our ability becomes one with God's move. Actually, God was wrought into Moses' ability. His ability eventually was full of God. (CWWL, 1979, vol. 2, "Basic Lessons on Service," pp. 143-144)

Today's Reading

Peter was self-confident in his natural strength and ability even to the point of thinking that he would follow the Lord both to prison and to death (Luke 22:33)....Peter was tested, and he denied the Lord three times, even before a little maid (John 18:15-18, 25-27)....Peter was absolutely defeated and became a complete failure (Matt. 26:69-75). He did have a heart to love the Lord, but he was too confident in his own strength, his natural strength. His love for the Lord was precious, but his natural strength had to be denied and dealt with. The Lord allowed Peter to fail utterly in denying the Lord to His face three times, so that his natural strength and self-confidence could be dealt with....Through his failure Peter learned to serve the brothers by faith in the Lord and with humility (Luke 22:32; 1 Pet. 5:5-6). Peter was really broken and was turned from the natural ability to something in resurrection. (CWWL, 1979, vol. 2, "Basic Lessons on Service," p. 144)

In the decree of the kingdom's constitution, Christ displayed the two possible ways of people's life and work before God (Matt. 7:13-14): the broad way....through the wide gate...leading to destruction...according to the worldly systems satisfying the natural tastes...to get the crowd...to maintain a career of man...achieving man's enterprise. [And] the constricted way....through the narrow gate...leading to life...according to the divine regulations fulfilling the spiritual requests...to bring in God's elect...to bear the testimony of Jesus Christ...carrying out God's economy...for the building up of the church of God—the Body of Christ. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, pp. 137-138)

The Way in Acts 9:2 includes the way of truth, the straight way, and the way of righteousness spoken of in 2 Peter 2:2, 15, and 21. The way of truth is the path of the Christian life according to the truth, which is the reality of the contents of the New Testament (1 Tim. 2:4; 3:15; 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:15, 18; Titus 1:1). It is designated by other titles according to its various virtues, like the straight way, the way of righteousness, the way of peace (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), the way of God (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26), the way of the Lord (John 1:23; Acts 18:25), and the Way (19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22). It was slandered as a way of heresy (Acts 24:14). (Life-study of Acts, p. 205)

Further Reading: Life-study of Exodus, msg. 6; Life-study of Acts, msg. 25; Life-study of Matthew, msg. 24

<< WEEK 5 — DAY 6 >>

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 7:14 Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

1 Cor. 3:12-14 But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, stubble,...the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built upon the foundation remains, he will receive a reward.

We are being trained in the God-ordained way revealed in the Bible. The God-ordained way is to have a living and a working which are always narrowed and constricted....In the spiritual field, there is no broad way. The way in the spiritual field is always constricted. On this way our freedom is always restricted. (The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, p. 142)

Today's Reading

After His baptism and the Holy Spirit descending upon Him, Jesus became such a being with divinity and with humanity, but with a humanity that had been terminated and resurrected. After He was anointed, He began to minister. It is crucial for us to see what it was that He ministered....When Christ came out to minister, He acted, He lived, He worked, He moved, and He ministered in such a way that no vocabulary in any language can describe. (Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament, pp. 39-40)

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it seems that the preaching of the gospel is a movement, a certain kind of activity or work. It is only in the Gospel of John, the Gospel of life, that the preaching of the gospel is not a work or activity; it is an outflow of life. That is why in John 15:16 the Lord chose and set the disciples to go forth and bear fruit. This is to preach the gospel for the increase of Christ. We must go forth to produce Christ, to have Christ reproduced, multiplied, and increased thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold. This is the "great commission."...It is not in a way of work, activity, or movement, but it is in the way of life, in the way of the outflow of the inner life. (CWWL, 1965, vol. 1, "Preaching the Gospel in the Way of Life," p. 321)

Watchman Nee saw through 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 that the important thing regarding our work is not its quantity but its quality. Gold, silver, and precious stones are always small in quantity but high in quality, whereas wood, hay, and stubble are always high in quantity and low in quality. Wood, hay, and stubble cannot stand the test of fire, but gold, silver, and precious stones can. We will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ not according to the quantity but according to the quality of our work.

When he would hear that a certain preacher had successfully gained a large following or that a certain Christian worker was doing a big work, he would frequently tell us, his trainees, that the real work is the outflow of life.

With the gifts, knowledge, and ability he had, he could easily have acquired a large following in Christianity. Watchman Nee, however, did not misuse his gifts and knowledge in this way. He always took pains to restrict himself in the function of his gifts and the use of his knowledge in order to ensure that his work was fully in life, of life, with life, and was life itself. As long as he had the assurance that his ministry was the outflow of life, he was satisfied.

Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth. That part of his ministry which has flooded today's Christianity through his books was not his work but rather the very life that issued from his work. To him work did not mean much; life meant everything. In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work. (Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, pp. 86-87)

Further Reading: The Training and the Practice of the Vital Groups, msg. 13; Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament, ch. 3; CWWL, 1965, vol. 1 "Preaching the Gospel in the Way of Life," ch. 12; Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, ch. 11

<< WEEK 5 — HYMN

Hymns, #1151

1

Drink! A river pure and clear that's flowing from the throne;
Eat! The tree of life with fruits abundant, richly grown;
Look! No need of lamp nor sun nor moon to keep it bright, for
Here there is no night!
Do come, oh, do come,
Says Spirit and the Bride:
Do come, oh, do come,
Let him that heareth, cry.
Do come, oh, do come,
Let him who thirsts and will
Take freely the water of life!

2

Christ, our river, Christ, our water, springing from within;
Christ, our tree, and Christ, the fruits, to be enjoyed therein,
Christ, our day, and Christ, our light, and Christ, our morningstar:
Christ, our everything!

3

We are washing all our robes the tree of life to eat;
"O Lord, Amen, Hallelujah!"—Jesus is so sweet!
We our spirits exercise, and thus experience Christ.
What a Christ have we!

4

Now we have a home so bright that outshines the sun,
Where the brothers all unite and truly are one.
Jesus gets us all together, Him we now display
In the local church.