

## Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

### Week 6 – Monday

1 Thes. 1:5, 9 – Footnotes 5<sup>1</sup>, 9<sup>1</sup>

2:1 – Footnote 1<sup>1</sup>

I would like to give you a few words to guide the remainder of our fellowship. If you are talking about caring for children, and especially caring for young people, teenagers all the way through college age, the number one thing, the top thing, is shepherding. We need to be their shepherds. So the first word I want to emphasize is *shepherding*. There is a small booklet that I would like to recommend called *How to Lead the Young People*. It is just one message but how much benefit I have received in my service in caring for the young people since I read that booklet. It has helped me even in caring for my own children. This little booklet has fellowship concerning six points. I am only going to mention a few of them. The first point is showing interest in them. We need to contact them and know them and also to study the age. We need to understand the age that our children are growing up in. Many parents are short in this area; they have not kept up with the age perhaps because things are moving too fast and there are many terms that they do not understand. In this it is good to have fellowship in the body; the church can really help. But the age that our children are growing up in is very different than the age that we grew up in. There are many things and influences on the young people, so we need to walk along side them. This is easy to do when the children are small because the children are saying, “Mommy, mommy, look.” One day that stops; did you notice? Does it stop when they are seven or eight? But somewhere along the line you need to go to them and ask, “Hi, what are you doing?” Sometimes when the children are playing on the floor, mommies and daddies come and sit down next to them and ask, “What are you doing?” They may say, “I am building a plane.” They may be using Lego to build something. It doesn’t look like a plane but you say, “What a beautiful plane” and just talk to them. When they are seven, and especially when they are thirteen, it is a little more of a challenge. However, it will be less of a challenge if you have been doing that every day of their lives, or at least every week. This is to stay in contact.

The second word I would like to give is *reaching* people. This is a big part of our shepherding. In our shepherding we need to reach people. Especially, we need to reach their hearts. Paul says in First Thessalonians, “You know what kind of entrance we had toward you” (1:9). When Paul and the brothers went to Thessalonica and contacted people there, somehow within less than three weeks they found an entrance into the hearts of these people. We need to find an entrance into the hearts of our children. When they are very young it is easy to have an entrance because there is no door, just a big opening because they depend on you for everything. Somewhere along the way a door appears there. Then for you to get into your child’s heart, they need to open the door. Do you have the key to your child’s heart? You need to pray for this. I hope that all the younger parents among us with young children would exercise to keep this door open by showing interest, by reaching them.

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### **Week 6 – Tuesday**

Luke 24:13-17

There are two examples in the scriptures that I feel are absolutely the best examples of shepherding. I just love coming to these chapters and I cannot exhaust what I see here. They are Luke 24 and John 21. These are the final two chapters of these two books. Luke 24 starting from verse 13 is speaking of something on the day of the Lord's resurrection. The first few verses of this chapter tell of the sisters going to the tomb and finding out that the Lord resurrected. Then they go back and tell the others, and Peter runs and sees that the Lord is not there. They are marvelling and somewhat confused. Some believe and some don't believe: "He said that He would resurrect, but I can't believe it." Sometimes we are too hard on these brothers and sisters because we all believe in the resurrection, but this was brand new to them. So two of them, probably discouraged, were leaving Jerusalem to go home.

Verse 13 says, "And behold, two of them were going on the same day to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty stadia away from Jerusalem." Sixty stadia is 11 kilometres, a long way. They were going and talking to each other about all these things, then: "And while they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them" (v. 15). Do you think that they were walking fast? I don't think so because they were sad; when you are sad you don't walk fast. They were confused and then all of a sudden Jesus was with them but they didn't recognize Him. This is hard to understand. This is the first principle of shepherding. When you go to shepherd someone, they should not recognize that you are shepherding them. You should not tell them, "Hey, I am here to shepherd you. I am here to save you and take care of you. Open your heart to me." Don't do that; they will probably not talk to you for a year. You need to be incognito; you need to be very human. The Lord was resurrected; you would think that He would have some kind of aura about Him. No, He looked just like a man, very ordinary. He was walking with them but their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.

