

Residency and Testimony – Truth or Twisting?

After our article [“Remember, Obey, and Greet the Ones Leading You”](#) published last December 18, 2009 to cut straight the word of the truth on Hebrews 13: 7, 17 and 24 which the dissenting sister had misused, she recently came up with a rejoinder entitled *“Residency and Testimony,”* where she defends what she previously wrote in her article about seven alleged requirements for an elder.

In that new write-up, the sister purports that her requirements are scriptural and according to the ministry, saying *“Actually these are not our ‘added’ requirements but part and parcel of the original requirements stated by the Holy Word and expounded by our dear brother Watchman Nee,”* quoting Brother Nee’s *The Normal Christian Church Life and Church Affairs* to support her claims. Is the sister presenting the truth or another one of her subjective interpretations? Was she faithful to the burden of Brother Nee or did she yet again twist his words?

Herein we reiterate, for the benefit of readers who might have been confused by her latest writing, the errors in truth and in fact of the sister’s original and continuing claims. We present once again the seven requirements she originally listed in her first writing, through a number of requirements she imposed on the elders and thereby considers those falling under these conditions to be unworthy of emulation or obedience from the saints:

- 1. One who still celebrates his or his children’s birthday and even invites saints to go to his house to celebrate with them;*
- 2. **One who resides in one locality but has his church life in another locality;***
- 3. **One who already resides in another locality but still holds on to his service in the locality where he formerly resided in;***
- 4. One who is a mere sign board telling the saints what to do but does not move out of its place to do what it says;*
- 5. **One whose wife and children do not love or live the church life;***
- 6. One who would not preach the gospel to his mother because she would reprimand him for it;*
- 7. One who would not voluntarily pray to end a very grave meeting.*

It is noteworthy to point out that she had seven requirements in total, and her rejoinder only tackled the three items we have emphasized in bold. Why was the sister silent on the other requirements she originally listed? Her selective defense indicates that she took up only that which she could defend while leaving out the other legalistic and overbearing items which she could not defend from the Word or the ministry.

Surely, an elder celebrating his or his child’s birthday or being a sign board telling the saints what to do or not preaching to his mother or not voluntarily praying to end a very grave meeting are not part and parcel of the *“original requirements stated by the Holy Word and expounded by our dear Brother Watchman Nee.”* Such unscriptural requirements, added by her in her editorial to score the elders who do not support her

views, while perhaps showing an elder who may be weak or even remiss, do not disqualify one from being an elder in the Word and in the ministry.

On Residency

In considering her two defenses, we tackle head on the matters of residency and testimony. Her first item defends her requirement of residency for an elder. Here she quotes pages 164-165 of Brother Nee's *The Normal Christian Church Life* where he stated that elders are local brothers:

“If we transfer a man from some other place to control a church, we are departing from scriptural ground. Here again we see the difference between the churches and the work. A brother may be transferred to another place to take care of the work there, but no brother can be sent out of his own locality to bear the burdens of the church in another place.”

By reading the whole chapter, we realize that what she is claiming patently missed the point of Brother Nee. “Residency” was neither the burden of Brother Nee's words in the quoted pages or in an earlier chapter entitled *“The Elders Appointed by the Apostles.”* His emphasis in these pages was the difference between the churches and the work, the co-workers and the elders. Therefore, he stated that the local churches are intensely local, and that all local matters should be handled by the elders, who are local brothers. To transfer a man from some other place to control a church is unscriptural. This is to say that to transfer a brother from another church to manage the affairs of a local church is unscriptural. The Biblical pattern is clear: the apostles work among the churches, while the elders manage a local church. It follows that an elder cannot be extra-local, and cannot manage more than one church.

Elders cannot be extra-local like the apostles, and conversely, apostles cannot control or manage a local church. In this context, Brother Nee points out to us the erroneous practice of many Christian groups where a pastor or Christian worker or elder from another place is made to manage another assembly in a different place. Since the elders are appointed among local brothers, it follows therefore that one cannot transfer a brother from another church, whether a co-worker or even an elder, to manage the affairs of a local church.

However, the sister twisted these very words of Brother Nee to support her requirement that elders need to be residents of the church where they are serving at all times. She emphasized that *“one who resides in one locality but has his church life in another locality”* and *“one who already resides in another locality but still holds on to his service in the locality where he formerly resided in”* are examples of improper elders.

