

**HWMR: LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST, (Week 1)**

*Scripture Reading: 1 Cor. 8:1b; 12:31b; 13:1, 4-8, 13; 14:1, 3, 4b; John 21:15-17; Gal. 6:2-3*

**LOVING THE LORD AND LOVING ONE ANOTHER—  
THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY FOR US TO BE ANYTHING  
AND DO ANYTHING FOR THE ORGANIC BUILDING UP OF  
THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST**

1 Corinthians 8:1	Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.
1 Corinthians 12:31	But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And moreover I show to you a most excellent way.
1 Corinthians 13:1	If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.
1 Corinthians 13:4	Love suffers long. Love is kind; it is not jealous. Love does not brag and is not puffed up;
1 Corinthians 13:5	It does not behave unbecomingly and does not seek its own things; it is not provoked and does not take account of evil;
1 Corinthians 13:6	It does not rejoice because of unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
1 Corinthians 13:7	It covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
1 Corinthians 13:8	Love never falls away. But whether prophecies, they will be rendered useless; or tongues, they will cease; or knowledge, it will be rendered useless.
1 Corinthians 13:13	Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 14:1	Pursue love, and desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.
1 Corinthians 14:3	But he who prophesies speaks building up and encouragement and consolation to men.
1 Corinthians 14:4	He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church.
John 21:15	Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.
John 21:16	He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.
John 21:17	He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? Peter was grieved that He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep.
Galatians 6:2	Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ completely.
Galatians 6:3	For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

## Day 1

*2 Thessalonians 1:3* - We ought to thank God always concerning you, brothers, even as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of each one of you all to one another is increasing,

*Titus 3:15* - All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith. Grace be with you all.

*1 Timothy 1:14* - And the grace of our Lord superabounded with *faith and love in Christ Jesus*.

### I. Paul commended the Thessalonians by telling them that “your **faith** grows exceedingly and the **love** of each one of you all to one another **is increasing**”—2 Thes. 1:3:

- A. To believe in the Lord is to receive Him as life, and to **love the Lord** is to enjoy the very person whom we have received; faith is given to us by God so that by it we may receive Christ as our life; love issues out of such a wonderful faith and enables us to live out all the riches of the Triune God in Christ as our life—2 Pet. 1:1; Heb. 12:1-2a; 2 Cor. 4:13; Gal. 5:6; John 1:12-13; 21:15-17; Col. 3:4.
- B. To the apostle Paul the grace of the Lord “superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:14); through **faith** we receive the Lord (John 1:12), and through **love** we enjoy the Lord whom we have received (14:21, 23; 21:15-17).
- C. In this wonderful faith and by this super-excellent **love** of the **Triune God**, **we should love Him** and all those who belong to Him; only in this way can we become, in the current of the church’s degradation, the overcomers whom the Lord is calling and desiring to obtain in Revelation 2 and 3.

Life is a person, and there is no other way to apply and enjoy this person but by love. **We need to love Him.** Some of the saints in past centuries used to pray, “Lord, show me Your love that I may love You.” **We need to pray the same prayer.** Once we see the love of Jesus, we will be so constrained, so captured, and so attracted. We will spontaneously love Him. Then by loving Him, we will enjoy Him. This is life, and since this life is a person, there is no other way for us to experience Him but by love. **Only** by loving Jesus can we enjoy Him.

Many Christians today hold the teachings but are so cold toward the Lord. They have all the doctrines, the dispensations, the prophecies, and the types. Some even have doctor’s degrees in divine teachings, yet they are so cold toward the Lord Jesus. We can deal with teachings in this way, but we cannot deal with this person in a cold way. We **can** exercise our mind to deal with all the doctrines, and **yet** our heart remains cold. If we are going to deal with this person, **we must have a hot and loving heart**, a heart so full of affection that we would contact Him all the time. One book among the sixty-six books of the Bible, the Song of Songs, illustrates how the Lord Jesus is altogether lovely. This book shows how the Lord is so attractive and how we are those who love Him. We just love Him! Could you love some doctrine in this way? I do not believe that you could even love the gifts in this way. Do you love the gifts? Could you say, “O dear gifts, you are altogether lovely! Oh, the healing! Oh, the speaking in tongues! All the gifts are so sweet!”? Just try to speak in this way. It simply does not fit. But we can say a thousand times, “Lord Jesus, You are altogether lovely! O Lord Jesus, You are altogether lovely!” (*Life and Building as Portrayed in the Song of Songs, chapter 2*)

