

A Brief Description of the Guiding Principles for the Children's Work

Scripture references: Heb. 11:7; Psa. 127:3; 2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:7-16; John 15:2a, 6; Rom. 16:1, 12, 13;
Tim. 4:12; Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:14-22

I. THE GOAL OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK—We must concentrate the efforts of our work to target the children and young people among us so that they can become the “seeds of the gospel”—Matt. 13:3; cf. Dan. 1:3-4.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK—Build the children in their humanity to be proper human beings—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18:

- A. Today, many young people have been damaged with respect to their character; it is because of this that we have a children's work for the children; we need to build up their character—Heb. 10:39; 1 Tim. 3:7; Acts 6:3; Prov. 28:20a.
- B. To build up a proper humanity is the way to prepare the children to be the best material to receive God's grace—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18:
 - 1. It is best to help the children grow up in their humanity by helping them know what a proper human being is; how to honor their parents, and how to be a proper child—Eph. 6:1; Col. 1:10; Prov. 22:6.
 - 2. Because children are too young to behave according to Christ, they must be taught to behave according to culture; children are preserved by culture while they are growing up—Rom. 13:1; Gal. 3:23.
 - 3. In caring for their children, Christian parents need to preach the law to them; we should not first preach grace to the children; we must build them up with proper ethics and morality—2 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 13:1; Gal. 3:24.

III. THE SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK:

- A. **The Homes**—We need to open up our home, we do not need to meet with others first; we can initiate our home meeting by meeting with our family members—Acts 5:42; 2:46; 12:12:
 - 1. We who have wives and children all can have a home meeting; we just meet with our folks, with our wife, and with our little children—Acts 12:12.
 - 2. The meetings in the believers' homes can be a fruitful testimony to the neighbors around, and they provide an opportunity for witness and gospel preaching—John 19:35; 3 John 12:
 - 3. This influence is most helpful for the families of the Christians; from early days the children will be surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere, and will have constant opportunity to see the reality of eternal things—John 14:17.
- B. **The Neighborhoods**—Another way of gospel preaching is to preach the gospel to the children; this requires the sisters to pick up the burden:

1. In our neighborhood there must be a children's meeting that should not be considered as the children's meeting of the church; this is a children's meeting work in the saints' neighborhood.
 2. After the children get home from school, the saints may open their home and prepare some snacks to welcome them; then they can sing with the children, tell them stories, and lead them to know God—cf. 2 Kings 4:3.
 3. Gaining people in this way is very safe, because they are taught by us and receive the gospel from us from their youth; thus, they should be very solid —1 Tim. 4:12; cf. Luke 18:21.
- C. **The Children's Meeting**—We expect the children's work among us to be very prevailing; therefore, we need to have a proper realization and preparation for this work—Gen. 1:28; Psa. 127:3:
1. When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old; these are the target of our children's work.
 2. In Christianity, doing the children's work is considered to be like operating a school; hence, it is called Sunday school:
 - a. In the Sunday school classes they may use textbooks; we do not agree with this method; we feel that our children's meeting should not have the flavor of a Sunday school—Rev. 18:4; Heb. 13:13.
 - b. From our experience we feel that if we regard the children's work as a school and teach our children from textbooks, it will be of more harm than benefit to them.
 3. The saints can open their homes for children's meetings; we need many brothers and sisters to open their homes; how beautiful this service will be and how much the Lord's work will be propagated—Acts 2:46; 6:7a.

