

FELLOWSHIP FOR FULL-TIMERS

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE TWO: BEING SPIRITUAL IN OUR PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

We have covered four matters that determine whether we are spiritual. How do we know if we are spiritual? First, do we have the Lord Himself, with His presence and His lordship? If we are not quite sure the Lord is with us, then everything else doesn't matter. Second, do we have the Lord's speaking? If we answer "no," it doesn't mean that the Lord is not speaking to us. It may mean that because we consider too much and struggle too hard, we cannot hear the Lord's speaking. If we lack either of these first two items, then our life cannot be harmonious. Harmony, which is the third item, depends on the Lord's presence and the Lord's speaking. If we are too occupied, or if we are always in the realm of "fair" and "not fair," then our life cannot be in harmony. When we are overly conscious of and affected by our environment, it actually means that we are not spiritual. However, even when we do feel harmonious, we still must be careful. Our self-life could be involved. This is why we must have the fourth item, a healthy self-awareness. Self-awareness will cause us to focus on spiritual things.

As a full-timer we must learn these lessons over our entire life. No matter how fruitful or operative we are, we must still ask ourselves whether we have these four things. Do we have the Lord's presence in a sweet way? Do we also have the Lord's presence in a "hard" way? Has the Lord ever told us, "This is My decision, whether you like it or not." That is to have His lordship along with His presence.

When we have His lordship we realize, “Lord, this arrangement is from You. This is Your government.” Then in turn we can be restful and enjoy the sweetness of the Lord’s presence. In this enjoyment, we will have the Lord’s speaking. We will also be in harmony with the Lord and with His environmental arrangement. A full-timer must learn to go beyond his environment. “Lord, where You have placed me is difficult. I feel like there is nothing for me here. But I am still in harmony with You, because You are with me. This environment is from You.” Then as we are in harmony, we should have a strong self-awareness. This is to be a spiritual person.

THE EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUALITY

Being spiritual can be likened to a circle, with a center and a circumference. In the center of this circle are four items: the Lord with His presence, the Lord’s speaking, harmony with our environment, and self-awareness. These four matters can be considered as the “center” of being spiritual. As a full-timer serving the Lord, we must have these four items as our center. If being spiritual is like a circle, then what is on the circumference of that circle? The circumference of the circle represents the expression of spirituality. Spirituality is exercised and expressed through seven different items.

AS A FULL-TIMER, WE MUST BE SPIRITUAL:

- 1) In practice*
- 2) In pursuing*
- 3) In laboring*
- 4) In handling church affairs*
- 5) In relating to the saints*
- 6) In responding or reacting to things*
- 7) In finance*

A spiritual person is one who is spiritual in regard to each of these seven items. This means that our entire full-time serving life must be spiritual.

We should remember that these seven items are the circumference of a circle. In other words, one item is not more important than the others. Even though we have listed them in a certain order, not one item can be counted by itself. All of the seven items are related to each other and coordinated with one another. We should not isolate them. Each item backs up the other six items, and not one of them is more crucial than another. These seven items should be our life. Now that we are serving the Lord full-time, we must be spiritual. Our spirituality will be tested by these seven items.

OUR PRACTICE MUST BE A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The first item in the expression of spirituality is the matter of practice. Our practice should be spiritual. This means that in our practice we should have the Lord's presence. In our practice, we should have His living word. In our practice, we should have harmony. And in our practice, we should have self-awareness. This is to have a spiritual practice.

In the recovery we have many practices which are "spiritual," but if we ourselves are not spiritual, then to carry out those practices will not benefit the church. The matter of practice can become a difficult issue, and can even cause the church to suffer. Many times we may have a certain practice. The practice may have been initiated by the Spirit, and may be fully of the Spirit, with many saints getting the spiritual help. But eventually that practice can just become 'a practice.' In other words, the spirituality is gone. Without spiritual reality, the practice has no value. Everything we practice must be a spiritual practice.

THE EXAMPLE OF PRAY-READING

For example, how many of us still recognize the preciousness of pray-reading? Pray-reading is one of the best practices the Lord has given to His recovery. Today, how many still pray-read? Brother Lee once spoke of a certain couple, and said, “If I do not teach this brother and his wife how to pray-read, I’m not fair to them. I owe the Lord.” Do we have this kind of operation? Or with such a couple, would we just be in a work, figuring out how to “gain” them? Brother Lee was a person who treasured a practice called ‘pray-reading.’ He practiced it himself. Then when he wanted to help people, he would help them to practice pray-reading.

Another time, a brother who was not in the recovery came to Brother Lee. This brother said something very insulting about Brother Lee and his coworkers. If someone were to come to us this way, how would we react? We might say, “Brother, get out of here. Don’t bother me. How dare you insult my coworkers?” But Brother Lee did not react this way. He simply said, “Brother, let’s pray-read together.” Brother Lee didn’t answer, he didn’t explain, and he didn’t react. He just invited the brother to pray-read, and so they practiced it together. This brother was caught for the Lord’s recovery by the experience of pray-reading. Today, he is very useful to the Lord.