A careful reading of her two requirements related to these matters show that her claims are different from Brother Nee's words. First, Watchman Nee's words make no mention of a responsible brother moving his residence to another locality after having been appointed. Second, Brother Nee's words stating that an elder should not be a brother “transferred” shows that such a brother in his mind would necessarily be one already in another church. Here is another instance of the sister putting words into the mouth of Brother Nee.

The sister narrowly construed the words of Brother Nee and expounded it to mean what he did not say. Nowhere did Brother Nee state that the elders need to be residents of the locality where he is serving when he was appointed and continuously live there while he serves there as an elder. If that was the intent of his words, he would have forthrightly said so.

In fact, only the sister seems to have this misunderstanding of Brother Nee's words, because no one in the Lord's recovery has ever made an issue of what she has in the past 90 years among us. In our practice among the churches through the years, there were many instances where elders do not live exactly in the locality where they are serving as elders, and neither Brother Nee nor Brother Lee ever questioned this. Moreover, Brother Lee himself is known to have time and again appointed as elders brothers who do not exactly reside in the city where they are serving. Are we to believe that Brother Lee does not know the truth?

When Brother Nee said elders are chosen from among the local brothers, it simply meant that the elders are brothers who are meeting or serving in that locality where they are eventually appointed as responsible brothers. Such a brother may actually be living in the locality, or even live in a nearby locale which affords him the convenience and opportunity to shepherd the flock in the locality he is appointed to oversee.

Even our dear Brother Liu Chi Cheng never understood the requirements for eldership the way the sister does, because he had appointed a number of brothers living in another locality to serve as elders in a local church where he does not reside in. Moreover, on many occasions when elders who have moved their residence to another locality went to him to ask to be discharged from their eldership, Brother Liu prevailed upon them to stay on as overseers in the locality where they no longer resided. Why did the sister not seek clarification from Brother Liu on these matters when he was still actively serving among us?

Actually, these things were not unknown to the sister. On many of these occasions, she was even the translator when Brother Liu asked elders who had moved their residence out of the locality where they were serving to stay on as elders. A brother even recalls that she herself had prevailed upon him to stay put as an elder in the locality where he is serving even though he no longer lived there! Such incidents repeatedly transpired over the past 25 years. Obviously, since she was Brother Liu's translator, she should have been clear that the requirement of "residency" for an elder was never an issue with Brother Liu. Has the truth changed or has the sister changed?

Outwardly, while she professes love and claims closeness and faithfulness in following the steps of Brother Liu, yet her actions here repeatedly heaped contempt upon our brother by questioning his decisions. Why does she, while knowing well how Brother Liu feels about the matter, and without privately seeking fellowship with him, bring out to the public her dissension from Brother Liu's practice? While she claims to honor Brother Liu and persists in misusing Brother Liu's name as a shield to defend herself and justify her lawless works, she attacks him publicly and insults him by attacking how he had appointed and retained elders.

By insisting on “residency” as a legal requirement for the eldership, it is clear that the sister is taking exception with Brother Lee, and criticizing Brother Liu. In reality, she is not just touching man’s hand, but God’s. In questioning the appointment of many elders both here and abroad who fall under the circumstances she describes, she is questioning the Holy Spirit who has ordained and confirmed these brothers as elders among the churches.

On the issue of “residency”, are we to believe that the dissenting sister has a better grasp of the Bible and a clearer revelation from God than our brothers Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and Liu Chi Cheng?

On Testimony

In her new article, she also defended her requirement number 5 by quoting Brother Nee’s words in *Church Affairs*, 1 Timothy 3:4-5, and Brother Lee’s word in his footnote to the verse that to *“manage one’s own house well is a proof that one is qualified to take the oversight of a local church.”*

In doing so, the sister was clearly trying to muddle the issue, because no one is confuting the Scriptural requirement for elders to be those who can manage their household well with their children under subjection. Contrary to what the sister likes people to believe, we are not saying that an elder does not need to have a proper testimony by being one who manages his own household well.

For an elder to manage his own household well is indeed scriptural. This item was, in fact, part of the many requirements of an elder we had listed in our earlier article *“Remember, Obey, and Greet the Ones Leading You”* which we recommend for readers to revisit to enjoy the many rich truths presented from the ministry. However, the sister’s requirement goes beyond what the Scripture says. While the Bible only requires that an elder be able to manage his own household and bring his children under subjection, pertaining to a private family matter that supports a good testimony, the sister requires that an elder must necessarily have a wife and children who love/live the church life. Otherwise, they can be disqualified. This is farthest from the truth.

