

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

The Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery

I. The importance and value of the publication work:

- A. God initiated the publication work:
 - 1. God is a speaking God (Heb. 1:1).
 - 2. As the Word, God came to people and inspired them to write down His word (2 Pet. 1:21), which became the contents of the Bible that we hold in our hands (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - 3. If we did not have the Bible, Christians would suffer an incalculable loss.
 - 4. The Bible is God's publication work; this is a marvelous thing.
- B. The usefulness of the publications is long-lasting and widespread.
 - 1. There will be a great loss in the Lord's work in the gospel and in the truth if it is not done in coordination with the publication work.
 - 2. Brother Nee's ministry has not only endured but has spread throughout the whole earth mainly because of the publication work.
 - 3. Like water, the publications can spread widely and imperceptibly "seep" into people; the effect of the publications lasts forever and is not as shallow as the effect of only hearing a message.
 - 4. A person may be touched as he listens to a message, but after three days his feeling may wane, and he may forget it; however, the more a person reads the messages, the more he will understand, and the messages will stay in his memory a longer time and give him a deeper impression.
 - 5. The value of the publications lies in the fact that their effect is long lasting and widespread.
 - 6. The Bible has been among human beings for a few thousand years, and its effect is self-evident.
- C. The publications spread the divine truth and supply of life to the Lord's people:
 - 1. The publication work in the Lord's present recovery began in China and was limited mainly to the Chinese language.
 - 2. By bringing the publication work to the United States and into the English language, the Lord's recovery quickly spread throughout the United States, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, and Australasia; many local churches have been raised up through the publications.
 - 3. At first, the recovery spread by the saints contacting people, but eventually the seeking ones have received benefit directly from the publications as spiritual food for their nourishment; on the surface this seems like a slow way to spread, but actually it is the fastest way.
 - 4. Most of the churches rely on the publications and the video messages; if we were to stop supplying them with these, there would be a famine.
 - 5. The publication work is crucial.
- D. What the Lord wants to accomplish in this age is to recover the truth.
 - 1. Today the entire earth is in a famine; there is little rich truth in the publications of Christianity
 - 2. When you look at the publications among us, they are full of rich truth; this is a proof that the Lord has blessed us.

3. We should receive the burden and not worry that there are too many books piled up in the meeting halls; instead, we must find a way to distribute these books, and we must first get them into the homes of the saints.
4. We are pushing to have everyone prophesy and speak the truth; but if we are to arrive at this goal, the first requirement is that we must teach the saints the truth.
5. If we are a group of believers who have only been saved but who do not understand the truth, what will be the future of the Lord's recovery?
6. We must get the truth into the saints' homes; in every church each household needs to teach the truth and study the truth.
7. Some complain that there are too many books and too many meetings and that they are too busy to read the books.
8. Everything depends upon our heart; if we realized that we could obtain "gold and diamonds" every time we read the truth, we would read more, and if we could receive treasures whenever we read the ministry, we would even sleep less in order to obtain the treasure. Do we consider the truth to be precious?
9. We must lead the saints to become addicted to reading the ministry; we should consider reading the truth to be more important than eating and drinking.
10. Then the truth in the Lord's recovery will greatly increase and be victorious; furthermore, the number of people in all the churches will spontaneously multiply (Acts 6:7).

II. The Living Stream Ministry office:

- A. Brother Lee said, "The Living Stream Ministry office is only a business office to serve my ministry for two things: publish the messages in book form and to distribute these messages in both video and audio tapes. That is all the ministry office should do and nothing else. I did not have much time to check on everything related to the office in the past, but the ministry office has always had this specific function and no other function. This little office is a Levitical service serving my ministry to put out the word of God in print and through video and audio tapes." (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1988*, vol. 3, "A Timely Word," p. 78).
- B. The Living Stream Ministry exists to serve Brother Lee's personal ministry, which he considered a continuation of Brother Nee's ministry. With the advances in technology, we have added other channels for the distribution of this ministry, yet our function remains the same.
- C. In addition, Living Stream provides the logistical support for the release of the word in the seven annual feasts and in the full-time training in Anaheim.
- D. This office is not the church or even the ministry, per se, but a part of the work in the Lord's recovery; however, it distributes the publications that contain the genuine New Testament ministry in order to feed and education the Lord's children for the building up of the Body of Christ.

