

SISTERS' MEETING

Ontario, Canada

March 10, 2007

Subject: The Organic Function of the Sisters in the Vital Groups

Message 1 Examples in the New Testament Church

I. The importance of sisters in the church life:

- A. The vital groups comprise eighty percent of the church life in the God-ordained way—Acts 2:46-47; 5:42.
- B. According to an early miniature of the church life in the house of Bethany, there were more sisters (Martha and Mary) than brothers (Lazarus) —John 12:1-3:
 1. The function of the sisters:
 - a. Martha received the Lord into their home and ministered to Him—Luke 10:38, 40; John 12:2.
 - b. Mary Loved the Lord and listened to His word—Luke 10:39,42; John 12:3.
 2. The prerequisites for such function:
 - a. Desiring to serve the Lord and His people, opening one's home to receive them, cherishing them and ministering to their needs.
 - b. Loving the Lord, being consecrated to Him, allowing Him to have first place in all things, receiving His word and knowing His desire.
- C. According to the display of the local churches in the greetings of Romans 16, Phoebe the sister was highly recommended by the apostle Paul—Rom. 16:1-2:
 1. Phoebe functioned as a deaconess who served the church practically:
 - a. Having a dignified and honorable character —1 Tim. 2:9-11.
 - b. Not being slanderous, but being moderate and faithful—1 Tim. 3:11.
 2. She was a patroness of the saints, that is, a protectress, one who helps, sustains, and supplies:
 - a. Sisters should be ready to render practical care to the needy, aiding and sustaining them with gentleness and compassion.
 - b. This kind of service must of necessity include a spiritual supply of life and the Spirit with petition and prayer.
- D. According to the record in the books of Acts and Romans, Prisca, together with her husband Aquila, were fellow workers of the apostle Paul; furthermore, her name is listed before her husband's (Act 18:18; Rom. 16:3), indicating that she:
 1. Took the lead to be absolute for the local churches, being willing even to be martyred for the apostles—Rom. 16:4.
 2. Took the lead to bear the burden of the practice of the church by opening their home—Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19.
 3. Took the lead to expound to Apollos the way of the Lord's full salvation according to God's New Testament economy—Acts 18:26.
 4. The case of Prisca and Aquila, in certain ways, is similar to that of the Lord's parents, in which although Joseph had the position and the divine guidance, Mary was the one who had the life and the divine conception. Together, in coordination, they brought forth Christ for the fulfillment of God's economy.

II. The sisters, according to the aforementioned examples in the New Testament, should be active to bear the burden of the church life in the vital groups by taking the lead in prayer and intercession, in reading the Word and ministry, in contacting people for gospel preaching and shepherding, and in many practical services and good works:

- A. Although in the church God's ordination in creation for woman to be subjection to man must be kept so that the sisters will not overstep their position and exercise authority over the brothers, the sisters should take the lead to pursue Christ and to serve Him—1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-12.
- B. In a church life according to the God-ordained way, the sisters should especially bear a major part of the burden in the vital groups, fulfilling their function to beget, to nourish, and to teach others.
- C. The role of a serving sister in a vital group is like that of a nursing mother whose labor is to nurture the children in her family, ministering to both the physical and spiritual needs of those in her group.

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Message 2 Serving in the Vital Groups

I. According to Romans 16, the proper church life, first of all, depends on the sisters:

- A. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the greetings and commendations in this chapter was written with the purpose of showing that sisters occupy the first place in the practical church life.
- B. The thought in Paul's recommendation of the many sisters (Phoebe and Prisca, Mary and Persis, etc.) is that the building up of a strong local church depends mainly on a group of serving sisters:
 - 1. These sisters should be patronesses in the church like Phoebe.
 - 2. These sisters should take the lead for the church life like Prisca.
 - 3. These sisters should be serve and labor in material and spiritual things like Mary and Persis.
- C. The sisters, with a serving spirit, should be bold to take the lead in the practice of the God-ordained way in the church life.

II. Practical areas of service in the vital group life:

- A. Serving in prayer:
 - 1. The sisters have a special function in intercession and prayer:
 - a. The women persevering in prayer before Pentecost—Acts 1:14.
 - b. Part of the church in Jerusalem praying in the house of Mary—Acts 12:12.
 - c. Widows continuing in petition and prayer—1 Tim. 5:5.
 - 2. The sisters, with one or two others, should pray much and often for their vital group—Matt. 18:19-20:
 - a. Interceding desperately for all the saints—Eph. 6:18.
 - b. Praying strongly for the salvation and gaining of new ones for the recovery—1 Tim. 2:1,4.
 - c. Petitioning watchfully for the many needs and situations—Col. 4:2.
 - d. Utilizing the telephone.
 - 3. As much as possible, also coming together weekly with five or six, eight or ten in the same district or church to pray.
 - 4. The sisters should forsake idle words and vain talk, and fellowship with one another with a serving spirit and a burden to pray.
- B. Serving in the gospel and in shepherding:
 - 1. The sisters should be nursing mothers in their vital groups:
 - a. Considering their vital group as their own families—Eph.6:18.
 - b. Contacting sinners with the gospel and begetting them as spiritual children—1 Thess. 2:7-8.

- c. Caring in a particular way for a few young or new saints as children in the spirit—Rom 16:13.
 - d. Restoring the backslidden believers as their own lost children.
 - 2. The sisters should abandon their self-love and self-pity and sacrifice their conveniences to occupy themselves with a burden for people.
- C. Serving in ministering the word:
 - 1. Not speaking with authority nor expounding doctrines—1 Tim. 2:12.
 - 2. But speaking the divine truth with revelation and light and testifying with personal experiences:
 - a. One-on-one and in the vital group meetings.
 - b. By way of encouraging, consoling, and exhorting.
 - c. Exercising a strong but gentle, burning yet sensitive spirit.
 - 3. Needing to be constituted with the knowledge of the truth and rich in the experiences of life.
- D. Serving in practical matters:
 - 1. By opening up homes:
 - a. For vital group meetings.
 - b. For saints and gospel friends.
 - 2. By preparing and serving meals:
 - a. At vital group gatherings.
 - b. Inviting people for meals.
 - 3. By assisting in practical affairs:
 - a. Calling and reminding.
 - b. Relaying information and helping with various arrangements.

III. A word of admonition:

- A. Practicing the one accord with other serving sisters—Phil. 4:2.
 - 1. Loving one another, being joined in soul, and having the same mind.
 - 2. Fellowshiping and coordinating with each another closely.
 - 3. Having a broad heart and controlled emotions, not giving to imaginations, suspicions, jealousy, or strife.
 - 4. Not forming cliques.
- B. Having a good testimony in the marriage life and the family life:
 - 1. Not domineering but being meek and submissive—Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:4-5.
 - 2. Coordinating and praying with the husbands harmoniously—1 Pet. 3:7.
 - 3. Not neglecting the children, but raising them according to God and with wisdom—Eph. 6:4.
 - 4. Keeping house properly—1Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4-5.
- C. Being one with the church and the leading ones:
 - 1. Doing things without murmurings and reasoning—Phil. 2:14.
 - 2. Not gossiping and being busybodies—1 Tim. 5:13.
 - 3. Honoring and obeying the direction of the church—Heb. 13:17.
 - 4. Following the Lord's move in the recovery— S.O.S.1:8.