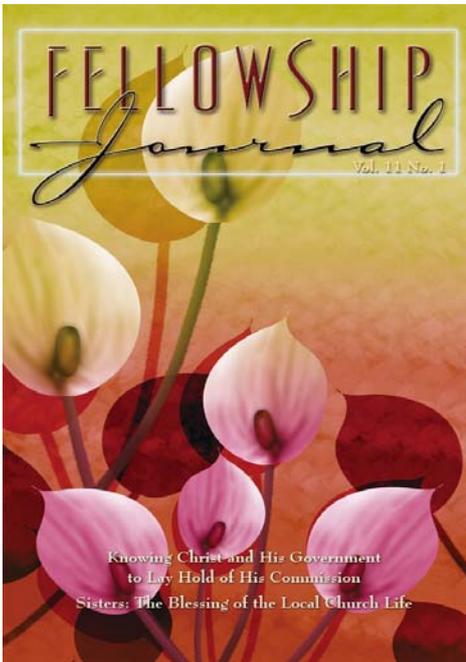


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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Laying Hold of Christ,
His Government &
His Commitment

Sisters, The Blessing of
the Church Life

Coming to Truth &
Releasing Truth

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On Concerns Regarding Our Stand

Our brother Titus recently shared with those in the internship that “We do not go to a place to raise up the church, for the church is already there! We go to raise up the testimony of the church as the Body of Christ in that city.” Some have wondered how those we encounter who do not meet as we do, might feel. Since the stand we have taken may put them “on the spot,” shouldn’t we downplay it or even keep it hidden? Otherwise, we may antagonize those we meet and jeopardize our fellowship with them!

There have been a number of things that have put me “on the spot” that other believers have done as they followed Christ. I recently read again of how George Muller was able to support so many orphans in his city through prayer alone. It is true that this did not leave me feeling comfortable. Instead, I felt challenged! Just a week ago I heard a sister give a testimony of how her prayer and faith enabled God to work miracles on her unborn child after doctors had told her there was no hope. Her faith and testimony likewise “put me on the spot” as to my own exercise of faith. God has also seen fit to place me with a brother who is always looking for opportunities to witness to others about Jesus. It seems he does so nearly every day. I find his faithfulness exposing, but I also find myself more watchful for opportunities to speak for Christ. And just this past Lord’s Day, God confronted me with how diligent a brother is in his study of the Word. I realized that my own study has been insufficient, but his example has spurred me on to something higher.

Therefore I do not see how putting others “on the spot” by our stand and giving them something to grapple with is reason for us to cloak something that has blessed us and is a result of our pursuing Christ. Those who returned to Jerusalem from captivity may have caused Jews in synagogues everywhere to have great searchings of heart. Should those in Jerusalem have felt awkward about that? God’s people everywhere should have been encouraged with their stand! The word of those of the diaspora was, “Next year in Jerusalem!”

No one should lightly jump from any situation the Lord has called him in (1 Cor. 7:24). We trust that His sheep are able to hear His voice, and that He knows when and how to lead each one (John 10:16). But what is a testimony for, if not to shine to others (Matt. 5:14-15)? – *J.B.*

LAYING HOLD OF CHRIST, HIS GOVERNMENT, AND RECEIVING WHAT HE WOULD COMMIT TO US

It is hard for me to be moved by the sight of so many hopeful young people, for I have seen so many others just like you who, after enduring for awhile, have spiritually “died”. Therefore I do not trust how anyone appears to be. I do, however, trust a proper understanding and a godly exercise. If these are present, you possess what is required to continue loving the Lord to the end.

Everyone of you possesses so much potential, but potential and substance are two different things! My hope for you isn’t that you would simply be faithful to meet in the church life for the rest of your lives. You should be able to go beyond what your parents have experienced! You have benefited from a much different environment than they grew up in, for you have had the benefit of growing up among those who have been struggling to practice the church life.

How can we know whether or not you will continue pursuing the Lord until you might become someone manifested and operative for what the Lord is after? I hope you could point to this year as a time when something solid took place in you. Whether or not you really possess what is spoken of in this message will be what challenges you for the rest of your life.

LAYING HOLD ONTO THE LORD, HIS GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMITMENT BASED ON VISION

As we spoke in the previous message, to continue on in the way that produces what the Lord is after, you must first have something you have firmly laid hold onto. What is it that you must firmly lay hold of? In this message we shall consider three matters: the person of Christ, His government, and the commitment that issues from what you see of the divine plan.

In the following messages we shall see how to allow that which you have laid hold on to become a field of operation. It is by this that Christ becomes real in your living. This is how you become a joint of supply, that is, a person who is able to supply others with the fresh and living essence of the Christ you have laid hold of.

What is it that you must lay hold of? First, you must lay hold of the Lord. Second, you must lay hold of the Lord's government. Third, you must possess the vision that the Lord wishes to impart to you. That must become your commitment. All three are required if you desire to be healthy. Do you really have Christ? Do you really live in the government of Christ? Do you really exercise in the vision the Lord has given you? These will become the real tests of your Christian life.

1. LAYING HOLD ONTO CHRIST HIMSELF

In America, marriage is not as treasured as it once was. I feel sorry for this. In American culture, celebrities exert a powerful influence, and their example is one reason for marriage's degradation. To them, marriage is just a means to generate news and attention. They use marriage, divorce, and re-marriage to generate buzz for themselves. America's culture is increasingly based on what people see in Hollywood and among other groups of celebrities. Actually, much of the globe is following American celebrities. No one seems to have a mind anymore. The degraded, corrupted writers in Hollywood produce story-lines that affect the lives of all who eagerly watch. We, by the Lord's mercy, have come out of that realm and have been transferred into a totally different sphere where Christ Himself is the center! Yet for some reason, even though we have been delivered out of that world, we still seem to easily forget about Christ!

In marriage, the wife is the focus of the husband, and the husband is the focus of the wife. Marriage is precious because what is laid hold onto is not the outward appearance but the PERSON of the spouse. If a marriage is based upon beauty, that marriage will fail. Because the commitment involved in marriage has such a proper focus, the family produced out of it is able to go through anything, for each party lays hold onto the other. Many times things will rise up to challenge your happiness, but once you have your spouse, that person is yours!

When you are a Christian, you come to a fabulous realm. If you are a base person it can make you wealthy, if you know how to work it. Or it can provide you with a rich social life. This realm can also provide real companionship with others who share your views and lifestyle, which is proper. But remember, what you first must lay hold of is Christ! In the church life, Christ must be first.