## Day 2

*Ephesians 5:25*

- Husbands, *love* your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her

*2 Corinthians 4:14-15*

- Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will make us stand before Him with you. For all things are for your sakes that the grace which has abounded through the greater number may cause the thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

### II. The Lord's recovery is a recovery of **loving the Lord Jesus with the first love**, the best love, and of loving one another for the building up of the organic Body of Christ, which is the building up of the New Jerusalem as the goal of God's eternal economy—Eph. 4:15-16; Rev. 2:4-5:

- A. The Christ whom we love is the **church-loving Christ**; when we love Him, we will love the church as He does—Eph. 5:25.
- B. The degradation of the church begins with our leaving the first love toward the Lord; to love the Lord with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the **preeminence**, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psalms 73:25-26.
- C. The very life that we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus is a person, and the only way to apply and enjoy this person is by **loving Him with the first love**; since the Lord Jesus as our life is a person, we need a new contact with Him to enjoy His present presence at this very moment and day by day—John 11:25; 14:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:14; John 14:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rev. 2:4-7; Col. 1:18b; Rom. 6:4; 7:6; *Hymns*, #559.
- D. We must be persons who are **flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ**; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to live to Him and love Him to the uttermost beyond our own control—2 Cor. 5:14.
- E. In order to love the Lord to the uttermost, **we need to be those who desire and seek** to dwell in the house of God all the days of our life to behold His beauty (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness) and to inquire of God in His temple; to inquire of God is to check with God about everything in our daily life—Psalms 27:4.

The Lord charges us to overcome all kinds of religion, and in these seven epistles He also charges us to overcome some other matters. The first thing we are charged to **overcome** is the leaving, the missing, the losing, of the first love. Many in Catholicism are absolutely for the Catholic Church, but they do not love the Lord or His holy Word. They do not say, "The Bible says..." Instead, they say, "The pope says..." or "The church says..." When they say "the church," they mean the Catholic Church. This is why the Lord Jesus in Revelation 2 says that Jezebel calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads His slaves astray. This indicates that the Roman Catholic Church is a self-appointed prophetess, one who presumes to be authorized by God to speak for God. Those who are loyal Catholics respect only what the pope says, what the church says. They do not care for what the Bible says. This indicates that they do not have any love given to the Lord.

**We need to overcome the loss of the first love.** The church in Ephesus was a good church. It was an orderly church and a formal church. Surely, we would like such a church, but such an orderly church had left the first love. The Greek word for first is the same as that translated "best" in Luke 15:22. **Our first love toward the Lord must be the best love for Him.** When the prodigal son in Luke 15 came back home, the father told the servants to bring the best robe. Best here means the first. (*The Overcomers*, chapter 2)

### Day 3

*1 John 4:8* - He who does not love has not known God, because God is love.

*1 John 4:19* - We love because He first loved us.

### III. Among the co-workers, the elders, the responsible ones, and everyone in the vital groups, **love must prevail**—1 Cor. 12:31b; 13:4-8, 13:

