

Leadership Questions and Answers

by Stephen Kaung

Stephen Kaung addresses the complexities of church leadership, emphasizing the need for realistic expectations and a return to scriptural principles.

Duration: 1:36:45

Scripture: Matthew 20:26-28, Acts 20:28, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 3:15, 1 Timothy 5:22

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the issue of workers in the church and the importance of equipping the saints. He shares an example of two brothers who were relied upon too heavily by a group of believers, causing problems. The speaker emphasizes that the work of a worker is to equip the saints, and once they are equipped, they should be raised up to bear responsibility. He also addresses the idea that one person cannot possess all the different functions and gifts in the church, and that it is not normal for a worker to be expected to fulfill all roles.

Transcript

The work of Stephen is from Ephesians chapter 4 of the Lord. God has given to the church different kinds of gifts. There are the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers.

I feel there are not that many, since there are not that many workers, is it possible for the worker to possess all four different kinds of functions? On the second aspect, brothers and sisters may feel sometimes because the workers serve the Lord in the same assembly, brothers and sisters demand much of him that he would be both apostles and prophets and shepherds and teachers. In actuality, it is very difficult for all four functions to be in the same person for him to serve in that assembly. This is my observation.

Those who serve, also they are mesmerized with themselves. They feel they are both the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. This is not normal either.

Sometimes brothers and sisters demand of a worker to possess all the functions, all the gifts, and this becomes a great pressure. God didn't give him all these gifts. Brothers and sisters, on the other hand, pressure him that he would possess all these gifts, otherwise he would not be a good worker.

This is my question. I hope both of you, either one, can answer. I agree with the brother's fellowship.

I think brother asked a question, he answered it as well. My personal feeling is, as far as what I know, I believe there is not a perfect worker. Sometimes the church expects something of the worker that the Holy Spirit is not expecting.

We are expecting a worker that is perfect in every way, and we are disappointed. Praise the Lord. My personal feeling is, there are some apostles, some are evangelists, some are teachers, some are prophets, some are shepherds.

This is my personal understanding, I don't know if it is correct. On the other hand, in Ephesians chapter 4, the gift, strictly speaking, is not directed at a local assembly, but to all of God's churches, and there are apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers for all the churches. I hope brother Stephen would give a further word.

The condition our brother mentioned, it is the pastoral system, it is a distorted pastoral system, which is incompatible to the scriptures' teachings. At the same time, Ephesians chapter 4, some say there are five different gifts, actually there are four. We see that there are apostles, there are prophets, there are some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.

In other words, pastors and teachers are connected together. So these four persons, God has given these persons as gifts to the church. In other words, it doesn't emphasize the gifts, such as in 1 Corinthians, those are the gifts, or the book of Romans.

What is mentioned here points to the persons, and these persons, God has given as gifts to the church. So even until today, we still do not know what the gifts of the apostleship, what is it. Because the apostles, it is an office.

The apostleship is an office. What kind of gifts do the apostles possess, we don't know. For instance, Paul, he possesses many gifts.

He has gifts of evangelizing, he has gifts of teaching, gifts of prophecy. Of course, the apostles are different. The other three, we know a little bit more.

If he is a prophet, then his gift is prophecy. If he is an evangelist, then his gift is in preaching the gospel. And shepherds and teachers are connected together.

Because in the New Testament, only here, this word is translated pastor, but in reality, it is a shepherd. So we see, even today, the so-called counseling. This counseling is individualistic.

It is private. Teachers is public. It is open.

So you see, some people, they emphasize in the private counseling, while other people are gifted in the public teaching. So the gifts like these, God has given these people as gifts to the church. But also these people's gifts are to shepherd and to teach.

Such as what our brother mentioned. It is correct. Because what is mentioned in Ephesians 4, the church here is directed toward the universal church.

So these four offices are given to the universal church. It is for all the churches. They are not given in a certain local assembly.

So today, the pastoral system is altogether unscriptural. We believe some people do possess the gifts of shepherding. But as far as system, it is not found in the scripture.

Today's problem is it has become a distorted pastoral system. We don't use the terminology of a pastor. Instead, we use the word worker.

But in reality, we have a worker in every locality, and everything is done by the worker. If we demand him to do the spiritual thing, and we even demand him to perform all the chores, this is incompatible to God's word. So on the one hand, we who serve the Lord, we also need to keep our ground.

On the other hand, the church should not overly demand of them. I also feel is it possible that we expect for the worker to be perfect? Is there a condition that the church becomes digressed instead of becomes lazy? Because there are some people that do everything so that we can go and relax and love the world. Because there is a perfect worker here.

So if we expect a worker to be like that, it gives us an excuse not to serve. So if we truly have seen God's purpose, that the church is the body of Christ, then we would not expect the worker to do everything. The worker should help alone, and should not usurp and replace a function of all the saints.

