

*Why We Read and Promote
the Ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee*

<https://shepherdingwords.com/why-we-read-and-promote-the-ministry-of-watchman-neo-and-witness-lee/>
(Shepherding Words – September 7, 2024)

Sometimes we who meet in the local churches are asked **why** we read and promote the **ministry** of **Watchman Nee** and **Witness Lee**. When we are asked such a question, we should not become defensive but rather explain why we appreciate the ministry of these two servants of the Lord so much.

The **ministry** of **Watchman Nee** and **Witness Lee** is unique in that:

1. It **focuses** on God's **eternal heart's desire**, calls the **good pleasure of God's will** (Eph. 1:5, 11).
2. It has **shown** us the **eternal purpose of God**,
 - the **way** to accomplish His purpose,
 - and how we can **participate** in that purpose (Eph. 3:11, 9; 1:9-11; 4:12, 15-16).
3. It has **opened** up the **central line of the Bible**,
 - showing us that in order **to carry out** His plan, which the **Bible** calls **God's economy**,
 - the Triune God **created** the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1)
 - and then **entered** into that creation by becoming **incarnated** in Christ (John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16),
 - who, through **death** and **resurrection**, became a **life-giving Spirit** (1 Cor. 15:45b)
 - so that He could **regenerate** men (John 3:6)
 - to become **members** of the **Body of Christ** (1 Cor. 12:27),
 - which will **consummate** in the **New Jerusalem** as the mutual **dwelling place** of God and man for eternity (Rev. 21:2-3, 22).
4. It has **brought** us to realize that **God is working out His plan**
 - **to build up** the **Body of Christ** through His **complete salvation**.
God's complete salvation is of **two parts**.
The **first part** is accomplished **judicially** through the **death of Christ** (Rom. 5:10a) and includes
 - the **forgiveness** and **washing away** of our sins (Luke 24:47; Heb. 1:3),
 - **justification** (Rom. 3:24-25),
 - **reconciliation** to God (2 Cor. 5:19),
 - and **positional sanctification** (1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:12).The **second part** is carried out in the **life of God's Son**,
 - which is the **eternal life** that we received when we believed in the Lord (Rom. 5:10b; Eph. 4:18; 1 John 5:12),
 - the **indestructible life** by which He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him (Heb. 7:16, 25).

Through the **life-giving Spirit**,

- o God **regenerated** us with His divine life (John 3:3, 5; 1:12-13)
- o with the goal of progressively **sanctifying** us with His divine nature (Rom. 15:16; 2 Thes. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:4),
- o **renewing** us inwardly (Titus 3:5; Rom. 12:2),
- o and **transforming** us with His very element (2 Cor. 3:18),
- o ultimately **conforming** us to the image of Christ and bringing us fully into His glorious expression (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10).

The **ministry** of **Watchman Nee** and **Witness Lee**

5. seeks to bring believers into a subjective **knowing of Christ as their life** (Col. 3:4).
6. presented to us, the **unsearchably rich Christ**
 - as the gospel (Eph. 3:8),
 - as the portion given to us by God (Col. 1:12; John 3:16).
7. It has **shown** us that this **Christ is now living in us** (2 Cor. 13:5),
 - dwelling in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22),
 - and even becoming one spirit with us (1 Cor. 6:17).
8. It has **shown** us our need **to grow in Christ**,
 - not merely in objective knowledge of the Bible, but in His life (Eph. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:2; cf. 1 Cor. 8:1).
9. It has **inspired** us -
 - to **pursue** knowing Christ and being found in Him,
 - to **gain** His very person (Phil. 3:9-14),
 - to be **filled** with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18),
 - and to **live and magnify** Christ by the bountiful supply of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19-21).
10. This **ministry** has **shown** us that it is **these** subjective truths, **not** principles of outward behavior, that will **issue** in the **building up of the Body of Christ**
 - to accomplish God's eternal purpose according to His heart's desire (Eph. 3:16-21).

Moreover, this **ministry** has **encouraged** us

- ✓ that every believer through the grace of Christ can reach unbelievers with the gospel (Acts 8:4)
- ✓ and build up the church by speaking to one another in mutuality (1 Cor. 14:26),
- ✓ and it has endeavored to perfect believers in such service to the Lord (Eph. 4:11-12).

It has **led** us

- ✓ to **abandon** the unscriptural clergy/laity and denominational systems (both of which frustrate the growth in life and development in function of the members of Christ's Body).

Our brothers' **ministry** has caused us

- ✓ to seek to maintain a testimony of practical oneness by **meeting** according to the **New Testament pattern of the boundary of a local church** being the city in which it resides (Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11),
- ✓ while at the same time seeking to **maintain oneness** with our fellow believers who choose not to meet on that basis (Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3).

Watchman Nee and **Witness Lee** were born in China, ... both men came from **Christian families** and were students not only of the Bible but also of Christian history and of historical **Western Christian** thought. From their study they gleaned the best of Christian teaching through the past two millennia, including many teachings that have been abandoned or neglected by contemporary Christian teachers, many of whom fall into the category of those who **tickle** the ears of their audiences (2 Tim. 4:3).

- On the one hand, we **treasure**
 - the recovery of **justification by faith** through **Martin Luther** and the **Reformers**,
 - the recovery of the **preaching of the gospel** through men such as **John Wesley** and **George Whitfield**,
 - the opening of the many **biblical truths** through **John Nelson Darby** and the **Brethren**,
 - the recovery of the subjective **experience of the indwelling Christ** by saints such as **William Law** and **Andrew Murray**, among many others.
- On the other hand, we **realize**
 - that all of these recoveries **fall short** of what **God desires to do today**,
 - which is to work out the **building up** of the **Body of Christ**
 - through knowing Christ experientially as **our life and everything**,
 - **developing** the function of every member of the **Body of Christ**,
 - and **practicing** the oneness of the Body in **local churches** according to the **New Testament pattern**.

We have observed that **ministries that emphasize other matters**, even objective biblical truths or proper spiritual principles, **can distract us**

- from **God's goal of the building up** of the Body of Christ to be His fullness and
- from the **central line of God's economy** to accomplish that purpose (Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3-4).

In short, we find in the **ministry** of **Watchman Nee** and **Witness Lee** the ministry that most closely matches the central focus and the breadth of **the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament**, and we are willing to settle for nothing less (Acts 2:42; Titus 1:9).