III. References: (CWWL, 1984, vol. 5, "The Faithful and Diligent Spreading of the Truth—Concerning the Publication Service," chs. 3, 4, and 6)

LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

Coordination with the LSM Book Section

I. The Book Section of the Living Stream Ministry has different ways to make the riches of this ministry available to the saints.

II. Standing Order / Direct Mailing Service (DMS):

- A. Receive books automatically in monthly shipments according to the subscribed categories.
- B. Categories available:
 - 1. New books - Softbound, previously unpublished messages by Witness Lee.
 - 2. *The Holy Word for Morning Revival*:
 - a. “Basic HWMR”: Comprises “Holy Word” publications from the two semiannual trainings, the annual Memorial Day weekend conference, and the annual Thanksgiving weekend conference, containing 36 weeks of content every year.
 - b. “Supplemental HWMR”: Comprises all other “Holy Word” publications not included in the “Basic HWMR” category; that is, from the international Chinese-speaking conference and the two International Trainings for Elders and Responsible Ones (ITEROs), containing 22 weeks of content per year.
 - 3. *The Ministry of the Word* (periodical): Contains the edited messages from six of the seven annual feasts (the two semi-annual trainings, the two national conferences, and the two “elders’ trainings”) plus the weekly ministry meetings in the full-time training in Anaheim (FTTA). Also included are brief reports concerning the Lord’s move throughout the earth and a schedule of upcoming gatherings.
- C. This program is available in English, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Korean, and Portuguese. However, not all categories may be available in every language.
- D. In general, churches that participate in this program receive a 40% discount, and individuals receive 30% discount. These discounts may not apply to some publications.
- E. Books received via Standing Order / DMS are not returnable. However, the Book Section will replace any books that are defective or arrived damaged.

III. Placing Orders:

- A. Irregular orders: All orders that are not “Standing Order” or “DMS” orders are considered irregular orders. Irregular orders can be placed with the Book Section for any book in our retail catalog. These orders can be placed in the following ways:
 - 1. Online at <https://livingstream.com> (We are currently working on a way to allow churches to place orders online and bill them to an existing LSM account and still obtaining their discount.)
 - 2. By email at books@lsm.org:
 - a. For each item being orders, send an email with the catalog number, title, language, and quantity.
 - b. The email must be sent from an email address that has been authorized to place orders for your account, regardless of whether or not the order is being charged to your LSM account.

3. By phone at +1 (714) 236-6050:
 - a. If possible, please have the following information before calling: the catalog number, title, language, and quantity of each item that is being ordered.
 - b. The caller needs to be one who is authorized to place orders for the account, regardless of whether or not the order is being charged to your existing LSM account.
- B. Return policy:
 1. Books in these orders can be returned to LSM for full credit. This may include a full order or part of an order, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. Books need to be returned within 90 days of the invoice date, and
 - b. Books need to arrive in an undamaged condition. Credit will not be issued for books that are damaged or have markings, price tags not placed by LSM, or glue on the cover.

IV. Special Orders

- A. Orders for books that are Out of Print:

In the case where a book is needed and LSM has no plans to reprint it (e.g., a old “Holy Word” or “Ministry of the Word”), LSM may decide to reprint the book to fulfill your order. In such cases a minimum order quantity may be needed, usually 50. Such orders usually take up to 4 weeks to be fulfilled. An estimate of how long it will take to fulfill the order will be provided when the order has been placed. Such orders cannot be returned to LSM.
- B. Church reading programs:

Sometimes a church decides to cover a book as part of a church reading program. We recommend that the church place an order with LSM 6 to 8 weeks before the book is needed to ensure that we either have enough stock or have time to reprint the needed and ship the requested title in time. While a faster response may at times be possible, LSM cannot commit to this.

V. Using the Book Retail Catalog:

- A. LSM publishes a Book Retail Catalog which contains the publications that are available for purchase.
- B. The Catalog includes the Catalog Number, Title, Retail Price, and sometimes Comments concerning a title.
- C. The Catalog has two sections:
 1. Alphabetical, in which products are sorted in alphabetical order.
 2. Categories, in which products first are grouped in categories and then in alphabetical order
- D. The retail catalog contains order forms that may assist in the process of getting the information needed to place an order. It also contains forms that explain the categories of the Standing Order and Direct Mailing Service programs.