And sometimes we expect the worker to be perfect, if we want him to replace us instead of help us. If they do help us, then it is as Scripture says, to equip the saints, and the church will receive the blessing. So there are two sides.

The church should not expect overly of the workers. At the same time, the workers should not replace the saints. Such as a good mother, an able mother, would not produce an able daughter because she does everything.

So if the worker is strong, then the church will be weak. So our brother's question does point out the difficulty of the church today. In reality, the history of the church, the Church Deity was produced because of the laziness of the majority.

So we expect some people to perform spiritual matters, and we would serve our mammon. Of course, then it would become an abnormal situation. If we truly have seen the vision of the church being the body of Christ, then the pastoral system would be exposed.

Brother Christian, how should we look at you in terms of your office? My question toward Christian Chen is that, according to what he knows of himself before the Lord, what is his gift? The second question is, how should we seated here treat him or consider him in terms of his office? I'm sorry, this question though is pointed, but I don't know how to answer. I never have thought of it as far as what my gifts are, or what my office is. I really don't know.

I feel in the body, everybody should see. For instance, in the gathering in Man Ting Fang, the brothers and sisters would know. Maybe in Australia or other places, you don't know.

We don't have much contact. Many brothers know my history. I never have felt.

Some people ask me, when did you start your full-time service? And I always answer, I started full-time service a long, long time ago. We belong to the Lord. Our service should always be placed in the first place.

And then according to what the Lord gave us, we offer to the church to serve brothers and sisters. So in reality, I don't know how to answer this question. Brother Chen, you answered this.

How do we look at ourselves? If this is so hard for you to answer, you don't know how to answer. We seated here, we have portion in the Lord's service. How do we know as far as what our gifts are? Let me put it this way.

For example, in the body of Christ, some people are clearly the eye, some are the mouth. So if we are in the church for a long time, we all should know whether we are eye or we are mouth. Some brothers are not mouth.

We know they have spiritual eye. They are the eye of the church. And some are the mouth, some are the hand.

For me, clearly, I'm not the hand. Because to take care of administrative, I'm not that good. Sometimes I maybe have to speak for the Lord.

Maybe the Lord can use me that way. But the real estimation belongs to the Lord and belongs to brothers and sisters. Personally, we cannot look at ourselves and judge correctly.

As Brother asked a question directed to Brother Christian, I think Brother Chen, it's hard for him to look at himself. It's easier for other people to look at him. Brother Chen and I were raised up together.

Witness Lee grouped us together and we were in the same group. Brother Christian Chen, Brother Benjamin Chen, Yao Chang and I, four of us in one group. We prayed together, visited together.

After many years, I think the Lord had led us according to his own plans and did something in us. When we were sick, and I've had a grave illness, Christian also had a disease in the eye. The Lord led us by our own path.

As far as my personal experience, after graduating from college, I felt led to serve full time. And I sought out a brother who helped us. I told him I wanted to go full time.

At that time, the church had much problem. The brother says, go back to society and work a few years and then come back. So I went to teach.

I was an education major. But in our hearts, we really wanted to be a person who served the Lord. To offer all our time.

If we can be the leg, we'll be the leg. Be a hand, we'll be a hand. If we can be a mouth, we'll be a mouth.

If the Lord wants us to be a stone, we'll be a stone and never speak. In the Philippines, I was there eight years. Brother Miao Sanxing and Brother Wu Renjie.

At the same time, I was teaching at school. During the vacation, I was sent to Cebu. I was single.

Some were engaged. I was there. Almost like a pastor.

Like a worker. I was doing those chores. Doing visitation.

Sometimes I was sent to Manila. And we were the hands. We did all the things.

Same as when the Lord put us in a certain church. And we were there. To do whatever required for the brothers and sisters.

Sometimes we were chauffeurs. Sometimes we were chefs. Cooking.

But we felt we are a servant. To view us as what? We don't know. We were not full time.

We had a job. But the Lord knows we are the servants. And we knew ourselves.

As to what capacity we should function in. So one day, when I encountered a problem, I asked an elder sister. She shared with me 1 Timothy.

Paul says, if I delay, you should know how to behave yourself in the house of God. The house of God is the church of the living God. The pillar and base of the truth.

We should know. Even though she did not answer my question. But in reality she did answer my question.

In the church we do know how we ought to behave. We who believe the Holy Spirit will guide us to do something. You say you are a teacher.

Yes, I am a teacher. You say you are an overseer. Yes, I am an overseer.

You say you are an elder. Yes, amen. I am an elder.

You are a butler. You are a papaditis. You are a soldier with Paul.

Yes, I am a soldier. I don't care who I am. What I do.