As you become more manifested, you enter into danger, for you may really think of yourself as having more ability to do things that seem good or that should be done, rather than someone who simply is serving God alone. You may not even be conscious of when the transition from being for God to being for something good takes place. (As you grow older, taking Christ as everything can really be troubling, for it may seem something you simply cannot afford to do!)

People like to justify themselves and judge others, for people are basically vindictive. People also like to be part of a movement, which is something where things seem to be happening. Therefore whether or not you are able to simply hold onto Christ shall be your great trial.

Today you love Jesus, but as you encounter test after test, with each being increasingly difficult, will Christ still be able to hold the first place in your heart? Suppose a young sister who loves Jesus meets a rich young man who says, "For your sake I will believe in Jesus." It is easy to declare, "I insist that Christ should hold the first place in my life," but it is not so easy to practice it. (There is nothing wrong with marrying a rich man, but it is wrong to marry a rich man simply because he is rich!) There will be many things that will arise to challenge your consecration. Your boss may say, "We are opening a new branch in a certain city and want you to head it up." You must have such a firm hold on Christ and He must have such a firm hold on you, or else what you are doing in His name is just that. . . it is in name only. Surely then, when you encounter something attractive, you will be drawn off. Surviving to follow Him requires that we determine to always hold firmly to Him alone.

We should beware of continuing on in something simply out of fealty or gratefulness for help received. Some brothers have remained in something out of a sense of faithfulness to Witness Lee. I personally can testify that

I also owe Brother Lee, but my labor is to the Lord and not out of a sense of obligation to anything or anybody. Such a thing may appear admirable, but it is not what the Lord is after. Such a “virtue” can replace Christ. Our labor and growth must be unto the Lord, and not with anything or anyone else in view. We must be for Christ first! We are here because of Him, and if He has used a certain person to help us, we appreciate and honor that service. But whatever we do must be because the Lord told us, and yes, the Lord’s voice may come to us through some person who serves Him!

It is ugly when a brother comes into the eldership through maneuvering rather than manifestation. Anyone who serves the saints must serve in light of what is best for the saints themselves, rather than what pleases some particular brother. We must never sacrifice the interest of the saints just to please some servant! Those who serve provide the “backbone,” but it is the saints themselves who are the crucial focus of the Lord’s work.

Even if it is your aim, you will find it difficult to do everything according to the Lord. Therefore you must firmly attach yourself to Him. As far as God is concerned, if we have not Christ, nothing is right in our life. Therefore, holding firm to Christ becomes the most basic factor for our living.

Some people feel secure in how wonderful a beginning they had in their Christian life. But many marriages that begin well end in divorce or languish without the love that was present in the beginning. Therefore ask the Lord to have mercy to continue to draw you to Himself and away from all other things! The things that drew many off may no longer be such a problem, but new things are always coming in that are capable of competing with Christ in our hearts.

2. LAYING HOLD ONTO THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST

When considering the matter of government, we must realize there are two sides: the side of provision and protection, and the side of responsibility and profitability. The Lord protects us and supplies us, but at the same time He disciplines us and works upon us for His profit (and ours).

When under the Lord’s governing hand, sometimes we may feel that He is torturing us! Yet “Olives that have known no pressure, no oil can

bestow” (Hymns #626). Because the Lord loves us, He works upon us. This is a matter of His government. We may feel we are being bruised and crushed, but to the Lord’s realization, we are being enlarged and transformed. In the midst of our trials and tribulations we may cry out, “Lord, this is not fair!” The Lord doesn’t argue. He seems unmoved by our protests. He knows exactly what is required. When everything is wonderful and we say, “Lord, I love You,” He replies, “I love you too; are you ready?” The longer you have lived the Christian life, the more you realize it is not necessary to bravely ask the Lord to “work you over.” The Lord knows when and how to do what is necessary. Yet to lay hold of Christ’s government without attempting to escape seems a very difficult thing for many.

To many ears today, talk of bearing the cross of Christ sounds old-fashioned, but the operation of the cross remains as vital today as it ever was.

During such times the Lord seems to become very stern and unyielding. We may plead, “Must it be so?” He replies, “This is what I want.” If we say, “It is not fair!” He says, “I don’t care if it is fair or not; it is what I want to do!” Once you really begin to love the Lord, a new life for you begins under His government. When we first discover Jesus we shout, “Hallelujah! New life! How heavenly!” The Lord replies, “Yes, but remember that as you enjoy this new life, sufferings will accompany it.” Americans may think they know what suffering is, but really for the most part they don’t. If they want to see something of suffering, they should travel to other parts of the world where enjoying a small sliver of meat is just as enjoyable to them as eating a T-bone steak is to us.

When things are going well, often the Lord likes to come and say, “May I interrupt your ease and comfort?” He reminds us of our need to continue laying hold onto Him, because He wants to bless us! It is best if we can be restful in the midst of difficulties, but we often complain. Perhaps to complain is not unusual, but do not seek to escape!

There was a brother who had received his PhD and was considering serving the Lord full-time. I was concerned for him, for if he did not make use of his PhD immediately, it would become hard for him to apply it later.

As I was considering these things, the Lord came to me and said, “You are Judas!” I repented and asked the Lord to forgive me. It was up to the Lord whether or not this brother would sacrifice his PhD. The Lord deserves the best men have to offer!

Some, when they see these things, may consider whether or not we would be better off not loving the Lord! Some even tell the Lord, “We loved You so much, and look what it has gotten us.” Yet at the same time there is true rest, recognizing that the Lord Himself is the One who is governing. He knows exactly what He is doing, and can never be wrong.

If we know the Lord’s government, we would never struggle with others for what we consider to be a profitable work, nor would we worry about what we should do, for the Lord is faithful to open and close whatever door that needs opening or closing. And should a door open, the Lord’s care will be there when it is needed to enable us to pass through it. The Lord has His government. We have no need to struggle for anything so as to make it ours, for in His government the Lord is the one who measures all things to us.

In His government the Lord may be hard on us, but whatever He arranges in His government always yields the best profit for us and for Him.