VI. Workshop:

Practice using the catalog as a help, compose and email order, or fill out an order form with at least three titles being ordered.

Topic Four—Additional Reading

THE BOOK SERVICE AND THE SPREADING OF THE TRUTH

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 3:15-16; Acts 8:30-31; Luke 24:27, 45

THE BURDEN AND GOAL OF THE BOOK SERVICE

The most important burden of the book service is not to care for the inventory of books but to study and find a way to spread every book into all the homes of the saints in your locality and, once the books are in the homes, to find a way to deposit their contents into the saints' hearts. The book service is a very important service in the churches, and it has an especially important relationship to the elders. In order to carry out the book service in a proper way, our view and understanding must be clear, and we must encourage the saints in the localities where we serve to cultivate the habit of studying the truth. We also must have a proper heart and attitude in our way of doing business. We are not selling books like street vendors. Rather, we are urging the believers in the Lord's recovery to have the books that we have published in their homes, and we are encouraging them to do their best to read these books.

In 1 Timothy 2:4 Paul says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth." Today most of the churches pay attention to the first half of this verse by preaching the gospel to bring people to salvation; however, we are not up to the standard of God's goal in the matter of leading the saints to know the truth. The responsibility for filling up this lack and arriving at God's goal lies with us.

Second Timothy 3:15-17 reveals that the Bible is crucial because it can make people wise unto salvation and can equip the man of God, making him complete. This is very precious. However, there is a big problem related to this, which is a common difficulty among believers today. When Christians open the Bible, they do not really understand the meaning of the words that they read. Even a person who is a good learner and who has studied a wide range of topics may not be able to understand the essential meaning of the Bible.

KNOWING THE TRUTH REQUIRING OTHERS' EXPLANATION AND THE LORD'S OPENING OF OUR MINDS

Acts 8:26-39 records the case of the Ethiopian eunuch. Many eunuchs in ancient times were scholars because they had to be well educated to serve in imperial palaces. This Ethiopian eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home, he was reading in the book of Isaiah where it says, "As a sheep He was led to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so He does not open His mouth" (Acts 8:32; cf. Isa. 53:7). On one hand, he was very interested in what he was reading, but on the other hand, he did not understand the significance of what he was reading. When the Holy Spirit directed Philip to approach him, Philip ran up to his chariot and asked, "Do you really know the things that you are reading?" (Acts 8:30). The eunuch's answer is very meaningful: "How could I unless someone guides me?" (v. 31). This shows that if we have only the Bible without anyone to guide us and explain it to us, we will still have no way to understand and comprehend it.

In the days of the Lord Jesus the Jews did not have public schools, nor did they have a school system; all their education was carried out in the homes. When Mary was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit, she was quite young, but when she went to visit Elizabeth, almost every sentence of her praise was a quote from the Old Testament (Luke 1:46-55). She

was so familiar with the Old Testament that she could apply verses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and make them into a praise of God. If she had not had a foundation in the Old Testament, she would not have been able to compose such praise, even with the inspiration of the Spirit. From this we can see that she was born into a household that knew the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus was born into such a family, and we must suppose that as He was growing to adulthood, He must have received good teaching concerning the Bible. When He came forth to minister, He immediately opened the Bible and began to expound it every time He entered into a synagogue to preach the gospel (4:15-21).

The early disciples, who followed the Lord Jesus for three and a half years and who were under His leading, must have studied the Bible very much; they could not have merely followed the Lord without reading the Bible. However, Luke 24 speaks of two disciples who walked with the Lord on the road to Emmaus but who still did not understand the Scriptures. The Jewish rabbis taught that the Old Testament is divided into three sections—the Law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets—but they did not know that each of these three sections is full of explanations concerning Christ. Although these two disciples were students of the Bible and knew the Old Testament, they had not seen anything concerning Christ in their reading; they needed the Lord Jesus to expound these things clearly to them (v. 27).

Later, when the disciples were gathered together and the Lord Jesus appeared to them, He said, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all the things written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms concerning Me must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures (vv. 44-45). The Lord not only pointed things out and explained them clearly to the disciples, but He also opened the mind of the disciples so that they would understand. This shows that Christians need more than just the Bible. We also need someone to expound the Bible to us properly, and we need the Lord to open our mind.