May the Lord know as to what I do. I'd like to share something. Since I grew up with Christian.

Even I don't know what he is. But I do know he is our brother. He is our dear brother.

Praise the Lord. When I see him I am full of joy. After lunch, in our room, several brothers got together and shared concerning this morning's message.

And we came to a problem. It seems we could not come to a conclusion. So I'd like to bring it up.

As far as the worker doesn't interfere the affairs of the church. But if an elder who doesn't progress, he occupies a position. How do we take care of this? For instance, in 1 Timothy, if accusation directed toward an elder, if there are two or three witnesses do not submit.

But who should take the case? Timothy was a worker at the time. If he is a worker, for him to take such a case, then it is as though the worker interferes with the affairs of the church. Paul was telling him how to teach the elders to take care of the administration.

But later, Timothy himself became an elder. So it becomes complicated. If we do not solve this problem, then because an elder does not progress, then the whole church suffers loss.

But in terms of being a worker, how do we take care of this matter? Let me begin. My personal view is this. This is why in the church, there are elders.

The plural eldership is the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. If there is only one elder, and if he doesn't grow, then the whole church is paralyzed. I praise the Lord because there are elders.

So if one does not go forward, the other three or four, at least, would continue to go forward. There is an elder who does not grow and mature. But Brun's sister looks at him and says, if the elder does not grow, how should we continue? And if he does not solve this problem, it is not good.

If he does, he does not know how to do it. In some places, for sure, I have seen some elders who do not even attend a prayer meeting. It does happen.

These practical problems cause us to seek after, to find a way. Because this kind of condition maybe is quite common. According to the teaching of the Bible, a person is revealed by the Holy Spirit to be mature enough to become an elder.

Because in terms of spirituality, he is more advanced than the other Brun's sisters. At the same time, before the Lord, he is faithful. He is willing to accept what the Lord has given him to serve Brun's sisters.

So, in this way, the eldership is born. This is a spiritual reality. So, when the spiritual reality is lost, what is left is merely an outward position.

This becomes a great difficulty. So, we see within the church, the church itself is a spiritual entity. Whatever is within the church should be based upon the spiritual life.

If today we departed from the principle of life and fall into organization, then we have already seen it is distorted. It is not right. So, according to this spiritual principle, we can only say why in the church's abnormality, when the Lord is doing a work of recovery, he doesn't pay attention no longer to these outward things.

He only pays attention to the spiritual reality. This is my observation these few years. Or I can describe it in a more clear way.

In the Bible, today we are in the stage of ruin of the church. In the stage of desolation, the work of the Lord is a work of recovery. And in the work of recovery, the Lord does not pay attention to the outward things.

He only pays attention to the spiritual reality. For instance, Paul wrote seven epistles to the church. But within the seven epistles, even though the churches did have some problems, but in the eyes of God, God still considers these churches to be still to be normal.

But in the time of John, in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, the Lord wrote seven epistles to the churches. We see there is some difference. Paul's seven epistles did mention the elders or the overseers.

For instance, in Philippians, he wrote to the saints and the overseers and the deacons. He mentioned these things. But in the time of John, within the seven letters, we saw God wrote letters to the messengers of the seven churches.

But he did not mention anything about the elders. The messengers, of course, can be explained in two ways. One, heavenly messengers or angels.

The other is the earthly messenger. It points to men. My personal view is the word messenger should be pointed to men.

And the messenger should be a collective entity, a corporate name. In other words, it is not one messenger. This messenger includes all those who bear responsibility before the Lord in each local assembly.

They may not be elders. They may not be deacons. But they are those who really bore spiritual responsibilities before the Lord.

So in these last seven letters we saw, what God paid attention to was reality and not the outward things. This is one side. The other side, when I read 1st and 2nd Timothy, I discovered in 1st Timothy, Paul mentioned the church.

The house of God is the church of the living God. The pillar and base of the truth. So at that time he still mentioned those elders, what kind of qualifications they should possess.

But when it comes to the time of 2nd Timothy, even though only a few years later, but when he mentioned the church, he said a great house. The church had become a great house. There are gold and silver vessels, or earthly vessels.

There are vessels unto honor, vessels unto dishonor. So if men would purge themselves to become a vessel unto honor, fit for the Master's use. In other words, in 2nd Timothy, he no longer mentioned those outward things, such as elders, or appoint elders, or appoint deacons, he never mentioned again.

He only mentioned how you ought to purge yourself, cleanse yourself, then you can deliver yourself from vessel unto dishonor to vessel unto honor, fit for the Master's use. And he never said the church was the church of the house of the living God, the pillar and base of truth. He only said you should get with those who pursue the Lord out of the pure heart, purity, holiness, and love.