IV. MOBILIZING THE WHOLE CHURCH TO CARE FOR THE CHILDREN—When the entire church is mobilized, all the brothers and sisters will have an opportunity to serve; some can open their homes, others can bring the children to the meetings, and still others can teach the children; when all the saints endeavor in one accord for the Lord's heart's desire, the profit will be immeasurable—Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:14-22; Eph. 4:7-16:

- A. The responsible brothers and the co-workers in every place must see the importance of the children's work in God's family; this should be a great matter to us—Heb. 11:7; Psa. 127:3; Gen. 33:5b; Dan. 1:3-4; Matt. 24:45; 25:16; Rom. 9:23; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Acts 16:31-32; Eph. 4:12-16; 1 Tim. 4:12.
- B. In carrying out this work, first, a number of sisters should rise up to lead the children's work; the elders should also appoint some sisters to take up this responsibility—Rom. 16:1, 6, 12-13; Mark 15:41:
 1. A number of older sisters must receive this burden, over ninety percent of the children's work requires the sisters' participation; otherwise, there is no way for the children's work to succeed—1 Tim. 5:2a; cf. Col. 4:17.
 2. The sisters in every church should be persistent to promote the burden for the children—cf. Luke 18:1-8; 1 Sam. 1:11.
 3. The sisters should fellowship about the way to carry out the children's work; they can determine how many sisters are available to be with the children, how many young sisters can teach the children, how many children can come and

even bring other children to the meetings, and even how many cannot come—1 John 1:3, 7:

- C. Many of the sisters love the Lord, but they need to find the way to do something for the Lord; if we bear the little ones as fruit, the Lord will add them to our account—Matt. 25:14-30; 2 Pet. 1:8; 1 Thes. 2:19:
 - 1. Only eternity will reveal the result of this; perhaps out of a group of children for whom we are caring, some will become apostles—cf. 2 Tim. 3:15; 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17.
 - 2. Therefore, I encourage the sisters to do this good work; all the housewives can bring children to the meetings, and the younger sisters can be trained to cooperate with them to bear these little ones as fruit.
- D. We also need the help of the young people in the children's work; this matter must be developed—1 Tim. 4:12:
 - 1. There are quite a large number of children in every locality; as soon as we begin the children's work, the young people will begin to function; they can all take part in serving the children.
 - 2. The young people need to give themselves to this work, and this will give everyone an opportunity to practice speaking.

Ministry Excerpts:

TARGETING THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME “SEEDS OF THE GOSPEL”

We must also consider the children's work and the young people's work. According to a recent article in the newspaper by the Ministry of the Interior, Taiwan has a population of thirteen million, of which forty-five percent is under fifteen years of age. More than sixty percent of this population is probably under twenty years old. This shows that young people constitute two-thirds of the population of Taiwan. Therefore, they must be the target of our work. We should concentrate our effort to work on the young people and the children.

In the past our work focused on people in the community; we did not pay sufficient attention to the young people's work. Today people in education and in business put all their energy into the young people; they focus on the second generation. The churches should do the same. If we desire to preach the gospel to the local people, the Taiwanese, we need to use the young people as a bridge. When we preach the gospel to the young people, we are actually preaching to the Taiwanese. When we gospelize the students, we are gospelizing the second generation of the Taiwanese. This will achieve maximum results with little effort.

The church in Taipei has over ten thousand saints. There are also at least ten thousand children from five years old to eleven years old. Suppose the church in Taipei would gather all ten thousand children into children's meetings and spend six years to give them a spiritual education. After six years they would all be young saints. Without going out to preach the gospel, in six years we could have ten thousand young saints. This is more effective than our gospel preaching. After these children are baptized, they will enter junior high schools and become gospel seeds in their schools. We could preach the gospel through them and save students in their junior high schools. After they receive our care, these saints will be gospel seeds when they enter high school. When they preach the gospel in their high schools, students will be saved and nurtured. When they graduate from high school and enter college, they will again be gospel seeds. The fruit we gain will be multiplied.

Not only so, after these young people graduate from college and find jobs in different professions as nurses, doctors, accountants, businessmen, and teachers, they will have a tremendous impact on the society. Hence, our gospel must go in this direction. It will not be easy in the beginning. A farmer

cannot sow seeds today and expect a harvest tomorrow; he must wait. We hope that all the co-workers will receive the burden of this fellowship.