An elder may manage his own household well and have his children under subjection and yet his wife and children may not love or live the church life all the time. No one has control over others. Only the Lord does. As parents, we can only pray for, exhort and admonish our children in love, but we cannot compel them, because God’s way is not to force man. In the Old Testament, the fact that Samuel’s sons were disreputable disqualified them, and not Samuel, from God’s service. Surely, Samuel must have lamented this situation, but the failure of his sons did nothing to diminish the delegated authority upon him. Without a doubt, parents do need to diligently teach the Lord’s word to their children (Deut. 6:6-7) and nurture their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). However, in his footnote, Brother Lee reminded us that how the children develop depends on God’s mercy.

While it is much better if the whole household of an elder were to be one mind, one heart and one soul with him in loving the Lord and living the church life, there is no such requirement from the word or from the ministry that an elder necessarily needs to have a

wife and children who love and live the church life. Either the sister is confused or is confusing others.

A Pattern of Deviation from the Truth

The sister's erroneous teaching on the scriptural requirements for eldership is another example of her subjectivity carried over into her teaching. This is by no means the only instance. Not counting her more recent different teaching on how Philadelphia becomes Laodicea [For details please read [“What Makes Philadelphia a Laodicea?”](#)] and her erroneous claim that living overcomers can only come from Philadelphia [For details please read [“Are the Living Overcomers Only from Philadelphia?”](#)], the [“May 2 letter from the elders of the church in Malabon”](#) listed at least twenty items where she had deviated from the truth.

First, she insists on “universal service”, which she redefines as *“all the saints, both brothers and sisters, should take part in all the services in the church and in the Lord's work”* [Emphasis Added]. Clearly this is not so as there are no female elders, sisters may not teach the truth with authority, and no sister baptizes among us.

In a reply to the elders, she stressed that her article *“Upholding the Universal Service”* should be read together with her article entitled *“Gender.”* We must note, however, that *“Upholding the Universal Service”* came out in October 2009 and *“Gender”* came out in December 2009, a good two months after the first article. They could not possibly have been read together when *“Upholding the Universal Service”* came out. Furthermore, *“Gender”* merely admits to and corrects her previous error in *“Upholding the Universal Service”* by pointing out that no female can be elders while adding that only sisters wear head coverings. These were the only two cases she yielded to indications of differences in gender. It does not admit to the fact that sisters do not baptize or give messages among us, or that sisters are not allowed to teach the truth with authority in the Scriptures.

Second, she claims that for one to teach that “sisters need to submit to brothers” in the principle of head covering in the church is unscriptural, despite the clear word in 1 Corinthians 11 as expounded to us by both brothers Nee and Lee, words which she twisted to suit her ends. [For more details, please read our article [“Is it Unscriptural for Sisters to Submit to Brothers?”](#) and DCP's article [“Women in the Divine Administration”](#)]

Third, in order to vindicate her refusal to be under the head covering of the brothers, she redefined head covering and limited its application only to ethical human relationships.

Fourth, to support her own interpretation of how house-to-house Lord's table meeting should be practiced, she taught that *“in no section of the Holy Scriptures could we find breaking of the bread done in the ‘temple’ or in big congregational meeting of the saints,”* disregarding Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 11:20. [For more details, please read [“What is the Scriptural Meaning and Practice of the Lord's Table Meeting?”](#)]

Fifth, to prove her point that a house-to-house Lord's table meeting only requires two or three gathered together, she misapplied the Lord's breaking of bread with the two disciples going down to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-55) to be a Lord's table meeting, when it

was not. [For more details, please read [*“Was Jesus’ Breaking of Bread with the Two Disciples Going to Emmaus a Lord’s Table Meeting?”*](#)]

Sixth, to project the image of being an Antipas, she erroneously alleged that *“Antipas will be the recipient of God’s blessing by way of much spiritual fruits for Christ’s multiplication and God’s glory,”* in contrast to the Biblical record in Revelation 2:12-17 where Antipas was never related to fruits and multiplication. [For more details, please read [*“What Really Was the Lord’s Blessing and Reward to Antipas?”*](#)]

Seventh, in her writing that sows seeds of suspicion and dissent in the saints toward the elders, she added extra-Biblical requirements for eldership such as *“residency in the locality of the church where the brother is an elder”* or *“an elder’s wife and children needing to love/live the church life,”* and other trivial yet overbearing allegations against the elders which have no basis in the Word. [For more details, please read [*“Remember, Obey and Greet the Ones Leading You”*](#)]

Eighth, in making a point that an apostle is answerable only to the Holy Spirit, she propounded an unscriptural teaching that Barnabas was stripped of his apostleship in Acts 15, despite Paul’s reaffirmation of Barnabas’s apostleship in 1 Corinthians 9:6 which he recorded under divine inspiration after he and Barnabas had split up in the work.