So you discover what God paid attention to was no longer the outward things, but the inward spirituality. Personally, I believe in our time, if we still consider the church to be in normality and not in abnormality or degradation, if we still want to recover these outward things, appoint elders, those things, then we would encounter many problems, impossible problems, just as I've already mentioned. Those are difficult.

According to spiritual principle, if other brothers and sisters have advanced further than you, then you should automatically withdraw and allow other brothers, because this is the reality. But today, if you treat the eldership as a position, a title, then you will see men are weak. You will pay attention to these outward positions and keep holding on to this position, not relent.

This becomes a great hindrance to the church's advancing. So my personal view is I feel on the road to recovery, we are today on the road to recovery. On the road to recovery, let us not pay attention to those outward things.

Let us straightway pay attention to the spiritual things. In this way, there is no problem. In the past, in many places, people tell me, they ask me to appoint elders.

I said, I cannot do it. Other people can appoint elders. It's up to them.

They feel like doing it. I cannot. I dare not oppose it.

But as far as my personal knowing before the Lord, I feel I cannot appoint elders because I feel today there is no way for you to appoint elders. Elders belong to the local assembly. What you appoint today is

merely an elder in a small group.

This is not in the scripture. So in Washington, D.C., there is quite a famous American preacher, used of the Lord. One day, two of us were fellowshiping.

This happened many years ago. He said he had a vision before the Lord. He would go to many places to set up churches.

In his vision, when he goes to many places to set up churches, of course he would appoint elders. In Washington, he himself is an elder. So I asked him a question.

I said, you are the elder of Washington. Then what is the scope of your authority? If a brother or sister who do not meet with you and they commit sin, they have problems, can you exercise your elder's authority and position to solve this problem? Of course not. Because he was merely an elder in one group, in one meeting.

He can exercise his authority in that group, in that meeting. But if those people who do not meet with him, his authority would not even touch them. So in this way, how can you say you are the elder of the city of Washington, D.C.? You are merely an elder of a meeting.

In the Bible, there is not an elder of a meeting. The elder in the Bible is an elder of a local assembly. So I feel today if we force ourselves to do those things, those impossible tasks, then you are looking for trouble for yourself.

So when you set up an elder, how do you do away with it? It becomes a great difficult task. At the same time, in 1965, because of what happened in Taiwan, which led me to consider this matter, something happened in Taiwan. I think it is OK to mention Brother Lee.

He came to the States in 1960. He and I were together. For his sake, I came to Taiwan twice hoping to help him solve some problems.

When I was in Taiwan, I had exhorted everybody, but when I left, everything, all the problems came back. So in 1965, Brother Lee came to Taiwan to solve the problem. And he excommunicated a few workers.

This I could accept because I felt the leader of the workers, if people are not in one heart, you can excommunicate the workers. But for him to excommunicate elders, I could not accept that because he feels he is the apostle. Those whom he appoints, he can excommunicate.

In this case, the church would never be independent. So when he excommunicated it caused me to come to the Lord to seek these matters. So the question the brother asked a while ago, and really it's a case of us looking for trouble for ourselves because the Lord doesn't want us to do something and we insist on doing it.

Once we did it, we cannot solve the problem. It becomes a great hindrance, great hindrance. So when I was in New York, at that time there were a few brothers and sisters some brothers bearing responsibility in the beginning.

There was one who is a doctor and we met in his house. He really loved the Lord. But later on he was a physician he was so busy to the extent that he could not even attend for a responsible brother.

It is difficult. He doesn't even attend a responsible brother's meeting. So when you determine when you make a decision you have to report to him and ask him to agree.

This becomes it's an impossible task to do anything. So the result was if this brother could not bear responsibility in practicality not that he was not willing but circumstances is so that he could not bear responsibility so we would not allow him to be a responsible brother. Later on we did not need to inform him of our decisions.

This is because he did not fulfill his own responsibility and office. So today we see that the function of an elder is there but the elder's title is not there anymore. When you fulfill a function you fulfill the function of an elder.

And if you do not fulfill the function there is no there is no such title no such position. I feel today in the recovery of the work my personal view is this is the way that we should take. If other brothers have a different view I dare not oppose.

So I said that if other people want to appoint elders I wouldn't oppose but for me to do it I feel I cannot do. What you had mentioned a while ago in Timothy the problem of an elder once he is appointed he cannot carelessly excommunicate him. If he sins it takes two or three and present the case to somebody.

Who do we present it to? This is a scriptural problem. My personal consideration personal view is there are two possibilities. One to turn it into other elders.

The other possibility is because in those days Paul asked Timothy to do the work of appointing elders so it is quite possible it was still in the infancy of the church. So in the church's infancy you see the so-called workers his relationship with the church was quite direct has a lot of influence. But it is no longer in the church's infancy my feeling is it should turn the case to the other elders to solve the problem.