There are many young people and children on the island of Taiwan. Our brothers and sisters are in many of the high schools and universities. The Lord has prepared this environment for us; we are foolish not to take hold of this opportunity. We should take advantage of this opportunity to gain more children and young people so that we can produce useful ones for the Lord's service. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1967, volume one, pp. 277-278)

BUILDING THE CHILDREN IN THEIR HUMANITY TO BE PROPER HUMAN BEINGS

The Children's Work Building Up Their Character

We must be built up as proper human beings. This is a matter of our character, that is, our behavior and habit. A person who has been properly built up is a right person with a right character. Today, many young people have been damaged with respect to their character. It is because of this that we have a children's work for the children. We need to build up our children's character. From their youth they must learn to honor their parents, love their brothers and sisters, and respect others. (*The Exercise and Practice of the God-ordained Way*, p. 302)

Preparing the Children to be the Best Material to Receive God's Grace

It is best to help the children grow up in their humanity by helping them know what a proper human being is, how to honor their parents, and how to be a proper child. (This will be very much appreciated by their parents, who will eventually be so grateful for the children's work.) To build up a proper humanity is the way to prepare them to be the best material to receive God's grace. God's grace is just like a color dye. When the dye colors certain textiles, the resulting quality always depends upon the quality of the textile. If the quality of the textile is high, then the resulting color will be so shining. But when the textile is poor, the result is always so dim, so poor. A man like Paul was educated and was brought up in a high standard of humanity. When he got colored by God's salvation, he was bright. (*Lesson on the God-ordained Way*, p. 212)

If, after reading these messages on Christ versus culture [In the *Life-studies of Colossians*], Christian parents tell their children that they no longer need culture, this will be a serious mistake. Without culture, children would act like animals. Children must be raised according to the standards of culture. Before they are of a proper age to receive Christ, the children must be built up in culture. The more the children are trained according to culture, the better it will be for them. The children must be trained to honor their parents, to love their brothers and sisters, to behave properly toward their neighbors, to be good students in school, to obey all laws, and to respect their teachers and other adults. Because children are too young to behave according to Christ, they must be taught to behave according to culture. If we did not have culture, we would be barbarians....Culture should be used to keep the children until they receive Christ and live according to Christ. Children are preserved by culture while they are growing up....But when children are able to realize their need for Christ and repent, we should minister the rich Christ to them and help them to receive Him....Hence, culture is used by God through parents to keep their children in custody until the time comes for them to receive the Lord. It is important to see this proper use of culture. (*Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 425-426)

In caring for their children, Christian parents need to preach the law to them. We should not first preach grace to the children. If we give them regulations according to the law, the law will keep them in custody for Christ. Thus, we should first give them the law in a strong way. The law will expose them, and keep them, serving as a custodian to keep them for Christ. (*Life-study of Galatians*, p. 165)

We do not need to give the young ones too much knowledge of the Bible. We should rather build them up with the proper ethics and morality that will constitute a proper character. Many people today are short of such a proper training. In our sleeping, in our rising up, in our dressing, and in every detail of our life we should be very strict to be built up in a good character. (*The Exercise and Practice of the God-ordained Way*, p. 302)

THE SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK

Needing to Open Up Our Home and Initiating Home Meetings with Family Members

The Greek phrase in Acts 5:42 indicates that not one house was missed. They met from house to house. We should not take the way of selecting some promising homes, and then having the meetings in those promising homes. This is wrong. Every home of the believers is promising. We need to open up our home. First we can meet with our folks. We do not need to meet with others first. We can initiate our home meeting by meeting with our family members. We who have wives and children all can have a home meeting. We just meet with our folks, with our wife, and with our little children. To set up a meeting will stir up our heart and will fan the flame in our heart and in our spirit. First of all, we will be burned, and then our family will be burned. To set up a home meeting will keep out many evil things from our homes. (*The Home Meetings*, pp. 19-20)

Still further, the meetings in believers' homes can be a fruitful testimony to the neighbors around, and they provide an opportunity for witness and gospel preaching. Many who are not willing to go to a "church" will be glad to go to a private house. And the influence is most helpful for the families of the Christians. From early days the children will be surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere, and will have constant opportunity to see the reality of eternal things. Again, if meetings are in the homes of the Christians, the Church is saved much material loss. One of the reasons the Christians survived the Roman persecutions during the first three centuries of Church history, was that they had no special buildings for worship, but met in cellars and caves and other inconspicuous places. Such meeting places were not readily discovered by their persecutors; but the large and costly edifices of today would be easily located and destroyed, and the churches would be speedily wiped out. The imposing structures of our modern times convey an impression of the world rather than of the Christ whose name they bear. (The halls and other buildings required for the work are quite another matter; we are speaking here only of the churches.)