3. LAYING HOLD ONTO THE VISION THAT PRODUCES COMMITMENT

Our commitment is something according to vision. In the New Testament we can see how the vision advanced and how at least three persons—John, Peter, and Paul—were brought into it. Each arrived at the fulfillment of their divine commitment, but the way each acquired the vision was very different! We should realize from this that different saints will arrive differently at the vision. We can see that John, Peter, and Paul each arrived at the same vision. Paul became very clear and firm about it. Peter arrived at it as the Lord dealt with him repeatedly, even after Pentecost. John mysteriously arrived at it. - *Titus Chu, from the second message he shared with those in the internship at Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, on September 6, 2011*

Jesus Asks Peter, “Do You Love Me?”

John 21:10-19

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish.

This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*agapao*) Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (*phileo*) You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*agapao*) Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love (*phileo*) You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love (*phileo*) Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love (*phileo*) Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (*phileo*) You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God.

And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

agapao: a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object loved, an apprehension of its preciousness (Wuest)

phileo: a love which consists of the glow of the heart kindled by the perception of that in the object which affords us pleasure...used to speak of a friendly affection (Wuest)

Commentary

[Jesus] says, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you have a love for Me called out of your heart by my preciousness to you, a love which impels you to sacrifice yourself for Me? And with this love do you love me more than you love these?” There were the great fish which they had caught, possibly still in the net, showing intermittent signs of life. The question simmered down to this, “Peter, are these fish more precious to you or am I more precious? By your actions you tell me plainly that you regard your fishing business of more value than the preaching mission upon which I sent you.” ... To this question Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, as for you, you know that I have a fondness for you.” Peter knew very well that he was not exhibiting *agapao* love for the Lord Jesus in his role as a deserter, and he could only assure Him of an affection and a fondness. ... Jesus says to Peter a second time, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you have a love for Me called out of your heart by my preciousness to you, a love which impels you to sacrifice yourself for Me?” He says to Him, “Yes, Lord, as for you, you know with positive assurance that I have a fondness for you.” ... Jesus says to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you have a fondness for Me?” Jesus now takes Peter’s word and in effect says, “Peter, I am beginning to believe that you do not even have a fondness for Me, judging from your actions of deserting Me and your preaching mission.” John says that Peter was grieved that our Lord used the word *phileo* the third time He asked him whether he loved Him. The point is not that Peter was grieved that the Lord asked him three times whether he loved Him, but that Jesus used the word He did with the implications back of it. ... Jesus had appealed to Peter for a love of devotion, a love that would impel him to sacrifice himself for Him. All that Peter offered Him at that time was a love of emotion, a fondness of affection that offered no restraint to Peter in his desertion of his Master, and no impelling motive to faithfulness to his commission. Our Lord says in effect, “Peter, I asked you for a love of devotion. You have given Me only a love of emotion. Nevertheless, some day you will have a love of devotion for Me, even such a love that will impel you to die a martyr’s death on a Roman cross for Me.”

(Kenneth S. Wuest, *Great Truths to Live By*, pp. 125-127 in *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Vol III*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI)

“Going to Church? ... or Going to the Meeting?”

It seems increasingly common to hear those of the younger generation mention “going to church,” or that they are “in” or “at” church, just as it is typical for older saints to say they are “going to a meeting” or that they were “in” or “at” a meeting.” Neither is biblical in usage or concept, even though the former reveals a more fundamental lack of truth.

“Are You Going to the Meeting?”

In the New Testament, one never reads of anyone going to a meeting! Instead, the believers gather, or are gathered together. Believers often meet, but they never go to or arrive at a “meeting”. This may seem like splitting hairs, but this subtle distinction represents a genuine difference in understanding and experience. When we say we are “going to” a meeting, **we are saying we are going to something outside of us that we must arrive at, and that we are not yet part of it.** In the Bible, however, it is the saints who gather together as the church, so the focus is always on the saints themselves, rather than something external that they arrive at.

In Acts 10:27, the NIV does say that Peter finds a “large gathering” of Gentiles waiting for him at the house of Cornelius, but it turns out this is better translated “those who were gathered together.” In Hebrews 10:25, it is the *practice* or *act* of assembling that we are not to forsake (Vincent). Even the unbeliever who comes into “a meeting” where prophesying is taking place, as in First Corinthians 14:24, “comes in” among believers who have simply “come together” (vv. 23, 26).

“Are You Going to Church?”

Most among us already are aware that we, the believers, *are* the church, or *ekklesia* (“called-out”). While the word “church” itself is derived from the Greek term “kyriake (oikia),” or “the Lord’s (house),” that should not affect our use of the word, for our definition is based on its use in the English Bible rather than its etymology; in most translations “church” is the word applied to that corporate entity composed of the Lord’s believers. But if we say we are “going to church,” **we are saying we are going to something outside of us that we must arrive at, and that we are not yet part of it.** Even if we say we are “at” church, it implies the church is merely a physical location rather than God’s Body of believers. If anything, we could say we are “churching” when we are experiencing Christ with other believers!

Many other things come to light when we consider these matters. For instance, when does one join the church? Or a church? If we think of a church as a local organization, we will think of it as something to be joined. But if we see that the church is simply composed of all believers, we will realize that if a joining ever took place, it had to be when we believed in Jesus Christ and became joined to Him, making us part of His Body (Eph. 4:16), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23).

What's the Difference?

When my children were younger, I became worried that they were starting to resent the church life, for often when they wanted to do something, I had to tell them, "I have to go to a meeting." "The meeting" thus came to mean something that took me away, and often in a way that seemed an obligation more than anything. Once I realized "going to a meeting" was not a biblical concept, I began to tell them instead, "I'm getting together with the saints," and the flavor was much different. The impression given was that the church was something joyful and even compelling, rather than something of duty. And isn't it true that whenever we get together with the other saints, we never know what is going to happen? The Lord's blessing is on our practice of oneness (Psalm 133), not on some gerund. Therefore let us meet to pray, rather than go to a prayer meeting. And let us gather to enjoy and celebrate the Lord's table, rather than attend the Lord's table meeting. (With regards to the Lord's table, however, there is the matter of gathering around the physical emblems representing the Lord's blood and mystical body. Even so, it is a matter of our gathering together to partake of them.)