Verse 17 says, "And He said to them, What are these words which you are exchanging with one another while you are walking? And they stood still, looking sad." He asked, "What are these words?" Did He not know what these words were? Did He forget that He got resurrected? Whenever God asks a question it is not necessary. There is no question that God could ask that He does not know the answer to before He asks the question, so why does He ask the question? In Genesis 3 God asked, "Adam, where are you?" Do you think that God was thinking, "Where did I put that man?" No, He knew where Adam was but He still asked, "Adam, where are you?" We do this when we are playing with children, "Where are you?" (She's right there.) "Where are you? I can't find you." God was playing a little bit. "What are these words?" Then look at the answer: "And one of them, Cleopas by name, answered and said to Him, Do You alone dwell as a stranger in Jerusalem and not know the things which have taken place in it in these days?" That is a little condescending; I don't like his attitude here. It is as if he was saying, "Where are you from?" And Jesus is there; what does He say in the next verse? "What things?" Can you believe that this is our Lord? This is the best shepherding. When you go to people, ask the proper questions. The proper question is not, "Did you read the Bible this week? Did you have morning watch?" Those are not the proper questions. "Are you coming to the meeting on Saturday?" No, that is not the proper question. You have to touch whatever is in their heart. That is the proper question. It is not easy sometimes to ask the proper question. Sometimes we ask the improper question and make it worse than before. It would have been better if we had not visited that person.

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### **Week 6 – Wednesday**

Luke 24:18-31

Then they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus...” Eventually the Lord starts to say something. Later in the story they say, “Was not our heart burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road.” This happened even before they recognized the Lord. He started to minister something to them and their hearts were burning. Do you see? You reach their heart. First you reach them and walk with them at their pace. Eleven kilometres—how long was this talk? We read and it is about ten verses, but these ten verses took eleven kilometres. Of course, we don’t know exactly where He joined them. Even if it was half way, can you imagine Jesus walking five and a half kilometres? But He did!

Verse 28 says, “And they drew near to the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther.” Can you imagine our Lord doing this? They must have come to a kind of fork in the road or they arrived at the place and He said, “Oh, you are here. It was nice talking to you. Bye, bye.” Then they said, “No, no, won’t you come to stay with us?” Then He responds, “I wouldn’t want to impose.” Of course, it doesn’t say that but with a little sanctified imagination, you could understand that probably He did say something like this. “No, no, please, just a little while. It is not an imposition.” “I don’t know. Well...” Where was He going? Actually He wanted to get into their home, unveil Himself to them, then go that evening back to Jerusalem, walk through that wall, appear to all the disciples, and then breathe into them, telling them “Receive the Holy Spirit.” John 20 follows this story. That is what He wanted to do. He wanted those two disciples in that meeting, but He never talks about the meeting. He never rebukes them, well only a little rebuke: “Foolish and slow of heart to believe”, but it was tender. Do you see the shepherding here? There was even some divine, human acting to go along with them in their situation.

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### **Week 6 – Thursday**

John 21:3-12 – Footnotes 3<sup>1</sup>, 3<sup>2</sup>, 5<sup>2</sup>, 6<sup>1</sup>

In John 21 the disciples went fishing. Peter says, “I am going fishing.” In the chapter before the Lord breathed on them. Now they have the Spirit within, and Peter gets bored or he doesn’t know where the next meal will come from. I don’t know what the situation was but anyway, he goes fishing. They catch nothing after fishing all night, and then what happens? Jesus was on the shore in the morning but they don’t recognize Him. Again, this is the first principle of shepherding. He said, “Little children, you don’t have anything to eat, do you?” Since they were in the water, maybe He called out loudly. They were in the boat. Now picture this; suppose you were one of the disciples in the boat. They may have turned and said, “Who is this guy?” Don’t you think that someone asked that? I am pretty sure someone asked, “Who is this guy and why doesn’t he mind his own business?” Jesus then told them, “Why don’t you put your net on the other side of the boat?” These were experienced fishermen; I don’t believe their boat was that wide. What difference would it make which side they were fishing on. I am pretty sure that they said, “Just do it; maybe he will go away.” So they put it on the other side and caught 153 large fish. Why 153? That is a good point too but for another day. As soon as they hauled in the fish, John said, “It is the Lord.” Then Peter put on something because he was naked and jumped into the water. When they get to the shore, Jesus says, “Come and have breakfast.” This was His shepherding. There was a fire there. I think that the fire was not only for cooking but also for Peter. He had been in the water and may have been a little cold so could warm himself up a little. Do you see the shepherding here? I think that these two chapters show the best examples of shepherding. In 1 Peter 5 Peter told the elders, “Don’t lord it over the saints, over the flock, but shepherd according to God.” How can you shepherd according to God? Look at these two chapters. That is how to shepherd; this is how we reach people’s hearts.

I want to give you another word—*relevant*. We have many deep truths that we are blessed with. We know a lot about God’s purpose, but saints, when we minister to people, especially the young people, we have to make all the truths relevant to where they are. We need to apply them. There is another writing that I would like to recommend related to the Summer School of Truth material. It is just a little book, four messages, called *Teachers’ Training*. Don’t get thrown off saying, “I am not one of the teachers; I don’t serve the young people.” The fellowship in this book will help all of us. Four short messages in which Brother Lee emphasizes the matter of reaching the young people with the word of God. He uses two phrases: We need to convert doctrine to experience and we need to leave the young people with an experiential impression, an impression that the truth we are teaching is very practical no matter how high it is, and it applies to where they are.