So the scriptural method of church organization is simple in the extreme. As soon as there are a few believers in a place, they begin to meet in one of their homes. If numbers increase so that it becomes impracticable to meet in one house, then they can meet in several different houses, but the entire company of believers can meet together once in a while in some public place. A hall for such purposes could either be borrowed, rented, or built, according to the financial condition of the church; but we must remember that the ideal meeting places of the saints are their own private homes. (*The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 170-171)

Preaching the Gospel Through the Children

The third way of gospel preaching is to preach the gospel to the children. This requires the sisters to pick up the burden. It is not necessary to use the meeting hall as the place for the gospel meeting. Rather, it is best to meet at the saints' homes. Use the weekends to gather the children from your neighborhood and to invite the children of your relatives and friends to your home. Many times parents are saved through their children, so do not overlook the children's work. Starting from now, we use our effort to work on the gospel for children whose ages range from six to twelve, then after ten or twelve years, they will be those who will rise up to bear the responsibility of the church service. This way may seem slow, but it is actually very fast. This way is also profitable. (*Truth, Life, the Church, and the Gospel*, p. 130)

Many Homes Being Open for the Church to Evangelize

Even in our neighborhood there must be a children's meeting that should not be considered as the children's meeting of the church. This is a children's meeting work in the saints' neighborhood. It is

easy for us to set up two children's meetings. Every week one sister can take care of two children's meetings with four helpers. On one day two sisters can assist this one to take care of twenty children. Maybe on another afternoon two more sisters may help to take care of another children's meeting of fifteen to twenty children. We can collect a number of children out of our neighborhood into our home. We can ask the children to sit down on the carpet. We do not even need a piano. There is no need for materials or textbooks, but one living person. She can even sing a song to the children. Within two months we can build up two children's meetings. Then after six months we will have six children's meetings. One sister will not need to take care of all the meetings directly because other sisters will follow her example and have their own meetings. There may be ten children's meetings under the direction of one sister. This would expand to over a thousand children. All of these children are linked to their parents. So through the children many homes will be opened for the church to evangelize. This is the community work. These are the warm doors and the parents will welcome us. Although people today are occupied by many things and it seems as if they are not open to the gospel, the best way to overcome this is to have a children's meeting in our own home. The responsibility for this community work lies with the elders. (*Talks Concerning the Church Services*, Part Two, pp. 39-40)

The Saints Opening Their Homes when the Children Get Home from School

In the past the children's meeting was always held in the meeting hall and was mostly led by the young people. Now the gospel work on the college campuses and at the junior high and high schools is very active, and the young people all have specific services in this work. Thus, they cannot take care of the children anymore. Hence, we need to rely on the elderly saints to spend the time and effort to teach the children...The elderly saints may use their homes. After the children get home from school, the elderly saints may open their homes and prepare some snacks to welcome them. Then they can sing with the children, tell them stories, and lead them to know God.

Every one of us should be able to do these three things—pray every day, join the small group meetings, and go door-knocking and have home meetings every week. The fourth matter is taking care of the children. I hope that more people will receive the burden to open their homes to take care of the children. Twenty years ago, I said that we should have ten thousand children in Taipei, and then ten years later we would have ten thousand young brothers and sisters. If the saints had taken this word and practice it, we would have ten thousand young people today.