Watchman Nee did teach that the biblical meetings of the church are the prayer meeting, the Lord's table, and the ministry meeting. I don't know whether this is exactly the sense in the Chinese, or even whether Chinese allows for the possibility of expressing these "using" verbs instead of a noun (just as I am not certain what Greek allows). And I am sure I will continue to use the term "meetings" when talking about the church life. But I also know that we cannot afford to lose the sense that the church life is a matter of actively and continually gathering ourselves rather than some matters of routine. When the church life in our understanding becomes something outside of us, we may be in trouble. Let us therefore not forsake the assembling of ourselves together in all manner of ways, for even where two or three are gathered together, the Lord is in the midst! - *John Berglund*

Coming to Truth and Releasing Truth

As one who ministers, your purpose is to bring light and life to those who are with you, for light brings in direction and life supplies nourishing and contentment. Therefore, when you speak before the congregation your speaking must bring in light so that the congregation knows how to go on, and you must minister life so the saints are nourished and satisfied. If you speak without producing light, the truth you think you are ministering is no more than teaching, and the saints will be spoiled by you. If someone ministers to a congregation over a period of time without producing light and life, there will be problems.

Neither should he who ministers aim at bringing the saints into a happy time. The most funny preachers are Christians, for Christians have two lives: the fallen and divine. If a turtle had a chicken's life, wouldn't that be funny? We are fallen humans, yet with the divine life. Few Christians, however, realize the crucialness of understanding the divine life and instead live by their human life. What does the human life desire? The human life desires religion. Even atheists feel such a need! In Christians the fallen human desire manifests itself in "Is this congregation enjoyable?" Thus entertainment becomes very important to most Christians. This involves the preachers as well. Rather than caring whether or not life and light is being received or ministered, the focus is upon whether or not the congregation is being entertained. Is this not the focus of the whole world? Thus what is taking place among most Christians is not according to the divine life, which seeks to bring us higher, but according to the fallen human life, which is common and no different from all else that is human.

In addition to whether you are handling the truth in life and light, I am also concerned whether you are able to *release* the truth. You can have a lot of truth, yet if it is not released properly, the saints will be unable to receive the life and light it contains. You may really have something, but after you speak the saints should also feel “I am filled with God and I see something from God.”

The brothers in the churches must thus have a real openness to the work of Christ that He provides for the churches. Some elders hold onto what they have, and insist that the workers come to observe what they are doing first. They seem to think they are doing fine, and are concerned that if the workers come, what they are trying to do will be frustrated. This is a shame! Their thought is, “We are doing fine.” This is the “common” view of many Christian congregations; they have no idea of what it is to receive from and coordinate with others. Nearly all Christian groups care for the individuals who meet with them. If this is all we care about, how are we different from other Christian groups? Rather than being luminaries as Paul describes in Philippians, we have no testimony, for we are common. This happened to many of the churches served by Paul during his day. Will this be our situation?

For your life-long exercise, learn to read the Bible, uncover the truth, and let the truth become your being. Then learn to release what riches you possess so that those who hear may receive life (inner satisfaction) and light (sight).

You do not need to make everything clear. Jesus’ own messages were often obscure to those who heard Him. The people even said, after hearing His word in John 6, “This is hard. Who can understand?” That message became a good test to those who were following Him. Because of it, there was a “new start”. But don’t purposely try to do such a thing! If you are preaching the truth, the truth will accomplish whatever is necessary. Just be clear about this: to simply make a point so clear that even people who do not have the Spirit can understand it is not adequate! - *Titus Chu, Ashland Woods near Sullivan, Ohio, February 20, 2012, to those in the internship.*

THE SISTERS, THE BLESSING OF
A LOCAL CHURCH LIFE

MESSAGE ONE:
THE SISTERS: THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF
A BLESSED CHURCH LIFE

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this series of messages is “The Sisters, the Blessing of a Local Church Life.” Sisters, do you realize that you are such a blessing? Probably this subject provokes all sorts of responses among you. Young sisters who hear this will say, “Amen! We can do it. We will be that virtuous sister. Praise the Lord!” But sisters who have been in the church life for a long time will respond, “Does this mean me? Can I still be a blessing? Oh Lord, thank You! You are telling me that I am not so old after all.” Your response is based on how long you have been in the church life. Older sisters might think, “Now we have been in the church life for many years. How can we be a blessing to the local church life? Actually, how can we be a blessing to anything at all? We cannot even be a blessing to ourselves.” But sisters, you still need to realize and remember who you are. You are the blessing of a local church life. No matter how long you have been in the church life, you should say to yourself, “Who am I? I’m a blessing! I’m a blessing to my local church!”

Sisters are the crucial element of a blessed church life. You might ask, “If sisters are so crucial, then what about the other saints? Aren’t they also crucial?” For example, what about the brothers? They are also the crucial element of a blessed church life. What about the older saints, and the younger saints? These saints are also the crucial element of a blessed church life. Every local church is the manifestation of the organic Body of Christ. In this organic Body of Christ every member is a blessing.

Whether you are a brother or a sister, an old one or a young one, a strong one or a limited one, you are the crucial element of a blessed church life. When you look at your physical body you realize that every member of your body is a blessing. Your eyes, your ears, your hands, and every part of you is a blessing. But each member of your body is a blessing in its own way. In the organic Body of Christ, manifested in local churches, every saint is a blessing to the church. You might say, “This is just political. Everyone is a blessing, and everyone is crucial. So to say that sisters are the crucial element of a blessed church life isn’t true.” But no, it is true! Sisters, your portion is unique and special.

Brothers are blessings, but they are blessings in their way. Sisters are also blessings, and they are blessings in their way. There is no possible way a sister's portion can be replaced. No brother can do a sister's work. No brother can function as a sister. The sisters have their own particular portion, which makes them the crucial element of a blessed church life.

THE DIVINE BLESSINGS AND THE SISTERS

EVE'S WEAKNESSES BROUGHT IN THE FALL OF MAN

This first point under "The Divine Blessings and the Sisters" may surprise us, because it doesn't seem at all related to blessing. It was Eve's weaknesses that brought in the fall of man. By giving in to the serpent's temptation and eating the fruit from the forbidden tree, Eve caused man to fall. Of course Adam also ate of the fruit, but it is likely that without Eve's influence Adam would not have fallen. At the beginning of human history man came into such trouble because of a dear sister. Adam was in trouble because Eve was in trouble. Man's entire history was affected in such a terrible way, and we can do nothing about it. However, God made both Adam and Eve coats of skin, which typify redemption. That means in eternity we will see Eve among all of God's redeemed people.