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### **Week 6 – Friday**

Rom. 1:24-32

Recently we had a young people's conference in the north-eastern United States for the local churches for the states from Virginia to Maine. We had it in the campground in upstate New York that we bought. Out of the burden of being relevant and reaching them, we conducted an anonymous survey and asked a few questions. We asked, "What do you think are the biggest issues that young people are facing today in America?" We asked them to write three things. It was very interesting to see their perspective and also interesting to see the perspective of the older high schoolers in contrast to the younger high schoolers, and the perspective of the brothers in contrast to the sisters. I was very struck that both the boys and girls of the older high schoolers had almost the same answer. I was a little surprised by that. Second, we asked, "What are the biggest issues that kids in your school face?" That could be very different. What happens in the country is one thing but it could be very different if you are in a big city like New York or Philadelphia, or if you are in suburbs. But these answers with the high school young people were all the same. They told us that from their perspective the biggest issues are drugs and alcohol. The next issue is depression. Down the list and not as high as I expected was dealing with the issue of homosexuality. I thought that that was going to appear higher on the list. They said that these things were issues in America in general and also in their school.

Then we asked, "What is the one biggest issue that you are facing?" Of course, this was anonymous. Many of them, particularly the older high schoolers, talked about pressure, anxiety, thinking about their future, what school they were going to go to, choosing a major, choosing a career—all these kinds of things. There was a list of 25 different things that they mentioned, but these were by far the most popular ones for both the boys and the girls. So, we encouraged the serving saints, "Please pay attention to this. You may think, 'Our young people, thank the Lord, don't have issues with drugs, alcohol, or depression.' But if in their anxiety about facing the future we don't help them and come to counsel them, they will look to those things to answer the need." Even just the stress of staying awake all night to do some work or some last minute paper, might make some vulnerable to a temptation. After we did this little survey, in one meeting toward the end of the conference, I spoke a little word concerning their responses. At the end of that meeting the young people lined up, quite a number of them gave us their honest testimony of being 15 years old and being offered drugs on the school bus and how they dealt with that. They had to change the way they were with people. Oh, the temptations facing our young people!

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### **Week 6 – Saturday**

Eph. 6:1-4 – Footnotes 1<sup>1</sup>, 3<sup>1</sup>, 4<sup>1</sup>

Then we asked them, “If you could change one thing in your young people’s meeting, what would it be?” The answers were also very interesting. We asked, “What would you like the serving saints to cover in your young people’s meeting?” When we asked the high schoolers, “What would you like to change?” I had something in my mind about what they might answer, but by far they answered, “We would like the meeting to be more mutual so that we could know one another better. Especially, we want to get to know the serving ones better. So can we have more contact outside the meetings? Things like outings, not for fun but to get to know the serving saints in a more human way and to have something to which invite our friends who have stopped meeting.” That is what is on their hearts. I was so touched by these answers. They are so concerned for the ones who haven’t been with us for some time. And to my great surprise, they are longing to know the serving saints. In the meeting setting you can’t do that.

Then concerning the topics, most of them did not give actual topics; mostly they said, “We just want the topics to be relevant.” That is the word they used. They wanted something that they could apply to themselves today. The last two things were: “What is your biggest obstacle in following the Lord?” and “What is your biggest obstacle in preaching the gospel?” When the young people have the way to answer honestly and we can know them, then we can give them help, we can reach them. Actually, all of this is just talking about communication; we need to be able to have the proper communication. I come back to the Lord’s example: asking the proper question. We are in the midst of a warfare and the enemy zeros in on our next generation. We need to corporately rise up and guard them, but our guarding is not by just giving them Bible knowledge. We surely need to do that in its measure and we need to avoid as much as we can premature knowledge because that damages. But actually we need to gain their hearts and that comes by being Jesusly human.

Watchman Nee has a very good chapter on the matter of parenting in the books entitled *Messages for Building Up New Believers*. One section of that chapter talks about building up an atmosphere of love in every family. He stresses that in our family, when the children fail there should be an atmosphere that they can come to us and confess, even that we would be the first one that they tell. Then when they have a success, we would be the first one that they tell. But in many homes we build up an atmosphere of a judge; especially the dad is like a judge with a gavel. When the children come it is like coming in front of a judge: “Yes, you honour.” We need to shepherd according to God. I think that the way we see the Lord interacting with people, not just in the two chapters I spoke about but in all the gospels, we could pick up a lot concerning how to shepherd.