Gaining People in This Way Being Very Safe

Moreover, gaining people in this way is very safe, because they are taught by us and receive the gospel from us from their youth. Thus, they should be very solid. If this were the case, many young saints would not need to put aside their gospel work at school to do the children's work. I hope that from now on the elderly saints would pick up the burden and take the lead to do this in their homes. The effect will be very promising in the long run. (*Being Up-to Date for the Rebuilding of the Temple*, pp. 46-47)

Having a Proper Realization and Preparation for the Children's Work

We expect the children's work among us to be very prevailing. Therefore, we need to have a proper realization and preparation for this work. When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old. These are the target of our children's work. If we are unable to take care of the children who are younger than this age group, we will leave them to the care of their parents. In order to give a message to young people or college students, we know that we must be well prepared. Some may think that it is easy to care for the children who are between the ages of five and twelve by simply giving them a piece of candy. However, to handle the children in this way will not yield a good result. According to my

observation, the most difficult work to do effectively is the children's work. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1967, Volume One, p. 311)

In Christianity, doing the children's work is considered to be like operating a school; hence, it is called Sunday school. In Western countries there is a Sunday school for every age: for elderly people, for younger adults, for college age, for teenagers, and for children. The denominations have Sunday school classes, and afterward everyone comes together for the Sunday church service. In the Sunday school classes they may use textbooks. We do not agree with this method. We feel that our children's meeting should not have the flavor of a Sunday school. From our experience we feel that if we regard the children's work as a school and teach our children from textbooks, it will be of more harm than benefit to them. This method educates the children with premature knowledge. Later, when the children grow up, they will not be very open to listen to the truth. The children hear too many Bible stories in Sunday school, and their hearing becomes dull. When they grow up, they will not be moved by what they hear. This is a problem.

Hence, the material that we prepare for the children's work should not be influenced by the material used in the Sunday schools in Christianity. Not only should we not use their material; we should not even reference it. We must drop the way of Sunday school in Christianity. We must never consult their material. Their material will not help us in the children's work; on the contrary, it will cause our work to deviate. (*Ibid.*, pp. 311-312)

The saints should open their homes for children's meetings. When the children's work is carried out in a good way, I estimate that there will be about three hundred groups with twenty-five to thirty children in a group. This is close to ten thousand children. This means that we will need several hundred places for the children's meetings. Of course, we can use the meeting halls, but the number of meeting halls we have will not meet this need. We need many brothers and sisters to open their homes. It would be good to have three hundred meeting places for the children every Lord's Day. How beautiful this service will be! And how much the Lord's work will be propagated!

MOBILIZING THE WHOLE CHURCH TO CARE FOR THE CHILDREN

When the entire church is mobilized in this way, all the brothers and sisters will have an opportunity to serve. Some can open their homes, others can bring the children to the meetings, and still others can teach the children. When all the saints endeavor in one accord for the Lord's heart's desire, the profit will be immeasurable. This will impress the children that we are all for the Lord and are caring for them without compensation. Those who open their homes do not ask for money, those who teach do not ask for money, and those who transport the children do not ask for money. Instead of asking for money, the saints spend their own money to pay the expenses of carrying out the children's service. As a result, everyone will be full of joy. Our conducting children's meetings in this way will deeply impress the children from their youth. They will see people who live for Christ and who sacrifice for Christ, not caring for themselves. This is the ultimate benefit. Furthermore, the impact will unconsciously influence the relatives of the children in such a way that it will be easy to invite them to a gospel meeting. Hence, the children's work is a major service. (*Ibid.*, pp. 305-306)

The Responsible Brothers and Co-Workers Seeing the Importance of the Children's Work

Whether or not we succeed in the children's work depends partly on the teaching material and partly on the brothers and sisters who take the lead. The responsible brothers and the co-workers in every place must see the importance of the children's work in God's family. How can a family not take care of its children? This should be a great matter to us. No family will disregard its children; as a priority a family looks after its children, raises them, and teaches them. Hence, we must serve the many children in God's family.