Ninth, to promote her style of house-to-house Lord’s table meeting, she developed and elevated a descriptive practice into an absolute prescriptive teaching and yoke, to force it upon the churches through her *Yellow Book*, website and other writings. [For more details, please read [*“What were the Practices of the Early Church Life in Acts 2?”*](#)]

Tenth, in overemphasizing the matter of house-to-house Lord’s table meeting, she claimed that it is the optimum means to bring the Lord back, yet the ministry clearly shows us that hastening the Lord’s return has nothing to do with any practice of meeting, because it is the producing of the overcomers, the reality of the Body of Christ, and the manifestation of authority that hastens His return. [For more details, please read [*“Is House-to-House Lord’s Table Meeting the Optimum Way of Hastening the Lord’s Return?”*](#)]

Eleventh, to justify her insubordination to the elders, she taught that as a “pioneer” of the church, she is exempt from submitting to the elders who all came in after her, but rather that the elders need to submit to her.

Twelfth, she mixed up “quarantine” with “excommunication” and “cutting off”, and in anticipation of a possible quarantine, made the extraordinary claim that Brother Lee taught that *“No Christian can ever be cut off from the body of Christ unless he commit the sins in 1 Corinthians 5”* allegedly based on *Elders’ Training Book 4*, p. 76, when such was not the context of Brother Lee’s words. After the elders of the church in Malabon and the co-workers in Northern Philippines recently made a call for her to be quarantined, she responded that what they did was a *“devious scheme”* and an *“evil effort to cut her off from the Body of Christ.”*

Thirteenth, in enumerating her own criteria to absolve themselves from division, she limited division only to mean: (1) not meeting in the local ground of oneness, (2) not

bringing fruits to the church but to oneself, and (3) not bringing the offerings to the church but keeping it to oneself.

Fourteenth, so that her website may not fall under being a “work within the work”, she redefined it by teaching that such a work only exists where (1) *the souls gained for Christ be given to the service group of the web site; (2) the souls of the new believers be not delivered to the local churches; and (3) offerings be not given to the local churches but for a separate organization which has been raised up by the group serving in this web site.* [For more details, please read [“No Uncertain Sounding of the Trumpet in the Lord’s Ministry”](#)]

Fifteenth, she defined “abiding in the vine” as necessarily only related to “bearing fruits” and “increase” without regard for the Word, disregarding an important prerequisite that to let the Lord abide in us is to let His words abide in us (John 15:7).

Sixteenth, she projects herself to be a shining star and insinuate that the leading ones in the work and the elders among the churches are wandering stars. [For more details, please read [“Who are the Shining Stars and the Wandering Stars?”](#)]

Seventeenth, she subverts the authority in the church by teaching that increase in numbers and the function of the members alone are the basis for authority, speaking half truths because in the very pages she quoted from Brother Nee, the first item he presented on delegated authorities in the church is concerning the elders, which she ignored and hid from her readers, thereby changing the meaning of his words altogether. [For more details, please read [“Who are God’s Delegated Authorities in the Body?”](#)]

Eighteenth, she teaches that a co-worker is responsible to God alone, is not accountable to others, and may not be limited by men in any way.

Nineteenth, she elevated a co-worker to a position higher than the elders and saints to lord it over them, and even maintain that elders have no standing to write letters of fellowship to her.

Twentieth, she changed many of the facts in the Bible in her writings like those pertaining to Theophilus, Cornelius, Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, etc, adding to or subtracting from the facts in the Scriptures. [For more details, please read [“Why is it Important to Handle the Facts in the Bible Accurately?”](#)]

Motivation for Her Writings

It is interesting that while the sister purported to be concerned for the proper practice of the church life by standing on the ground of oneness in the locality in her writings on residency, she applied it in the case of the elders to necessarily require them to reside in the locale where they are shepherding the flock at all times, while she made no such requirement for the serving ones or saints in general. In fact, she embraces the idea that whole districts or areas that belong to another locality (and all the saints therein) may be part of the church in another locality!