There is another problem. For instance we can put aside the question of eldership but how about the deacons who are closely related to the elders in the church's administration? My personal view today is that since we do not appoint elders then we do not appoint deacons either. But in the church we do have the functions of an elder functions of the deacons.

In reality there are many brothers and sisters who are fulfilling the functions of deacons. Some brothers are truly fulfilling the functions of eldership because elders seems to to be in the leadership. At the same time in 1 Peter 5 we see the elders also do the work of shepherding.

There are two aspects to the shepherding. On the one hand those elders are also the shepherds. On the other hand God has given to the church certain ones who have the gift of shepherding.

So these are the two aspects. The question is how do we fulfill the function? As long as we fulfill the function then it's okay. Even if we do not fulfill the function even if we do have the name we are still not the elders.

So deacons are the same. We do not need we do not have to appoint certain ones to be deacons. We don't need to appoint.

Those who are doing such a work already they are fulfilling the function of deacons. So today if we pay attention to the real function and not the outward things then that will be easier. I would like to turn the

question around.

Our church does not have workers, no elders, no deacons. We do not even have our meeting hall. We have nothing.

But we have all the functions. It's great. But we are still not perfect.

So I have three questions. Number one as I mentioned last night our church began by sisters praying. The Lord gave us those who are saved.

We are very happy. The church meetings are good. In terms of function there are some problems.

Number one sisters are strong. Each time we meet there are 30, 40 sisters and there are only a few brothers. And the brothers are weak.

So in the local assemblies the brothers are required to preach not for sisters. But our church is special so we allow the sisters to preach. Take the pulpit and it becomes a problem.

Some sisters feel if you can do it why can't I? So some sisters feel unjust. They feel they are better than the others. Second problem is we have a monthly service meeting.

Everybody can answer that. It's not limited to Brother Stephen or Brother Chen. In our monthly meeting there was one older brother that came out of the local church who insisted on everybody to attend the service meeting.

But I attended a few times and I discovered I feel only those who serve should be the ones who attend. And those because some people who do not attend any meetings they come and give their opinion. So the question is whether we should allow everybody to attend or allow only those who serve to attend service meetings.

Third is the problem of bread and cup. In the beginning we have small cups but in the past couple of years we are very close to Ray An meeting in Taipei who told us to insist on one cup and we had a problem. And so we began to use one bread one cup.

Many brothers and sisters could not tolerate they left. Brother said not limited to anyone so whoever. I did not encounter this problem for the first time.

Every time I encountered this problem. First time was difficult then I quieted myself before the Lord. So when brothers asked me again this question the question of the sisters whether sisters if the sisters are majority and they want to preach so how do we do? I said this is a shame to the brothers.

Brothers should go to the Lord and pursue the Lord. This is my answer in terms of the service meeting you feel only those who have been serving to attend. Those who do not serve should not attend.

I think this is not a good way either because if those who serve they should lead those who do not serve to enter in. This is the best way. So those who do not serve they come.

Even if they raise a lot of questions have a lot of opinions we should bring them to the Lord. It is not necessary that his opinion is not the Lord's opinion and it is not that those who serve their method or their opinion are according to the Lord's will. I think if we all bring our feelings to the Lord if you accept his good

opinion then he will attend service.

Third question is a question that has not been solved for two thousand years the question of cups. I cannot answer it. Our learning is this we use one bread one cup.

But I would like to mention in terms of breaking bread is it a corporate exercise? It is the Lord's feast. According to my understanding 1 Corinthians chapter 11 it is an individual relationship with the Lord. In our assembly we have had a problem.

If one or two brothers have a problem should we terminate their participation in breaking bread? My view is this if these two brothers before the Lord have thoroughly dealt with the problem this is their thing. The teaching is that before breaking bread each one should examine himself. It is not a corporate examination.

If it is then I am afraid no assembly is qualified to break bread because there are so many breakers. There is always one or two problems and if you know he has a problem then we all do not break bread then I am afraid it is hard to maintain a table meeting. So I think it is an individual matter before the Lord.

If a brother examines himself his relationship with the Lord has no problem then we cannot interfere. As far as using bread or unleavened bread or one cup or many small cups or like in the conference this time we used many teaspoons these are not problems. So one bread one cup is my my seeing before the Lord and what I have insisted on.

A question concerning the scaffold. When the building is done one day the scaffold will be torn down because the work is for the church not church for the work but today there are many meetings they started because of the work of the worker. After some time we see brother brothers sisters came were raised up to serve but when should these workers lay down their responsibility because from what we have seen the workers stay there for life because they started the meeting so the meeting considered them to be the head.