What would you say to Eve? You might say, "Eve, without you we wouldn't have been in so much trouble. Even God Himself would not have had to go through so much trouble to save us. Eve, don't you know that you are the source of all the problems in the human race?" Do you know how Eve would answer? She would say, "Look at the New Jerusalem. Look at the throne by the river of life. Look at the tree of life. Look at all of God's work. Look at your own transformation. You tell me I made such a terrible mistake. But without my mistake, how could you have all this?" Then you would have to reply, "Eve, I really appreciate you. I don't like it that you got into trouble, but I'm still thankful. If you didn't get into trouble, and Adam just ate from the tree of life and took in the divine life, I would never have experienced so much. I would never have known God, or His love, or His operating economy in such a way. It's because of your weakness that I truly know God's love. I know how the Lord Jesus had to die for me. I know what it was like to be fallen, and I know what it was like to be saved. I have experienced the whole process of God's organic salvation. I know transformation, sanctification, glorification, and conformation. I know all of these riches. Eve, I'm thankful. Because of your mistake, I'm blessed."

Sisters, on one hand you must realize that the entire human race was brought into a fallen condition because of Eve's weaknesses. But you must also realize that because of Eve, God's love, God's wisdom, God's economy, God's operation, and God's very person all were revealed to become our experience. Do you realize that sisters are so powerful, even when they make mistakes? When a brother makes a mistake, it can often be settled easily. But when a sister makes a mistake, it seems very hard to undo. Yet Eve could testify this to us that the mistakes of the sisters can turn into the blessings of the Body. Sisters, how often do you feel that you have 'goofed'? It's possible you might say, "Many times." But do you realize that God always uses your mistakes? He uses them to bring blessings to the church life. Of course, you shouldn't say, "If that is the case, I will abide in my weaknesses and cause problems." No, that is not healthy. But you should learn from Eve that even your mistakes can be turned by God into a blessing.

THE FAITHFULNESS, SUBMISSION, AND DILIGENCE OF NOAH'S WIFE
CAUSED THE FAMILY TO EXPERIENCE THE FULL SALVATION
ACCORDING TO GOD'S ECONOMY

At the beginning of the Bible there is almost no mention of sisters. For instance, with Abel, with Seth, and with Enoch there is no mention of sisters. Eventually we come to Noah, and again there is no mention of sisters. We never learn anything about Noah's wife, but the Bible does mention one fact: the ark contained eight members of Noah's household. This means the ark contained Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their three daughters-in-law. These eight members of Noah's household all came into the ark and were saved from the flood. Yet before the flood came, how long did it take to build the ark? It took at least 100 years. Furthermore, Noah built the ark far away from any ocean or sea. People must have thought that he was a mental case. Perhaps for the first few years he told people, "I am building this ark because God has spoken to me. One day judgment is coming." Surely they all laughed at him. For a few years this might be endurable, but eventually it would become unbearable. After five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years, forty years, and so on, how could Noah continue to build the ark in the middle of nowhere, with people mocking him for wasting his life? But Noah was faithful to build the ark. While Noah built the ark, who suffered the most? It was his poor wife. Noah's wife did not receive the revelation from God about the ark. She only knew that Noah saw something, and that she had to follow him. Yet her role was so significant. Her faithfulness, submission, and diligence caused the entire family to experience the full salvation according to God's economy. How many wives could handle this situation? Perhaps Noah was originally

wealthy, and squandered all of his resources on building the ark. Suppose you marry a husband who is a millionaire, and then he sees a vision and decides to serve the Lord. Every year he invests all of his time and money into his serving, and there seems to be nothing to show for it. Every year he brings in nothing, and yet he keeps draining all of his resources. Year after year goes by, and people are now mocking him. Could we submit to such a husband? Yet Noah's wife could handle this. If we were Noah's wife we would say to him, "I never wanted to marry a mental case. What happened to you? You say you received a vision. But what kind of vision is this? You waste all our money and build a huge boat, and there's no water. This whole thing is terrible." If the flood came after ten or twenty years, it would be bearable. But after one hundred years? We don't even live one hundred years anymore. Every morning Noah went to work on the ark. He even had to repair any wood that had rotted after so long a time. He spent all of his life working on the ark, and meanwhile his wife was there being so kind and patient. But eventually the ark was built, and the family experienced God's full salvation.

Full salvation can only be experienced because of the dear sisters. And it requires the exercise of patience. In the church life the first lesson a sister has to learn is to live with the impossible. The church life is an impossible life. Your husband, if he is committed to the church life, has committed himself to an impossibility. Perhaps your husband labors day and night, and you are there as his dear wife. At the end of the year you might ask him, "How many people have you preached the gospel to?" He says, "Not too many. At least a hundred." Then you ask, "How many people got saved?" He says, "Not too many. Maybe ten or fifteen." "How many got baptized?" "Not too many. Maybe three or five." "How many came into the church life this year?" "Zero. But we don't look at today. We hope for tomorrow." This might cause you to be frustrated or disappointed. But do you realize that your husband is building the ark? It may take many years for something to be produced. It took Noah more than one hundred.

Surely this process is hard on the wife. The husband can say, "God has spoken to me! I have the divine calling! Praise the Lord! I will serve Him with everything!" Perhaps he would even say, as Watchman Nee once said, "Either I will be martyred, or I will be raptured." What kind of life is this? The wife would argue with her husband, "If you are raptured, then who am I going to rely on? If you are martyred, how can I live on this earth? You are not so human. I am human. You shouldn't say these kinds of things." But sisters, a husband that can say, "Either I will be martyred, or I will be raptured," is the best husband. A husband who can declare, "My

whole life and my whole person belong to Jesus Christ!” is a good husband, a trustworthy husband, and a husband that really loves you. For you to stand with such a husband requires faithfulness, submission, and diligence. Then you and your husband together will be able to enter into God’s full salvation.

THE SUBMISSION OF SARAH ENABLED ABRAHAM TO SOJOURN ON
THIS EARTH ACCORDING TO GOD’S CALLING

In our experience of God’s full salvation, life becomes a sojourn on the earth. The submission of Sarah enabled Abraham to sojourn on this earth according to God’s calling. We might not appreciate Sarah. For example, when God told Sarah she would bear a son, she laughed. Sarah was the one who caused Abraham to conceive a son with Hagar. Worse than that, she was responsible for casting out Hagar and Ishmael. She forced Abraham to cast them out because of her own jealousy. Doesn’t Sarah seem to be a cruel person? But look at how the Bible speaks of her. The Bible says that she called Abraham, “my lord.” This is interesting, because it shows that God sees people differently than we do. We may look at a sister and say, “No good.” But God sees something very good. Sarah laughed at God’s promise, she caused her husband to go to Hagar, and then she forced Hagar and Ishmael to be cast out. It seems that she has no humanity. But God appreciated her. Sisters, from the beginning you should learn to have this ability. When you have a problem with another sister, learn to say, “I don’t like her, but God loves her. I don’t appreciate her, but God appreciates her. I’m bothered with her, but God is delighted with her.” This is the principle of Sarah. Then out of Sarah’s submission, by calling Abraham “my lord,” Abraham was able to sojourn on this earth according to God’s calling.