Peter, who was a leader among the disciples, wrote his Epistles when he was older, and there is much revelation in them. However, at the end of these Epistles he spoke of Paul, who “according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:15-16). If we consider the book of Hebrews, we will realize that if there is no one to expound it to us, we could read it ten times and still not understand half of it. At the most we would know that this book speaks of Christ as our High Priest, who is able to save us to the uttermost (7:25) and who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (13:8). But this is only our natural understanding; it is not the center of the book of Hebrews. If we are to understand the central points of the book of Hebrews, we need people to point things out to us, and we need the Lord to open our mind. Now we have the *Life-study of Hebrews*, and this book of the Bible has been opened to us.

Matthew 24:14 says, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole inhabited earth.” Most Christians have some understanding of the gospel, but they have very little understanding of the gospel of the kingdom. I have been reading Christian books for many years and have heard many messages, but I have not found one person who adequately points out the meaning of the gospel of the kingdom. Even the subject of the Gospel of Matthew, the kingdom of the heavens, is not understood according to its true significance. Today most people expound the Bible according to their natural understanding. Thus, even though we have the Bible in our hands, we cannot understand what we are reading if we do not have someone to interpret it for us, to teach us, and to open our mind.

THE SPREADING OF THE PUBLICATION WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Regardless of whether we are full-timers going out to work or those who serve with books, our goal is to spread the divine truths for the accomplishment of God's goal of establishing and building up churches in every place so that they may become the expression of Christ.

I would like to make something clear from the start. If we think that the goal of the publication work is to make money, we are wrong. From the first day until now we have not had the slightest thought of making money or earning a profit. Our burden is to spread the truth and to serve the churches.

We all know that it is not easy to understand the Bible. However, through the Life-study messages and the publications in the Lord's recovery, we can understand the central thought of every book in the Bible, and we can be clear about the true meaning of every chapter and verse. In order to deliver these truths into the hands of God's children, we need full-timers to go out to visit people and to supply them, and we need the serving ones in all the localities to faithfully labor in the book service in the churches to diligently distribute the food to the saints.

Presently, the publication work throughout the whole earth has developed to the extent that we have three offices. The main office is in Anaheim, the second office for printing is in Irving, and the third office is the Taiwan Gospel Book Room, which publishes materials in Chinese. Due to Taiwan's laws we set up the bookroom in Taiwan as a "juridical party" (the designation for a non-profit organization). In these three offices there are around fifty full-time serving ones; in addition, there are many others who volunteer to come and help. The publication work is quite laborious.

The publication work under my ministry began in August 1949. At that time the twelve members of my family lived in a small house of about three hundred square feet. The study, bedroom, and living room were all one room. In the house there was only one chair and one small table. It was under these conditions that I completed the sixty topics in *Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures*. Thank the Lord for blessing the publication work of this ministry and for bringing it to the scale that it has reached today.

In 1962, because I was clear that I should begin the work of the Lord's recovery in the United States and release the truth to God's children there, I moved to the United States. Over the past twenty-five years about three hundred local churches have been raised up overseas due to this ministry, and about eighty percent of them have been raised up through the publications. My co-workers and I did not go to all those places; most of the churches in those places were raised up entirely as a result of the publications going there first. This shows that the effect of the publications can be very great.

Beginning with Luther the Lord has manifested His work of recovery. However, over the past five hundred years the Lord has never done as much related to the recovery of the truth as He has done today among us. This has been especially true since 1974, because the Lord has opened up every book in the Bible through the Life-studies and various messages, pointing out the crucial items concerning Christ, opening the minds of the saints, and bringing us into the depths of God's economy so that we would advance toward His ultimate goal.

This is not to boast in ourselves. Many saints have testified that no matter how many times they read Matthew, they could understand only verses such as "Come to Me all who

toil and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (11:28), which can easily be understood according to man’s natural thought. However, they could not understand the verses concerning the kingdom, the reality of the kingdom, the appearance of the kingdom, and the manifestation of the kingdom. They read the words, but they could not understand their significance. However, because of the Life-studies, they now understand that Matthew is a book concerning the gospel of the kingdom.