This is one side. The other side is in North America it seems it is fine but in the far east among the Chinese we have a feeling that we are the workers we do not have the pastors we do not have the residential pastor resident pastor but in the far east this is a very serious problem. The fact is before us we still hope that there is a brother who is in the church answering telephone he does everything just like a pastor so we can see this in the far east.

When I go to North America we come to the meeting hard to meet we do not have this problem but in the far east we do have this problem the concept still remains in the far east so I like to ask as brothers this kind of problem how do we face it? We do not have names but we still have the reality. The first question about the race was that the work was started by a worker and he had led a group of brothers and whether or not he is leading does he lead all the way to the end? He bears responsibility alone? Or should he at a certain point in time relinquish his responsibilities to the local brothers? And then he goes to the sideline to help them. I think this is a very practical problem according to the Lord's word we have seen.

Seems yes. When Paul and Barnabas went out to work they led brothers and sisters to be safe. Even in Corinth he was there a year and six months or in Ephesus for three months but we have seen that their work was done to serve the such an effectiveness that within a short period of time they can raise up some brothers so that they can bear responsibility in the local assembly.

Then the workers go to the sideline to help them. This really is a great accomplishment in work. Today our problem is we usurp, we replace brothers and sisters to work so brothers and sisters cannot be raised up because brothers and sisters cannot be raised up.

So we continue to labor and work to the end. Strictly speaking this is a failure of the work because today our work is to equip the saints. If we cannot equip the saints, if we cannot cause the saints to be mature, to be raised up, to bear responsibility, to be raised up to lead the assembly, then our work really is a work of replacement and not a work of leading.

So in principle I think we should in each locality to work to such an extent. Of course scripture shows us how do we apply, how do we put the practice. This takes the Holy Spirit to lead us.

Maybe some assembly takes longer time, maybe some assembly takes shorter time. This is not determined by man. The worker before the Lord, he himself should have a spiritual discernment for him to know that if the time has come, now the Holy Spirit has guided him so that he can relinquish this thing.

The problem is here. Much of the time maybe our requirement is set too high or maybe we cannot, we're anxious, we're not like a parent, you're very anxious about your parents. You're not willing to let go.

Therefore, the children can never grow up. They always rely on you. So to the extent that when the time comes you should let go believing that the Lord will take responsibility.

So what degree that you have led the brothers and sisters is leadership of the Holy Spirit. It's not according to the word, not a matter of letters. If it's according to letters, then you go to a place, you let people to be saved, you work, then what do you do? Because we say when the building is built and then the scaffolds are torn down, for you to build a house and leave the scaffold, what kind of situation is that? But this is not letters.

If you do according to letters, there will be problems. Sometimes you let go too early. For instance, in America it happened.

At that time in Long Island, there are two brothers, they formerly were pastors. Later on the Lord revealed to them. So the result is a group of brothers and sisters began to meet.

They came from many different backgrounds. There were about 200 some-odd things. So these two brothers were helping them.

The result is they felt turned tape over. They said we have done too much for them. The brothers rely too much on us.

So this is a loss. So we can only in principle say the work of a worker is for equipping of the saints. When the saints are equipped, then we should let the saints be raised up to bear responsibility.

We go to the sidelines to help them. If we have seen that in a certain place there may be some problems, we can remind them. At the same time, those responsible brothers should also have a heart of humility to ask questions.

Ask those workers if they can maintain such a good relationship. So I say the relationship between work and the church, if it is normal, it is beautiful. But if it is not normal, then it would create a lot of problems.

So in terms of timing, I believe it takes the Holy Spirit to lead us. So the second question, today we do have such a problem. In the past, I can only mention from my personal experience of what I have encountered in the past.

When we began in China, at that time we seemed that we should stand on the ground of oneness. We should not be divided. So at that time there were many brothers and sisters who responded.

I was one among them. We came out of many denominations to assemble together. But at that time, first of all, we never dared to call ourselves the church in so and so place, because we felt we were not.

We were merely those who testified for the oneness of the church. We were willing to hold the Lord as our head and to accept all of God's children. But we could not claim that our small group to be the local church.

We felt the local church includes all of God's children in that locality. So in those days, we never dared to call ourselves the local church in so and so place, the so-called Christian meeting assembly. And these were, we called these in order to avoid to call ourselves the local church, in order to say that we merely are a place for Christians to gather.

This is not the name of the church because the church belongs to Christ. We have no name. So that was the condition at the time.

At the same time, in those days, the so-called workers were the few and far between. And the workers were mobile. We went to all different places.

We went to many places. We were not like a resident pastor. We stayed in one place.

So we did not have this problem at the time. Even though some workers, for instance in Shanghai, a few workers did live in Shanghai, even though they lived in Shanghai, but the assembly there did have responsible brothers, bearing responsibility. But we all coordinated together to serve together.

So we did not have the problem of one locality, one worker, one locality, one locality. They distorted the pastoral system. We did not have that.