From this time onward, the co-workers should give more thought to the way they lead people to know the Lord. They must pay attention to the sisters and the children. The co-workers should not say that they are not gifted for these two aspects of the work and therefore cannot do the work. If they cannot do it, they must learn how to do it; they should always learn. The co-workers do not need to be personally involved in doing the children's work. They can meet with the leading sisters in a locality and entrust the burden for the children's work to them, and they can encourage them. They must lead the church to receive a burden for the children's work. The church should concentrate its effort on this work. (*Ibid.*, p. 314)

The Sisters Rising Up to Lead the Children's Work

In carrying out this work, we need to pay attention to a few principles. First, a number of sisters should rise up to lead the children's work. A number of older sisters must receive this burden. The elders should also appoint three to six sisters to take up this responsibility. (*Ibid.*, p. 305)

Ninety Percent of the Children's Work Requiring the Sisters' Participation

Furthermore, the sisters should receive a burden to serve in the church; the brothers should not be the only ones who serve. The brothers should have a change in their concept. They should not think that since the sisters should not assume the headship, they cannot participate in the church services. We should highly regard the service of the sisters. The sisters should have their head covered and not assume the headship, and they should also serve in the church. The sisters should care for two-thirds of the church service, and the brothers should care for one-third. This is a proper proportion. Therefore, the sisters must receive a burden. Without the help of the sisters, the children's work cannot be properly carried out. The same applies to the young people's work. If we want the young people's work to be done to perfection, the sisters must be brought into the work. Over ninety percent of the children's work requires the sisters' participation. Otherwise, there is no way for the children's work to succeed. (*Ibid.*, pp. 269-270)

The Sisters Being Persistent to Promote the Burden for the Children

My burden in this chapter is to kindle a fire within the sisters. The sisters in every church should be persistent to promote the burden for the children. On the one hand, they should not give the brothers any peace, and on the other hand, they should learn not to assume the leadership but to be full of patience, knowing when to proceed and when to wait. The sisters should be persistent to develop the children's work in the church. Furthermore, according to the leading of the Lord, they should fellowship with other sisters who are serving. As the sisters fellowship more and more, the burden for the children will increase more and more, and the number of sisters who are burdened will grow as well. Through fellowship, more and more people will be burdened for the children.

The Sisters Fellowshiping about the Way to Carry Out the Children's Work

The sisters should fellowship about the way to carry out the children's work. For example, they can determine how many sisters are available to be with the children, how many young sisters can teach the children, how many children can come and even bring other children to the meetings, and even how many cannot come. Once they have a general idea of the situation, the sisters should meet with the elders and let them know of the needs in the children's work. This will surely activate the work among the children. Although the sisters should not assume to lead or head up anything, they should be persistent so that the brothers who take the lead can promote this matter. All the sisters' service, including the children's work, should be done in this way.

Bearing the Little Ones as Fruit

Many of the sisters love the Lord, but they need to find the way to do something for the Lord, not by themselves but by abiding in the vine to impart life into others. If we bear the little ones as fruit, the Lord will add them to our account. Only eternity will reveal the result of this. Perhaps out of a group of children for whom we are caring, some will become apostles. Therefore, I encourage the sisters to do this good work. All the housewives can bring children to the meetings, and the younger sisters can be trained to cooperate with them to bear these little ones as fruit. (*Ibid.*, p. 550)

Needing the Help of the Young People in the Children's Work

We also need the help of the young people in the children's work. This matter must be developed. There are twenty to thirty thousand children between five and twelve years of age in the homes of the saints in Taiwan. If we can care for these children, in six years they will become gospel seeds. If the children's work progresses well, even dormant saints will send their children to us, and we will be able to regain the dormant ones.

I believe that there is quite a large number of children in every locality. As soon as we begin the children's work, the young people will begin to function. They can all take part in serving the children. For a class of twenty children, we will need two teachers. If there are two thousand children in Taipei, we should have one hundred classes, and we will need two hundred young people to coordinate and serve. The young people need to give themselves to this work, and this will give everyone an opportunity to practice speaking. (*Ibid.*, p. 326)