THE PUBLICATION WORK SUFFERING ATTACKS

Because the churches in all the localities have been pursuing to digest the Life-study messages these past few years, some people have slandered us, saying, “Brother Lee forces all the local churches to read his Life-studies and to neglect the reading of the Bible.” However, there is no church among the more than six hundred churches on the earth that can testify that any locality neglects the Bible and reads only the Life-studies. There is no way to read the Life-studies without reading the Bible, because the Life-studies are based on the Bible and serve only to expound the Bible. If some read the Life-studies without reading the Bible, that is an individual practice, and it has nothing to do with the Lord’s recovery.

RECEIVING THE BURDEN TO LEARN AND SPREAD THE DIVINE TRUTHS

For the past five hundred years the strongest recovery of the Lord’s truth has been among us. Today the books that we publish are very rich and full of truth and revelation. The Life-studies of the New Testament alone contain more than eleven hundred messages with an average of ten pages per message. The Lord has been constantly recovering His truths throughout the ages, but before today the truth concerning the New Jerusalem was barely touched. The New Jerusalem was not expounded thoroughly and clearly until we were raised up.

More than fifty years ago Brother Nee said to me, “Brother Witness, the truths that the Lord has given us are not only for the Chinese-speaking believers; I believe that they are for the whole world.” At that time neither of us knew how the Lord was going to spread His truth to the whole globe, but the Lord raised up the environment. When the political situation in China changed, the Lord brought me to Taiwan. After ten years of developing and establishing a foundation, the Lord brought me to the United States. After another ten years the Lord spread His recovery to all the other continents through the publications. Although the number of saints meeting in the local churches is still insufficient, the churches themselves have been widely spread. The Lord has given us an open door from this point forward, and every continent has people who receive our truths and welcome the saints to visit them. Even Burma and India have begun to have meetings.

Through the labor of Brother Nee and myself, the truths of the Bible have been dug out. Beginning in 1974 I spent at least half of each year to write the outlines for the Life-study messages and the footnotes of the Recovery Version. I wrote every word with much care and effort, particularly the footnotes. I did not use my native Chinese for writing; rather, I used English. Anyone with a seeking heart cannot deny that the truth is among us. I hope that we would receive the burden to thoroughly study the truths of the Lord’s recovery and to spread these truths.

GETTING THE TRUTHS INTO THE BELIEVERS’ HOMES

What the Lord wants to accomplish in this age is to recover the truth. Today the entire earth is in a famine; there is even a famine across the United States, which is a great

Christian country. It is like the situation in the days of Joseph, when only Egypt had food, and all the other places were in famine. At that time if a person wanted food, he had to go to Egypt to buy it. Today there is not much rich truth in the publications of Christianity; their better publications present only a few shallow gospel truths. However, when you look at the publications among us, they are full of rich truth. This is not my boast; it is a proof that the Lord has blessed us. Therefore, we should receive the burden and not worry that there are too many books piled up in the meeting halls; instead, we must find a way to distribute these books, and we must first get them into the homes of the saints.

Paul says that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Today nearly two thousand years have passed since this was written, but even in the Lord’s recovery we have not arrived at this standard. This is why we have changed our way and are pushing to have everyone prophesy and speak the truth. However, if we want to arrive at this goal, the first requirement is that we must teach the saints the truth. If we do not, the saints will still prefer big meetings with one person speaking and everyone else listening. For the past thirty years we have maintained this practice. In conferences we have spoken about items of the truth such as the cross, the resurrection life, and the Body of Christ, but as time has passed, not many among us have really understood the truth. This pains my heart.

Today the Lord has gained saints who have a heart to serve Him; some serve as elders, some serve as deacons, and some serve in book sales. We thank the Lord for this, but please forgive me for speaking honestly to you in love: I am afraid that even you are not clear about the truth. This is the matter that concerns me the most. If we are a group of believers who have only been saved but who do not understand the truth, what will be the future of the Lord’s recovery? The present teaching in the homes is insufficient; we must get the truth into the saints’ homes.

I hope that in every church each household would teach the truth and study the truth. The churches in one particular area of the United States are the best pattern in this matter; the homes of the saints there are full of our publications. Whether you go to the study, the bathroom, the living room, the bedroom, the dining room, or even the kitchen, you will find open ministry books. Wherever anyone goes in these homes, they can seize the time to read a paragraph of a message. In this way they are nourished. Today in Taiwan we have not arrived at this point, and there are even some saints who complain that we have too many books and too many meetings. They say that they are too busy to read the books. In regard to this, I cannot say anything. Everything, however, depends upon our heart. If we realized that we could obtain “gold and diamonds” every time we read the truth, we would read more, and if we could receive some treasures whenever we read the ministry, we would even sleep less in order to obtain the treasure.