THE WILLINGNESS OF REBEKAH ENABLED ISAAC TO ENJOY HIS
FATHER’S FULL PROVISION AND HIS MOTHER’S TENT

The most peculiar sister in the whole Bible is Rebekah. She was biased and manipulative. Physically she was beautiful, but her behavior was very ugly. She encouraged her son (Jacob) to deceive her husband, and she caused her sons to fight with one another. She manipulated her sons and her husband in order to get what she wanted. When Esau was angry and was going to kill Jacob, Rebekah said to Jacob, “You had better go away. Why should I lose two sons in one day?” This shows that she was still manipulating. Until then she didn’t even care about Esau. All of a sudden Esau became her son again. Would we like such a sister? Rebekah has so many limitations and peculiarities. However, look at how Rebekah behaved earlier when Abraham’s servant first came looking for a wife for Isaac.

When the servant found Rebekah she instantly said, “I will go.” She quickly decided to marry Isaac. This is such a sweet portion of the Bible! Rebekah was so decisive, and so one with God. Eventually she came to Isaac, married him, and went with him into his mother’s tent. This means that Rebekah enabled Isaac to enjoy his father’s full provision in his mother’s tent, that is, in grace. Rebekah shows us that every sister has something to be appreciated, and whatever is to be appreciated will become a real blessing to the Lord. We should not consider sisters to be in only one of two possible categories: “perfect” or “failure.” The Lord appreciates sisters differently than we do. No sister is perfect, and no sister is a failure. The Lord put us all together in the church life, and all of us are different. Every sister has problems and limitations, but they should not cause us so much concern.

We should remember that every sister has something to be appreciated which can become the source of God’s blessing. Even Rebekah, such a peculiar and manipulative sister, had something to be appreciated which became a blessing.

EVEN THOUGH THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IS ON INDIVIDUALS, JACOB
AND HIS WIVES GENERATED GOD’S TESTIMONY

The next four sisters are much worse than Rebekah. It is hard to believe that the nation of Israel, God’s holy nation, came from Jacob and his four wives. Not one of Jacob’s wives had any dignity. They were constantly jealous and competing with one another. Yet out of such sisters, God produced a nation. This is surprising. We would argue with God, “How could you use these four women? Rachel and Leah are terrible, and so are their maids!” But God would say, “You are foolish. Only by these four sisters can My testimony be produced. I transformed Jacob by using his household. I raised up My testimony through Jacob and his wives.” The Lord would remind us of this in the church life. Why does the Lord allow sisters in the church life who seem to cause problems? Because He wants to produce His testimony.

THE LORD WAS ABLE TO HAVE A CALLED RACE FOR HIS TESTIMONY
THROUGH THE MOTHER OF MOSES

Unlike Jacob’s wives, Moses’ mother seems perfect. It is difficult to find anything wrong with her. After generating His testimony, the Lord was able to have a called race for His testimony through the mother of Moses. It was through his mother that Moses was kept alive, which allowed him to be used by God for the sake of His called people.

BOAZ WAS ABLE TO ESTABLISH A PROPER TESTIMONY THROUGH
RUTH'S FAITHFUL SUBMISSION, SEEKING, AND LABORING

In the entire Bible it is difficult to find a sweeter sister than Ruth. Ruth is the most pure, the most submissive, the most seeking, and yet the most diligent sister in the Bible. Through her faithful submission, seeking, and laboring eventually she married Boaz, and he was able to establish a proper testimony. All of these sisters we have covered so far show us that for us to go on with the Lord, for us to grow, and for us to be the Lord's testimony, we need all kinds of sisters.

ISRAEL, THE LORD'S TESTIMONY, WAS ABLE TO BE SAVED
THROUGH ESTHER'S RISKING OF HER OWN LIFE

In the church life we should have pure sisters like Ruth, and we should also have sacrificing ones such as Esther. Esther was so bold, and declared "If I should die, I will die for the sake of the Israelites, God's kingdom and God's testimony. What the Lord is after must be first." This is marvelous. Israel, the Lord's testimony, was able to be saved through Esther risking her own life.

FROM THESE EXAMPLES WE SEE THAT EVERY ASPECT OF THE
LORD'S WORK IS RELATED TO THE SISTERS

These key sisters in the Old Testament show us all the aspects of the church life. In the church life we must experience a full salvation. In the church life we must sojourn on this earth. In the church life we must enjoy the Father's full provision. In the church life we must abide in grace. In the church life we must generate God's testimony. In the church life we must become a called race. In the church life we establish a proper testimony. And even when there are problems, in the church life we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of the Lord's testimony.

- Titus Chu, from a series of messages spoken to sisters at a conference in Cleveland, OH in December of 2001. They are available in .pdf format at www.ministrymessages.org.

UPON YOU, POUR OUT ALL

All that I have dear Lord, I'd offer You.
Though it seems far too small,
How could I ever give enough to You?
From my heart, pour out all.
I've seen Your value, treasure You, Your worth.
What could compare? No greater joy on earth!

I touched You, Lord, my life forever changed!
My love for You, was gained!
Then You spoke to me, what to me seemed strange,
Your Body You proclaimed!
“If you are loving them, You're loving Me;
Each member precious, they are My Body.”

“Now spend your life on them, for they are Me.
And do not count the cost.
Take none for granted, or treat carelessly,
You then would honor Me.
They're My beloved, by My blood they're bought,
They are My bride for which I long have sought.”

Your mercy, Lord, has kept me all these years,
You've watched for me and prayed.
And through Your Body, You have rendered care,
To love You more today.
Countless the ways they've poured out, to self died,
That I could know You, Your love magnified. (J.G.)

(can be sung to the tune: “I Love You Lord But With No Love of Mine”)

N I C E A

“WHO DO MEN SAY THAT I AM?”