- A. We have been regenerated to be God's species, God's kind (John 1:12-13), and **God is love** (1 John 4:8, 16); since we become God in His life and nature but not in the Godhead, **we also should be love**; this means that we do not merely love others but that we are love itself.
- B. **We must keep ourselves** in the love of God and be constrained by the love of Christ to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers—Jude 19-21; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:14-16; 4:7-21.
- C. **God first loved us** in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers (vv. 19-21); to abide in God is to live a life in which we love others habitually with the love that is God Himself, that He may be expressed in us—vv. 16-17; *Hymns*, #546 and #547.
- D. We need to beware of **ambition** and **pride**:
  - 1. Whether or not we will be useful in the Lord's hands for the long run and whether or not we will bring in the blessing for a lasting time does not depend on what we can do but on how pure our heart is; **we need to have a pure heart**, purified from any form of subtle ambition in intention, purpose, motive, and action in the Lord's recovery—Matt. 5:8.
  - 2. **Pride** means **destruction**, and to be proud is to be a top fool; humility saves us from all kinds of destruction and invites God's grace—James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5.
  - 3. **We should never hunt to be the first** in any work for the Lord (3 John 9); rivalry in the Lord's work is not only a sign of **ambition** but also a sign of **pride**; referring to our capacity, success, perfection, and virtue is a careless form of pride (Luke 17:10; Phil. 1:15; Gal. 5:25-26).
  - 4. Thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think is another form of pride (Rom. 12:3); **self-boasting**, **self-exaltation**, **self-glorification**, **self-will**, **self-justification**, **self-righteousness**, and lusting after vainglory are all ugly and base expressions of pride (Gal. 5:25-26).
  - 5. **Wanting to be great** and not to be a servant and **wanting to be the first** and not to be a slave are also a **sign of pride**—Matt. 20:26-27.
  - 6. **We should pray for one another**, have an intimate concern for one another, cherish and nourish one another, and always cover one another, speak well of one another, and never expose one another's failures and defects (2 Cor. 7:2-3; Eph. 1:15-16; Philem. 4; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; cf. Matt. 24:49); **we need to forgive one another** and seek to be forgiven by one another (Col. 3:12-15).
  - 7. On the one hand, **we should have a clear sight** over the people for whom we care with much discernment, and on the other hand, **we should be blind spiritually**—Isa. 11:1-4a.
  - 8. **We should not speak reviling words**; to revile is to rebuke or criticize harshly or abusively; to revile is to assail someone with abusive language; to revile is not only to rebuke someone but also to sharply wound him and stamp him with open rudeness or contempt arising from arrogance—Gal. 5:14-15, 25-26:

- a. **Revilers** are ones who **beat** their fellow slaves, which means that they habitually mistreat fellow believers; revilers will not inherit the kingdom of God—Matt. 24:45-51; 1 Cor. 6:9-10.
- b. Those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; in order for the church to maintain the oneness, the **brothers and sisters must withstand reviling words**—v. 10; cf. Num. 6:6.
- c. The consciousness of sin comes from knowing God; in the same way, the consciousness of reviling words comes from the knowledge of the Body; reviling words are opposed to the testimony of the Body—1 Cor. 1:10.

**Love is not jealous**, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, never falls away, and is the greatest. Jealousy is in our nature. When a new child is born in a family, the other child may become jealous. Jealousy is also present in the church life. One sister may be jealous of another sister because she receives many Amens from the saints when she prays or prophesies. Some brothers may be jealous when they see that another brother has been appointed into the eldership. After being in the church life for over sixty years, I can testify that one of the hardest things is to appoint the elders. We realize that if we appoint a certain brother, another brother whom we do not feel to appoint may be stumbled because of jealousy. If a certain sister is asked to take the lead in a sisters' house, the others may become jealous, but love is not jealous.

Also, **love is not provoked**. People are easily provoked because of the **shortage of love**. Regardless of how much we are rebuked, we will not be provoked if we are filled with the divine love. Love does not take account of evil. We have to confess that we have taken account of other people's evil. Some wives have a record, an account, of their husband's failures and defects. This record may not be written, but it is in their mind. They are taking account of their husband's evil.