My point is that we do not consider the truth to be precious. As leading brothers in the churches in Taiwan, we should imitate the pattern of the elders in the churches in the previously mentioned area of the United States and lead the saints to become addicted to reading the truth. We should consider reading the truth to be more important than eating or drinking. If we do this, the truth in the Lord’s recovery will greatly increase and be victorious; furthermore, the number of people in all the churches will spontaneously multiply (Acts 6:7).

THE PROPER ATTITUDE IN THE BOOK SERVICE

Thank the Lord that we have a heart to serve the Lord and that we have obtained His mercy to serve Him in His word. We must have a proper attitude and be positive and

aggressive, doing our best to urge people to read His word. If we do not find ways to promote the truth or pray, how can the Lord's word be spread? If we take the Lord's word lightly, how can we have the boldness to promote the publications among the saints? Some brothers and sisters spend more time reading the newspaper and watching television than they do reading the ministry publications; this really grieves me. I hope that we could have a jealous heart for the Lord and change the atmosphere so that everyone would have a desire to read the Bible, and each household would make reading the spiritual publications a priority.

We must understand that our service is not to help the Book Room do business and make a profit; rather, it is to bear a burden to minister the word of the Lord and to send out His truth. I hope that our view could be expanded and broadened. The churches in Southeast Asia have been able to maintain their spiritual life for the past thirty years mainly through the publications of the Book Room. Despite the fact that the co-workers frequently go to help the churches, their true, long-term help has come from the supply of the publications. If there had been no books for the past thirty years, the churches in Southeast Asia would not have spread to the extent that they have today. Moreover, during the past twenty years, eighty percent of the more than three hundred churches in the West have been raised up through the publications. Therefore, we must see that serving in book sales is really to be the Lord's co-worker, to promote His truth, and to spread His divine economy and divine speaking to the whole earth.

Please pick up a burden to return to your localities, fellowship with the elders, and consider this to be an important matter. The primary matter is not to promote the books but to stir up the saints' interest in pursuing the truth and to encourage them to enjoy reading the spiritual publications. This will depend on the way that we do it. Even the wonderful truth of the excellent gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ requires us to speak much with all our heart and to preach diligently so that people will receive and believe it. Even more, the Lord's word will require that we bear the responsibility to labor willingly to zealously encourage and urge everyone in all the local churches to pursue the truth and read the spiritual publications. In this way the Lord's truth will spread widely, and there will be a real revival (*CWWL*, 1984, vol. 5, "The Faithful and Diligent Spreading of the Truth—Concerning the Publication Service," pp. 191-195, 198-208).

LEARNING TO SERVE WITH THE PUBLICATIONS

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PUBLICATION WORK

God initiated the publication work. God is a speaking God (Heb. 1:1). The Gospel of John tells us that God is the Word (1:1). As the Word, God came to people and inspired them to write down His word (2 Pet. 1:21), which became the contents of the Bible that we hold in our hands (2 Tim. 3:16). If we did not have the Bible, Christians would suffer an incalculable loss. The Bible is God's publication work; this is a marvelous thing.

In the past, after people established a new country, they often carried out a publication work. On a small scale, they published writings to commend themselves, and on a large scale, they controlled the publishing of the country's historical data. Without publications the world would be like a person without a soul.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PUBLICATION WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Originating with Brother Watchman Nee

The Lord's recovery among us began with Brother Watchman Nee. Brother Nee was from Foochow, which was a city with literary tendencies. Brother Nee's father was a scholar, and he placed great emphasis on a literary education. He even hired private tutors to teach Brother Nee the classical Chinese language. Brother Nee's grades in Chinese were always among the top in his class. After the Lord raised him up, when he was only twenty years old, he began the publication work. When my second sister began to study theology at the Chinling Seminary in Nanking, Brother Nee's writings were already spreading among the students of theology. She would come home to Chefoo for summer vacations and bring his publications to show me. Thus, before I was saved, I had already read some of Brother Nee's early publications. At this time he was still writing in classical Chinese, not in the vernacular Chinese. Therefore, when I read his writings, I felt that they were very deep, and I could not fully understand their meaning. Later, as the trend of writing in vernacular Chinese began to spread throughout China, Brother Nee began to write in the vernacular as well. Brother Nee was always willing to study; hence, he made the change very quickly and successfully.