This actually began in Taiwan. This problem began in Taiwan. So it began in Taiwan to have this condition.

It is to our regret that this abnormality became widespread. And this is not scriptural at all, because for one locality to serve there is not a good system. It is a bad system.

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It is a bad system. From this point forth. And from a to fellowship in their locality, because Brother Stephen is in Richmond.

From their experience, they must have had a condition between a worker and a church. Maybe they can explain and share with us. We have two couples from Richmond.

Yeah. Right? Yeah. Okay.

I think the question then is what is our experience with our brother Stephen in Richmond, since he's a worker? The Lord began something in Richmond just prior to 1970 by putting a burden in the heart of several older sisters to pray. And it all began with going to a conference where they heard ministry through Brother Sparks, DeVern Fromke, and Stephen Kahn. And I guess what's really important about that is it was out of their travailing prayer for several years that something was birthed that came out of their prayer of several years.

And then, was it 1976 or 77 that he came? No, that you moved to Richmond. 76? 78? Okay. 78? Around 78.

Yeah, roughly. Our brother moved to Richmond from Washington. And by that time, there were a few of us brothers who had begun to step out in responsibility.

So it would have been four years that several brothers had been functioning in leadership. So when our brother moved to Richmond, we immediately were glad because he'll meet with us. And he was very clear that because he had extra-local ministry that he could not come into leadership locally.

But we're very, very thankful because there is a close relationship of the leadership with our brother that has continued through the years. And we've tried to get together fairly regularly every couple months or so over the years. But I think what's important is that our brother has never told us what to do.

It's been more spiritual counseling and standing with us and supporting us. And rather than him coming to us to help us, he's really just been available and we've had a freedom to come to him. So I guess that's how I explain it.

The thing that has been a testimony to me, and our brother touched on it this morning, was that when a worker is in a local assembly, he functions as a brother. In Richmond, we clean the meeting place ourselves. And each different home group rotates and cleans the meeting place.

And for many years before our brother got a little bit older, he would be there every work day to help set up chairs and to look after the facility. And that has been a real testimony to many of us. And also what has been a testimony is we have to travel other places to hear our brother minister.

Last year, our brother spoke maybe three, four times in Richmond. And he's always encouraging others to minister. I think last year, maybe 12 or 13 other brothers ministered the Word.

He's always there to come alongside and to encourage and to be that support that encourages many others to function. So it's just that the example that our brother has set for us has been a living encouragement to many younger brothers and sisters also. We have less than half an hour.

Let's seize the opportunity to fellowship. A while ago, Stephen had mentioned a lot concerning answering Brother Lou's question, that is a worker in a certain locality becomes a resident worker, a lifetime worker, like many presidents who want to be a lifetime president. But Stephen mentioned one aspect.

I feel there's yet another aspect that I have observed for many years. Workers in many assemblies, they never desire for anyone who possess gifts that surpass his to work with him. When the Lord raised up brothers who are able to coordinate in service, but because a leading worker, he feels threatened, thus

creating problems.

I feel this may be a great temptation for many assemblies. It's not that the Lord doesn't raise up brothers in the locality, but those who are raised up by the Lord is pressed down or driven out by the leading workers because he feels he's threatened. Especially if this one who's raised up will be used more than he.

This is a common widespread problem. So brothers and sisters who are here should examine ourselves before the Lord. May the Lord give us a great capacity to accept those who are raised up by the Lord among us who are more useful than us.

I feel this is also a crucial point. I saw it with my own eyes in one place. This one brother, everybody feels he's very good, very proper.

But the result, because he attended seminary, so he was not accepted to become a worker. So he left and went to another place. Even he did attend seminary, but he saw the vision later on that wherever he went, he was not willing to be appointed or ordained a minister.

So he went to another place. He was used by the Lord. Many received blessings from him.

But the church where he was born and raised up, the church had lost such a blessing. This is such a loss. I feel we also need to encourage each other regarding this matter.

As the world is saying, a successful leader is not that he is capable, but he is able to raise up people who are more capable than he. This morning Stephen mentioned those who are elders or responsible are the most laborious. I feel if you want to be the head, the scripture says you must be the servant of all.

I don't want to say something about myself. But the Lord indeed, in the Spirit, has guided us to do such things. Such as Brother Feng and I, I feel we have done so much.

We labored much. We did everything. It is not that the Lord specifically told us to do something.

We preach. We drive a car. We are chauffeurs.

We pick up and deliver brothers and sisters. Some brothers and sisters work in Tainan. They ask you to drive them to Tainan.

So we do. In the Holy Spirit, the Lord has told us to do those things. For instance, one time a brother and sister was concerning the cleaning of the Meeting House.