It was a gathering of over 300 church leaders from across the empire, although predominantly from the East where the recent persecution had hit the hardest. In a last-ditch effort to reassert traditional Roman values, Emperor Diocletian had declared that all Christian Scriptures were to be burned, all meeting places shut down, church leaders imprisoned, and every Roman citizen put to the test—worship Caesar or die! Indeed, some of those who responded to the new emperor came maimed or missing eyes. They had been prepared to die for their flocks and for the gospel’s sake. But now peace was flourishing and they had found favorable treatment under Emperor Constantine. It was he who had summoned them to his summer retreat in Nicea on Lake Ascanius (in present-day Turkey). They knew it had much to do with the new controversy regarding Jesus’ relationship with God His Father. For Constantine it had to do with peace within his empire; for them it had to do with this faith they were prepared to die for.

The writings of the apostles had already been studied for over two centuries. What was held to be divine Scripture was largely agreed-upon, and taken as an organic whole with what had now become the Old Testament. In some places, things were being expounded one way, while in other places some other conclusions were arrived at. Some portions of Scripture, such as the opening of John’s gospel, were difficult to comprehend. Was Christ, as the Son of God, truly God in the same sense that His Father was God? And if so, how could He be obedient to God and be able to die for our sins?

In the third century, Origen of Alexandria had labored to put all that was written together in a coherent fashion. He taught that Christ was the same as His Father in essence, and yet as the Son He was subordinate to the Father. At roughly the same time another teacher, Sabellius, was teaching that since they were all of one substance, they could not truly be separated. In other words, since God is uniquely one, any distinction of the Son or Father or Spirit could only be apparent and not real. To Sabellius, God simply played the part of Son or Father as needed; there was no such thing as the two existing at the same time. (This has also come to be known as “modalism,” or the teaching that God merely transitions between the modes of Father, Son, or Spirit.)

Diocletian’s edict hit hardest in the East. Unlike in places such as Britain or Gaul, where little was done to enforce Diocletian’s edict, places such as northern Africa felt its full weight. Some believers, under fear of their lives, did give up their Scriptures to be destroyed, or feigned worship of Roman deities. Others, feeling they could not worship or obey anyone other than Christ, refused and were executed or given over to the wild beasts in the arenas, often after suffering great torture. After the persecution ended, there was intense disagreement as to how those who “caved in” by surrendering their Bibles, etc., should be treated. Were they to be received back as forgiven? And if so, what sort of disciplinary action was required? The hard-liners in Alexandria followed a man named Miletus, while others followed the more lenient Peter. (This controversy was not limited to Alexandria, of course, but was part of something larger which today is referred to as the Donatist Schism, after one of the leaders who romanticized martyrdom and held that anyone who handed over Scriptures, etc., was a *traditor*. The great persecution under Decius and Valerian during Origen’s lifetime led to a similar schism involving the treatment of *lapsi*, or lapsed believers. We call the hard-liners of that time Novatianists, who came to believe that true believers do not commit sin.)

One of those who belonged to Miletus’ group was a young man named Arius. Later, after a reconciliation between the two groups, Arius was made a presbyter, or elder, in Alexandria. Soon afterward, a man named Alexander became bishop over all those in Alexandria. Alexander held more strongly to the aspect of Origen’s teaching that Jesus was of

“After much suffering, it was unavoidable for the church to lean towards a compromise for existence. The policy of the Christians at that time was that, since events had developed the way they did, they readily accepted them without qualm. As such, the church stooped and accepted the welcome of the government. Hence, the church lost its purity and was joined to the world.”

(Watchman Nee, *Collected Works, Set 1, Vol. 4: The Christian (2)*, Chapter 5, Living Stream Ministry)

“The word *coinherence* is not emphasized in today’s theology. Today’s theology pays attention only to the word *coexistence*. . . . Today all the fundamental theologians believe in the Trinity, but the problem is that their speaking causes people to think that there are three Gods. . . . The Son is in the Father, the Father is in the Son, the Father and Son are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is also in the Father and the Son. This is the genuine Divine Trinity. An overemphasis on coexistence may lead to tritheism, and an overemphasis on God being one may lead to modalism. Both are extremes and are wrong. We believe in the Divine Trinity revealed in the Scriptures.”

(Witness Lee, *Vessels Useful to the Lord*, Chapter 10, Living Stream Ministry)

the same substance with the Father, whereas Arius held more strongly to the aspect that Jesus was subordinate to the Father. To Arius, Alexander was guilty of Sabellius' teaching that the Father and the Son were one substance and essentially indistinguishable, thus erasing Jesus' separate identity as Son. In contrast, Arius taught that the Son had a beginning, and thus was not of the same category as the Father. Emphasizing verses such as Colossians 1:15 and John 14:28, Arius taught that Jesus was a creation of God, which means He could not have been forever with the Father nor could He be of the same divine substance. The phrase "there was a time when the Son was not" became the catch-phrase of those who followed Arius, who even used it in songs to spread Arius' teachings in the streets. His teachings rapidly gained a following, and other church leaders across the Mediterranean got pulled into the controversy, for they realized this matter lay at the heart of the Christian faith.

Enter Constantine, who had become the great patron of the Christians. He realized Christians made up a large part of the armies that his father, Constantius, had led and he now led. Eventually he himself embraced Jesus' deity. In 312, he famously defeated Maxentius outside of Rome, where he claimed to have seen a sign of the cross in the sky and to have heard a voice tell him, "In this sign, conquer!" After he thus came to power, he and his co-ruler Licinius issued the Edict of Milan, declaring that all religions were to be tolerated, and that Christians were to be reimbursed for damages suffered under Diocletian. Inevitably, it became clear that only one of them could rule, and in 324, Constantine came east and defeated Licinius, becoming the undisputed ruler of the Roman world. He was well-aware of the dispute involving Arius and the division it was threatening to bring in among a very significant group within his empire. Hence, once the matter of his rule was settled, he called the Christian leadership to Nicea.

(The one whom church history would shine upon most brightly out of all of this, however, was not Alexander or Arius. It was a deacon who acted as Alexander's secretary at Nicea named Athanasius. It was this man who would succeed Alexander as bishop of Alexandria and take it upon himself to prosecute this battle to its conclusion. At Nicea he was still a young man, but had already made a mark as someone who knew how to handle the Word and utilize the highest forms of reason.

It was he who would eventually lead the fight against Arius' teachings in the decades that followed, even to the point of being exiled five times under four different emperors. Such steadfastness earned him the surname "Contra Mundi," or, Athanasius *Against the World*.)