The elders need to realize that in their **shepherding**, they have to cover others' sins, to not take account of others' evils. **Love covers all things**, not only the good things but also the bad things. Whoever uncovers the defects, shortcomings, and sins of the members of the church is disqualified from the eldership. Our uncovering of the members under our eldership, our shepherding, annuls our qualification. **Love also endures all things** and never falls away. First Corinthians 13 concludes by saying, "Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (v. 13). (*The Vital Groups, chapter 8*)

#### Day 4

*1 Corinthians 12:31* - But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And moreover I show to you a **most excellent way**.

*1 Corinthians 13:13* - Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is **love**.

*2 Timothy 1:7* - For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of **love** and of sobermindedness.

#### **IV. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ—12:31b—13:8a:**

- A. The love described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 is the **expression of the divine life** (vv. 4-8a); furthermore, the fact that love is the fruit of the Spirit indicates that the substance of love must be the Spirit (Gal. 5:22); if we do not have love, our speaking is like that of sounding brass and a clanging cymbal, which give sounds without life (1 Cor. 13:1; 14:1,3, 4b, 12, 31; 2 Cor. 3:6).

- B. **Love** is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all things, endures all things, survives everything, and **is the greatest**—1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13.
- C. **We should be like God in our love for others**, loving people without any discrimination (Matt. 5:43-48); the first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was not a gentleman, but a criminal, a robber, sentenced to death; this is very meaningful (27:38; Luke 23:42-43).
- D. The law of the Spirit of life is the law of Christ as the **law of love**—Rom. 8:2; Gal. 6:2-3.
- E. The law of love must be substantiated by the law of the Spirit of life so that we may be able to bear one another's burdens (v. 2; Rom. 8:2); but if we are **filled with pride**, we will be **unable** to bear others' burdens because we **deceive** ourselves by thinking that we are something when we are nothing (Gal. 6:3).
- F. When the law of love is activated within us, we **automatically** and **spontaneously** will be shepherds who have the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ—John 21:15-17; Luke 15:3-7.
- G. When the law of love is activated within us, our labor in the Lord is a **labor of love** (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thes. 1:3) in which we "support the weak" (Acts 20:35) and "sustain the weak" (1 Thes. 5:14); *the weak* refers to those who are weak either in their spirit or soul or body, or are weak in faith (Rom. 14:1; 15:1).
- H. The church life is a life of brotherly love (1 John 4:7-8; 2 John 5-6; John 15:12, 17; Rev. 3:7; Eph. 5:2; cf. Jude 12a), and the **Body builds itself up in love** (Eph. 4:16).
- I. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"; we may listen to the messages of the ministry and become puffed up with mere knowledge—1 Cor. 8:1b; cf. 2 Cor. 3:6.
- J. Our God-given, regenerated spirit is a spirit of love; **we need a burning spirit of love** to conquer the degradation of today's church—2 Tim. 1:7.
- K. As the branches of Christ, the true vine, **we need to love one another** in order to express the divine life in fruit-bearing—John 15:12-17.

The end of 1 Corinthians 12 reveals that **love is the most excellent way**. How can one be an elder? Love is the most excellent way. How can one be a co-worker? Love is the most excellent way. How do we shepherd people? Love is the most excellent way. Love is the most excellent way for us to prophesy and to teach others. Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything.

**Love prevails.** **We should love everybody**, even our enemies. If the co-workers and elders do not love the bad ones, eventually, they will have nothing to do. We must be perfect as our Father is perfect by loving the evil ones and the good ones without any discrimination. We must be perfect as our Father because we are His sons, His species. This is most crucial. How can we be a co-worker and an elder? It is by love in every way. **We must love any kind of person**. The Lord Jesus said that He came to be a Physician, not for the healthy ones but for the sick ones. The Lord said, "Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who are ill" (9:12).