Should we farm it out to other people? We said, in the House of God, we should clean the Meeting House ourselves. So every time, every Lose Day, the Lord gave me a feeling that I should take care of the most dirty places. Places that other people would not do.

So I would take care of the men's room. Every time, I would do the men's room. I would wash with my hands.

But I was very joyful. I don't want to lift up myself to do something. But the Scripture is true.

And when the Holy Spirit guided us to do that, to do what? If you want to be the head, you will be the servant of all. If you want to be the elder, you will be a humble brother. I remember brothers who went before us told me that when Brother Ni, after the Conference, he was holding the Conference, when

Brother Sister wanted to take a photo session with him, he would always go to the sideline.

Just like yesterday, Brother Stephen was like that. He would go to the sideline. So I was there with him on the sideline.

I felt the same. I would find a place on the sideline to have the photo session. I feel the Lord gave us something.

Because the Lord is like that. He is obedient to the dead. Even He took the form of a servant.

So within the Church, when we do this, other people will respect us. They will say, Brother, you have helped us. So nobody should oppress others.

The Holy Spirit will guide us to know what to do among the brothers and sisters. I think we still have some time. Let's ask Brother Lance Lambert.

He is among us. Ask him to fellowship with us. He will not be bound by the five minute limit.

So Brother Lou doesn't need to stand up. I just wonder whether it would help to just give a little from our experience when I lived in the United Kingdom. I believe that it was a basic foundational thought in the whole work of the Lord in Britain that there was never a clear distinction between the Church and the work.

The ministry, particularly of our beloved Brother Sparks, was tremendous. And many, many people all over the country and beyond Britain came into revelation as a result of his ministry. There also came into being companies of believers in different places.

Edinburgh, Newcastle, Birmingham, Wembley, Stand Down and the Isle of Wight, and a whole number of others. In every single place, there was an autocratic leadership. The Church was in the hands totally of the worker.

And the result was that there was endless problems. All the way through. And today, not a single one survives.

I was particularly thankful that Miss Fischbacher came to stay with us in Richmond, Surrey. And in her own inimitable way, she fellowshipped with me and she put her finger, without any trying to manipulate her in any way, she put her finger on this problem. And I said to her that we had really felt that the Lord should enable the Church itself to develop.

And I have never forgotten the one comment she made. When the Holy Spirit is free, the Church will be built. But if He is trapped, the work of the building will be paralyzed.

This went very much into my heart. And I was very afraid. Because I had been told by our beloved brother that you can't just have a free meeting where any Tom, Dick and Harry, as it was put, can stand up and minister.

And so we were very afraid. But we felt we had to go this way. And I am very thankful today that we did.

And I think that this, that we have been talking about in these two days, goes to the root of very much. And I just hope that what I have said will help. The thing that I would describe as the mistake in many of the small fellowships was totalitarian leadership.

When I went to England, I found out this also was learned from Brother Sparks. So some things, our Brother Ni was so humble. He was willing to learn from any place possible.

But things like these, were not quite compatible with our condition at that time. As we look in hindsight, the great problem that we have encountered, could that be related somehow with this? We know in Taiwan, in some places, we had great difficulties, great problems. Was it because of this? I think, this is my personal observation.

It may not be true. My personal observation is, there are two reasons. Number one, that it is possible that our Brother Ni... Let me modify.

In terms of spiritual side, in the spiritual messages, Brother Ni had fellowship with Brother Sparks. And in terms of spiritual messages, we did receive a lot of help. It should be recognized.

Our past problem, on the one hand, was because of these things. On the other hand, was also because we began to implement organization. In the past, among the workers, there was no organization.

Our relationship was one of spiritual. At the same time, within the church, there was no great amount of organization. We did have some brothers who bear responsibility, some brothers and sisters who serve together.

But the so-called organization was miniscule, was minute. But later on, organization was implemented greater and greater. My personal observation, I feel, this was one reason for our degradation.

Because whenever the spiritual life was lacking, you would make it up by organizing things. So later on, organization prevailed, not only in the church. We had all kinds of organizations.

Of course, this is my feeling. My feeling is that Brother Ni was not an expert in organizing things. This is the expertise of Brother Witness Lee.

So later on, Brother Lee brought in a lot of organizations because Brother Ni was not one for organizing things. He, before the Lord, received much light before the Lord. But if you want him to organize things together, he was not able.

So later on, at the time of the Hong Kong revival, Brother Ni still asked Brother Lee to go to Hong Kong to organize things together in Hong Kong. I believe the Hong Kong brethren all know this very well. Because Brother Ni was not one for organizing things.

When we came overseas, the organization prevailed yet more and more. This is a great reason for our degradation. I believe the time has quickly come to the end.

Here we have some brothers and sisters who lead us in prayer, and we end this meeting.

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