THE VALUE OF THE PUBLICATION WORK

Having Long-lasting, Widespread Effects

When the publication work began in Taipei in 1949, I was the only one who was involved. At the most I would sometimes ask another brother to help me by going to the printer. I did the editing and publication work myself, including most of the work related to the printing. In those days in Taiwan the process of printing was not very advanced. Through the Lord's arrangement for my involvement in Brother Nee's publication work in China, I had learned a great deal about printing. Therefore, when I began the publication work in Taiwan, I knew every step of the publication process, including preparing manuscripts, typesetting, printing, and binding. At that time the Gospel Book Room was in my home, and it consisted of one chair and a small table that I used as a writing desk. It was not like the Book Room today, which has many serving ones and modern equipment. As we look back on the difficult times in the beginning, I hope that we would treasure what we have now and that we would endeavor to learn many things.

There will be a great lack and even a great loss in the Lord's work in the gospel and in the truth if it is not done in coordination with the publication work. It would have been very difficult for the ministry of Brother Nee to spread without the publication work. The usefulness of the publications is long lasting and widespread. Like water, the publications can spread widely and imperceptibly "seep" into people. A published message can have a great effect simply by "flowing" into a home and reaching someone whom we do not know. The effect of the publications lasts forever and is not as shallow as the effect of only hearing a message. A person may be touched as he listens to a message, but after three days his feeling may wane, and he may forget it. However, the more a person reads the messages, the more he will understand, and the messages will stay in his memory a longer time and give him a deeper impression. Psychologists have discovered that television is more powerful and has a stronger impact than radio because visual memory lasts longer than auditory memory. Thus, the value of the publications lies in the fact that their effect is long lasting and widespread. The Bible has been among human beings for a few thousand years, and its effect is self-evident.

Spreading the Divine Truth

I hope that the brothers and sisters would realize that it is a great mercy of the Lord that the publication work in the Lord's recovery, beginning with Brother Nee and continuing until now, has given Chinese-speaking Christians the knowledge of the truth. If our publications had not been going out over the past sixty years, we would be in a much poorer condition.

The churches in the Lord's recovery have received help from the publication work in the early days from Shanghai and now from Taipei. For the past thirty years or more the churches have been fed mainly by the ministry of the word in the publications. The Chinese-speaking churches among us rely fully on the ministry of the word in the publications. In 1962 this ministry entered the English-speaking world, and in the past eleven years, due to strenuous labor, we have completed the Life-studies of the New Testament. Even though what we have seen cannot be considered complete, in comparison to other publications it is higher and richer. Now English-speaking Christians in the West are beginning to accept the truths given to us by the Lord.

There is a brother in Christianity who loves the Lord very much and who has set up Bible-study groups in many places. One day he read some of our Life-study messages and received a great deal of help. Although some people in the United States were criticizing us as heretics, he announced that he had read the Life-studies and discovered that they were full of rich content. He declared that he wanted all his Bible-study groups to use the Life-study messages. This happened a little more than a month ago, and he made a special trip to ask for permission to use the Life-studies. Similar things have happened in many other places.

We have recently printed the Life-studies of Paul's Epistles in a nine-volume, hardbound set and sent them as a gift to libraries and seminaries in many places. Every place that has been given a set has warmly welcomed it. Moreover, the Living Stream Ministry office has received letters from some of these libraries expressing their gratitude. This is a sign that the truths of the Lord's recovery will spread to the countries in the West through the publication work.

Supplying the Bread of Life

By going to the United States, we brought the Lord's recovery to the English-speaking world, and through the publication work, the Lord's recovery quickly spread throughout the United States, Central and South America, Europe, Africa, and Australasia. Many local churches have been raised up through the publications. At first the recovery spread through saints contacting people and introducing the recovery to them, but eventually the seeking ones have received benefit directly from the publications.