The church is not a police station to arrest people or a law court to judge people but a home to raise up the believers. Parents know that the worse their children are, the more they need their raising up. If our children were angels, they would not need our parenting to raise them up. The church is a **loving home** to raise up the children. The church is also a **hospital** to heal and to recover the sick ones. Finally, the church is a **school** to teach and edify the unlearned ones who do not have much understanding. Because the church is a home, a hospital, and a school, the co-workers and elders should be one with the Lord to raise up, to heal, to recover, and to teach others in love. (*The Vital Groups, chapter 8*)

## Day 5

*John 21:16* - He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, *Shepherd My sheep.*

*1 Peter 5:2-4* - *Shepherd* the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly; Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

**V. John 21, a chapter on *shepherding*, is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John; after His resurrection the Lord shepherded Peter and commissioned him to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep; this is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, the church, which issues in the Body of Christ—vv. 15-17:**

- A. Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he tells the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer (Christ) of their souls—1 Pet. 2:25.
- B. He exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they will receive the unfading crown of glory (5:1-4); Peter's word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to *shepherd the church* of God as His flock, which issues in His Body.
- C. The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ's heavenly ministry are to *build up the Body of Christ*, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God.

## Day 6

*Psalms 23:1* - Jehovah is my Shepherd; I will lack nothing.

*2 Corinthians 7:3-4* - I do not say this to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts for our dying together and our living together. Great is my boldness toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction.

**VI. Psalms 22—24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion to His kingship in the coming age; in Psalm 22 we see *Christ's death*, His *resurrection*, and His many brothers produced in His resurrection to form His church; in Psalm 23 we see Christ as the *Shepherd* in His resurrection; and in Psalm 24 we see Christ as the *coming King* in His kingdom:**

- A. These three psalms show that between Christ's death and resurrection in the past and Christ's coming again as the King in His kingdom in the future is the enjoyment, experience, and expression of Christ as our **pneumatic Shepherd** in the present.
- B. This reveals that *shepherding* is the bridge between Christ's first coming and His second coming; in His heavenly ministry Christ is presently shepherding people, and if we participate in His wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival, a new revival, in the Lord's recovery to bring Christ back.

**VII. In taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life—2 Cor. 7:2-7; 12:15; Philem. 7, 12:**

- A. In shepherding the saints, it is possible that we may kill others; the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of **intimate concern**—cf. 2 Cor. 3:6:
  - 1. The milk of the word of God, the life supply of Christ, should be used to **nourish** the new believers in Christ, not to “boil” them—1 Pet. 2:2; Exo. 23:19b.
  - 2. If we have the ability to carry on a work but lack an intimate concern, our work will be fruitless; **our heart must be enlarged to embrace all believers** regardless of their condition—2 Cor. 6:10-11.
- B. How fruitful we are, how much fruit we bear, does not depend on what we are able to do; it depends on whether we have an **intimate concern**.
- C. A ministering life is a life that warms up others; if we would minister life to the saints, **we must have a genuine concern** for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate.

It is possible to become knowledgeable in spiritual matters and powerful in preaching and yet still be unfruitful. In fact, instead of being fruitful and ministering life, such a person may cause others to suffer death. A brother may even visit another locality and hold a conference, but the results of that conference may be that many are killed. They are killed not by wrong words, but by right words. Furthermore, in the **shepherding of the saints**, it is also possible that we may kill others. The reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern. A brother who has a conference with a particular church may be concerned only for the giving of messages; he may **not** have any **genuine concern** for the church in that locality. Likewise, we may visit a family to shepherd them, but we may not have any loving concern. Rather, our motive may be to display our knowledge, spirituality, gift, or capability. The result is a killing.

Some mothers seem to be short of wisdom. Yet even though they are not clever, they raise their children in a very good way because they have a loving concern for them. Such mothers have a tender, intimate concern for their children. On the contrary, some step-mothers may be knowledgeable, gifted, and clever; however, they lack the necessary concern for the children. In taking care of children, what is most important is not knowledge or ability—it is an **intimate concern**. The same is true in taking care of churches or in shepherding the saints. What is needed is the **intimate concern of a ministering life**. The brothers who hold conferences with churches must have a genuine concern for the churches. They should not merely be interested in giving excellent messages as a display of their knowledge, talent, or capability. (*Life-Study of 2 Corinthians, chapter 44*)