**A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE MUST BE
BACKED UP BY A SPIRITUAL PERSON**

We do have certain practices, but these practices must be something spiritual. A practice should not become a movement, or be promoted as something that we “ought to do.” Many times the Spirit may begin something as a little “sprout,” but we quickly try to turn it into a big “tree.” The Spirit works a little bit, and a sprout comes out. Then we pull on the sprout until we kill it. This is what happens when a spiritual practice is handled by a non-spiritual person. Eventually that practice ends up as merely ‘a practice’ without spiritual value. Actually, the practice itself may still have value, but the value has been depreciated by our lack of spirituality.

A practice may be healthy and spiritual, yet with us there is not the spirituality to back it up. It ends up becoming a movement or a thing we must do, until it even wears out the saints. The saints get tired of hearing that one practice after another is the Lord’s move. Eventually some saints may think, “Every time I’m told that a certain practice is the Lord’s move, we try it, but it doesn’t work. Now another practice is here. How do I know that this will work?” This happens when we take a good spiritual practice and do not substantiate it with spirituality. A spiritual practice must be backed up by a spiritual person. Otherwise it is merely a good practice that will die out. Spirituality must be the substance and the backbone to the healthy spiritual practices. When we take the lead to practice something but do not back it up with spirituality, we can actually kill the healthy drive and desire in the saints.

THE EXAMPLE OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL

For example, to preach the gospel is clearly a spiritual practice. However, if it is not backed up spiritually, then we will carry it as a work and not as an operation. What is the difference between a work and an operation? Sometimes when we go out with the gospel, we are not only working on people, we are working on the Lord Himself. Our attitude is, “Lord, because we are going out, You must bless us and make us fruitful.” This is not spiritual. But suppose as we go out with the gospel, we are praying, “Lord, lead me. Lord, be with me.” Then that is an operation. In the whole process of going out, we are in the light. We are praying, “Lord, have mercy. If someone is saved, that is Your blessing. If no one is saved, Lord, I still trust in You, because this is Your will.”

This is how the Lord prayed to the Father: “Yes, Father, for thus it has been well-pleasing in Your sight” (Matt. 11:26). The Lord was spiritual. He did not work on God. He did not pray, “Father, bring down fire to consume those Pharisees. And I’m tired of these disciples, so give Me another crop who understand what I tell them.” But this is how we pray: “Lord, we’re going out with the gospel now, so You must be with us, anoint us, and prepare the way for us.” This is to work on God. How many of us can say that what we are practicing is an operation, and not a work? Our realization should be, “I desire to be one with Christ. I desire for the Lord to lead me. Then I want to do my part to fulfill my operation.” This is to be spiritual in our practice. When we have the spirituality to back up our practice, then whatever we practice will bear fruit. When we do something as a movement and try to promote it, it will end up hurting us. A good practice should be backed up by spirituality. It should be backed up by a spiritual person with a spiritual burden. Then the practice will become very valuable.

THE HEALTHINESS OF NEW PRACTICES

This fellowship does not mean that we should remain in our old practices and avoid any new practices. We should not come to the conclusion, “I want to avoid doing something as a movement, so I won’t bring in any new practices. The church life should just go on as usual.” In the church life, there should be nothing “as usual.” The Lord should always be fresh. The Lord should always be able to lead, to speak, and to do something new with us individually and corporately. Whenever we practice the church life “as usual,” that means we are somewhat dead already. If we visit a church, and that church is practicing what it did three years ago, then in those three years the Lord did not have much of an operation. When the church is healthy there should be some practices that come out from the leading of the Lord all the time. Then these practices must be backed up by a spiritual burden. The content of the practices must be spiritual, and must be exercised by those who are spiritual. If these practices become merely practices alone, then no matter how good they are, they will fail.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that being spiritual is expressed in regard to seven different items, and all of these items are related to one another. Each item is crucial, because each item affects the others. Our practice, for example, affects the other six items. When we consider the matter of practice we must have this realization. In our church life and in our daily life, our practice determines everything. From the very beginning we should learn to tell the Lord, “Lord Jesus, I want my practice to be healthy. In my individual pursuing life and in the church life, what I practice must be spiritual. I pray that what I practice could be backed up by spiritual reality. I pray that I could be a spiritual person, practicing these things in a spiritual way.” What we practice will decide our life and our future. This includes what we practice individually, what we practice with our coworkers, and what we practice in the church life. Our practice must have the content of the Lord’s presence, the Lord’s speaking, the proper harmony, and the healthy self-awareness. Then we will be a spiritual person, and our practice will have the spiritual content.

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