In one of her earlier articles entitled “600 Homes (Phase II) – ‘Root Hairs’”, she wrote: *“Cluster Two encompasses the four barangays Hulong Duhat, Dampalit, Flores, Bayan-bayanan of Malabon and Barangay Tanza of Navotas. For practical spreading, Tanza is spiritually attached to Malabon because every resident of Tanza needs to pass through Cluster Two and Cluster Three of Malabon before he would be able to go to other parts of Navotas; unless, of course, he travels by water or by air; as long as he travels by land, he has to pass through Malabon.”*

Her arguments scrape the bottom of the barrel, even if we are to follow her train of thought and grant her some leeway. To take as an example the churches in Malabon and Navotas that she cited, why does she require the elders of Navotas to necessarily live in Navotas while justifying the practical reason for a whole barangay of Navotas (and the saints therein including district coordinators and other serving ones) to be part of the church in Malabon where they do not reside? Is there any scriptural basis for whole territories and groups of saints that geographically belong to a certain local church to be transferred to another church because of convenience while requiring the elders to stay put? Furthermore, in this illustration, it is possible and probable that a faithful brother living in Tanza might eventually and rightly be appointed as an elder of the church in Malabon because he has been meeting and serving in the church in Malabon which Tanza has been made a part of, although in reality he lives in Navotas and not Malabon.

To be clear, we have nothing against Tanza saints meeting with cluster 2 of Malabon. The matter only comes under scrutiny because it is one of two irreconcilable positions taken and propounded by the sister. We are merely pointing out that in order to be principled and faithful to what she perceives to be “scriptural residency requirements for elders” that she teaches, the dissenting sister cannot have it both ways. Her dogmatic requirement that elders need to reside where they serve should also apply to the serving ones and saints of Tanza as well. Why the conflict and contradiction in her two arguments? Why the inconsistency and discrepancy in the *“spiritual education”* she was teaching? Where is the absoluteness for the truth? Isn’t this another case of her whimsically teaching as “truth” whatever suits her ends and advances her positions?

Here we must highlight to readers the motivation of the sister in insisting on her perverse logic and erroneous teachings. Like the case of her latest article we are reviewing, her original articles were not motivated by care for, but rebellion against the elders, which is why she singles them out. Her past and present actuations clearly pinpoint to insubordination and sowing seeds of rebellion and dissent in the church and in the work.

Furthermore, readers must realize that the narrowness by which she constricts and repeatedly misinterprets the words of brothers Nee and Lee shows how legalistic she is. Particularly, she likes to quote Brother Nee’s book *The Normal Christian Church Life* and use it against the co-workers and elders; this she does against Brother Nee’s own words at the concluding paragraph of the preface where he warns against using the book as a manual for service:

*“One of the prayers I have offered in connection with this book is that the Lord should keep it from those who oppose and would use it as a chart for attack, and also from those who agree and would use it as a manual for service. I dread the latter far more than the former.” (W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Volume 30, Preface to the English Edition, LSM*)*

A Word of Admonition

The opposing sister's various errors in teaching and in truth also resulted from her refusal to take heed to the apostle Paul's word for women not to exercise authority over men, especially in teaching the truth (1 Tim. 2:11-12). As a sister, her head needs to be covered by the brothers, and yet she refuses to submit to God's ordination.

This is not exactly anything new at all, because other sisters throughout history have also taken the same adversarial stance as a presage to horrible mixture and a terrible end. Brother Nee said:

"I. Concerning Women Teaching

First Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 14, and Revelation 2 all show that God forbids a woman from teaching. Any sect that is started by a woman or headed up by one, or any group in which the woman occupies the same place as the man is highly suspicious. More than half of the heresies in the world have been started by women. For example, the founder of the Christian Scientists was Mary Baker Eddy, and the founder of the Seventh-day Adventists was Mrs. White. When the Bible speaks about Roman Catholicism, it also refers to the teaching of the woman Jezebel." (*W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 3, Volume 50, Messages for Building Up New Believers (3), p. 951, LSM*) [Emphasis Added]

Brother Nee's strong words are a sober warning for us not to be complacent. Small divergences from the apostles' teaching, especially when accumulated over time, eventually result in far-off deviations. The dissenting sister has demonstrably been shown to have deformed and twisted the Scriptures and the ministry many times over. She clearly exhibited an immodest penchant for teaching recklessly which has resulted to so many deviant teachings that have developed into a system of error threatening to toss and carry about the unsuspecting and unprepared saints. In order to practice the truth, we need to reject such different teachings and turn away from such divisive works to stay in the central lane of God's New Testament economy.

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