During the Nicea conference, Constantine listened in on the debates concerning Jesus' divinity, and at times even contributed to them, impressing those who attended with his ability to understand their discussions, which were largely in Greek. It was he who recommended that the term *homoousion* ("same substance") be applied, no doubt under the influence of Hosius of Corduba, his teacher in matters of faith. Arius and those with him wanted the word *heteroousion* or "different substance" to be used regarding Christ's relationship with the Father. ("Semi-Arians" put forth the term *homoiousion*, or "like substance." Some have remarked on how foolish it was that one *iota* led to so much contention, but the difference that little letter makes is indeed profound!)

Arius' teaching was rejected, and he and his followers were excommunicated. Constantine, being present, represented the government's acceptance of the action and insured its enforcement. Thus Arius was sent into exile, marking the first instance of a secular government enforcing a decision made by churches. It did not mean the end of Arius or his followers, however, for both schools of teaching vied for acceptance over the next six decades. (Today, Arius' teachings regarding Christ and God most evidently survive among those who call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses.)

Other things were decided upon at this first gathering of leaders at Nicea. The date Easter would be celebrated was agreed upon. (In the East, the official Jewish lunar calendar had been used, while the Western [Latin] churches used the 365-day calendar established by Julius Caesar. At Nicea, it was decided that the celebration of Christ's crucifixion would no longer be tied to the Passover, determined as it was by the Jewish Sanhedrin.) It was also decided how certain "schismatics" in Alexandria would be handled, which was in a very gracious manner. (This decision would lead to headaches for Athanasius after he succeeded Alexander.) Everyone also agreed that Rome,

Antioch and Alexandria were to be recognized as the metropolitan areas, or “sees,” holding the highest authority, and their leaders were made “patriarchs.” The see of Jerusalem was recognized as holding a special, honorary status.

The reader may recognize that the situation among Christians by this time had evolved beyond the New Testament model. Very soon after the last of the original apostles had died, the influential Ignatius of Antioch urged that all churches should elevate one elder (*presbyter*, who was also *episkopos* or overseer or bishop) to a “monarchical” position to which the term “bishop” would be reassigned. Apparently most churches felt this was a good thing in light of the persecutions and heresies that were felt to be coming. Ignatius’ strategy, however, opened the door to the system of church government seen at Nicea, where one man answered for large groups of Christians even beyond the locality where he lived, in contrast to the New Testament model in which more than one man led one locality and fellowshiped with leaders in other localities and those who labored among the churches. The situation at Nicea stood just one short step away from the papacy, where one man, or “pope,” would rule all. Even so, Alexander and Athanasius and many others like them served to the best of their ability in that system.

How shall we view this event at Nicea in 325 AD? We have set ourselves to seek and follow the Lord according to Scripture rather than tradition. I myself have looked to Athanasius as a hero for his struggle for the truth. We honor Alexander and Athanasius’ stand, but what is the application or significance for us, who have staked ourselves to be led by the Spirit and to stand upon Scripture alone? Even if we were to consider Nicea as a meeting of “the work” at that time, what does it have to do with us today? Their decision is not Scripture, and the “creed” they came up with did not even take all Scripture into account, for the inclusion of some books into the canon of Scripture was still a matter of dispute! The primary thing is that we hold in our hands the same Scriptures today, by which we may establish or re-establish truths that it alone holds.

At Nicea, those who taught and held differently were put out of the fellowship of the churches. Yes, Paul exhorted Timothy to charge certain ones “not to *teach* differently.” John, confronting Gnosticism and who-knows-what-else simply said, “You have an anointing from God which is true. That anointing teaches you all things” (1 John 2:27, although see 2 John 9-11). If we believe in the operation of the gifted members such as the apostles, prophets and teachers, we must believe that what is deficient can and will be made up for as the believers grow in the faith, as defined in the contents of the entire New Testament.

“You are the CHRIST, the SON of the Living GOD!”

Certain things we must hold in common, even for our fellowship together, such as described in Ephesians 4:3-8. We believe in God and that He sent His Son to die for our sins, and that He rose again and is coming for us. These are part and parcel of our faith and hope as believers, but must people confess to a creed to participate in the church life? Rather, let us pursue both the things of *peace* and the things that *build one another* (Rom. 14:19). As members of Christ’s Body, we believe in Christ’s ability to manifest what is of Him, and what is not, as we grow together.

“Upon this ROCK I will build My CHURCH!”

Our teaching must provide the means for those who hear us to experience Christ and the riches He has for us. Shall we not thus focus upon the very God those in Nicea sought to define in their “creed”? In this, our endeavor approaches theirs, particularly as we consider how important the relationship between the Father and the Son is for our arriving at what Jesus prayed for in John 17! How shall we speak on this if our understanding does not allow for it? In this light, the warfare waged by Athanasius on behalf of “the” faith (1 Tim. 6:12; Titus 1:1) is to be appreciated. We may even declare with him, “God became man that man might become God!” True, there is no example in Scripture of someone being excluded because they are deficient in truth *unless they become insistent and thus heretical, that is, divisive* (1 Tim. 1:3; Titus 3:10). What is taught must be “healthy” (Titus 2:1). Just being general for the church life does not bring those within it to the goal of their inclusion. Until we all arrive at the oneness of *the* faith, let us speak *truth* in *love* that we may grow up into *Christ* in all things, pursuing the things that *build one another!* (Eph 4:12-13, 15) - *John Berglund*

The “Nicean Creed” as originally set forth

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father; the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (homoousion) with the Father; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day He rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say: ‘There was a time when He was not;’ and ‘He was not before he was made;’ and ‘He was made out of nothing,’ or ‘He is of another substance’ or ‘essence,’ or ‘The Son of God is created,’ or ‘changeable,’ or ‘alterable’—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

(325 AD, Nicea)

**A SONG ABOUT THE TRIUNE GOD
that goes beyond the Nicene Creed**

Our God is processed; He's our Great Three-One!
He, through His process has our life become.
We're His containers; He's our content, come!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Through incarnation God became a man,
In likeness of the flesh of sin to stand
For my redemption, and for His great plan.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

This precious Life-Seed fell into the ground;
Abode alone, but look now what He's found...
His life released, the many grains abound!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

In resurrection, Last Adam became
Life-giving Spirit, breathed in me the same!
God's life possessing, now His son I am.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

And in ascension, He's the Firstborn Son.
Head of the Body, glory He has won!
He's interceding, ever with us one!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

There as that city, New Jerusalem,
Can He but joy in all that we've become?
We're His expression, ever with Him one!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

(to the tune: "For All the Saints Who From Their Labors Rest")