The churches in Europe are an example. Since it is difficult to travel to visit them, the most reliable and direct way to help them is to send the publications as spiritual food for their nourishment. On the surface this seems like a slow way to spread, but actually the results are surprising and quicker than one would think. For example, churches have been raised up in Mexico in more than fifty localities mainly through the publications. The saints are also helped by watching videotapes of the messages. We have given localities videotapes of messages and some video machines, and the saints take these to various places to spread the ministry. Most of the churches in Mexico have been raised up with the help of the video messages. The churches in Brazil were also raised up through the publications. Presently, about eighty local churches have been raised up in Brazil, and there are dozens of churches

in other countries in South America. All these churches were raised up through the publication work. They now mainly rely on the publications and the videotapes. If we were to stop supplying publications or were unable to send out videotapes, there would be a famine. This shows that the publication work is crucial.

THE VISION OF THE PUBLICATION WORK

Since the effect of the publication work is long lasting and widespread, it is entirely worthwhile to spend time and effort on it. In addition, you must be patient. Every aspect of the publication work, whether writing, editing, proofreading, or transcribing, is very tedious. If you do it for a long time, you will easily become frustrated. Therefore, you must exercise to have the endurance to concentrate on your labor. For the past eleven years I have spent about one hundred days every half a year working on the outlines and footnotes for the Recovery Version. I spend at least four or five hours a day at my desk absorbed in work and allow my wife to take care of everything else in my living. If I had not done this, I would never have been able to complete the footnotes or the Life-studies of the entire New Testament.

In conclusion, the publication work requires vision, patience, and perseverance. Sometimes when we are considering the right words and phrases, we should put down our pens and walk outside to call on the Lord or sing a few verses of a hymn to relax our heart and increase the feeling in our spirit. Then when we return to writing, we will be able to express things well. This word is from my experience, and I hope that it will be an encouragement and help to the young ones (*CWWL*, 1984, vol. 5, "The Faithful and Diligent Spreading of the Truth—Concerning the Publication Service," pp. 209-210, 216-222, 224).

THE VALUE AND LEARNING OF THE PUBLICATION WORK

THE PUBLICATION WORK BEING STARTED BY GOD HIMSELF

God is a speaking God, and in His wisdom He knows that His word must be written down so that it is not transitory. Without the Bible humanity would be empty, waste, void, and dark. The only reason that there is a small amount of light in human society is because of the existence of the Bible. God not only spoke through the mouths of the patriarchs and prophets in ancient times; He also recorded His speaking in the Bible. This is truly a miracle.

In the whole world there is no other book that is complete in truth and perfect in organization like the Bible. God used the best languages to write this book, and He used at least forty very suitable persons to write it. If Moses had not written the Pentateuch or David had not written a great part of the Psalms, there would be a great lack in the Bible. I do not know how long it took Moses to write the Pentateuch, but I believe that he spent much time on it and wrote it in his old age. David had many responsibilities and experienced many difficulties, but in the midst of his sufferings he wrote of his experiences. Many Old Testament saints and many believers have received help from the Psalms. Without the book of Psalms there would be a great lack. This shows the importance of the publication work initiated by God Himself.

THE PUBLICATION WORK HAVING AN ETERNAL, WIDESPREAD VALUE

As the apostle John indicated, the Word of God can be handled (1 John 1:1). Of course, when John spoke of this touchable Word, he was referring to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus

as the Word of life can be handled. In 1 John, however, the term *word* refers not only to the Lord Jesus as a person but also to the words that He spoke (1:10; 2:5, 7, 14). Thus, as the Word of life, He has been spoken forth and can be handled, but this Word of life is conveyed as well through the written word, which can also be handled. The people of the Old Testament read God's words, and New Testament believers can read His words. Furthermore, people will continue to read these words in the future. The word of God is eternal, and its value is eternal.

Moreover, the publication work can be widespread. Today the Bible has been translated into many languages. Translators even use phonetic symbols to translate the Bible into languages that do not have written forms. Thus, the Bible can be spread to every place. This is of God, and it is according to a principle ordained by God. Throughout the history of the church, the writings of God's people have been continuously published. Those who wrote the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were not the only ones who wrote in the early days of the church; the church fathers also produced writings (*CWWL*, 1984, vol. 5, "The Faithful and Diligent Spreading of the Truth—Concerning the Publication Service," pp. 235-236).