

FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

THE 2011-2012
GREAT LAKES'
INTERNSHIP

THE SUMMER
EVENTS

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
YOUNG PEOPLE

PRACTICAL
MATTERS

BEING A SEED
OF LIFE

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For the Young People

This issue of the *Fellowship Journal* is focused mainly on the younger saints among us. We begin by highlighting the 2011-2012 Great Lakes Internship, explaining what it was about, and also providing a number of testimonies from those who participated in it. We also have an article from Brother Titus in which he fellowships about practical matters of the Christian life based on questions asked by the interns. Also related to the young people, we have a number of testimonies from this past summer's Gospel Odyssey.

Our final article deals with a great principle in the Christian life, that of being a seed of life to die and bear much fruit in resurrection (John 12:24). This is a very good word for those who are just beginning to follow the Lord, as well as for those who have been Christians for many years.

Laboring Together to Become a Blessing

Rex Beck

The 2011-2012 Great Lakes Christian Internship began immediately after the 2011 Labor Day Weekend conference, and ended this past August. We worship the Lord for what He has done to inspire so many precious saints, both younger and older, to invest this year to gain the Lord. Overall 35 full time and 5 part time participants participated for the last year, in three different churches: 7 in Ann Arbor, 22 in Cleveland, and 11 in Buffalo.

Each of these has a story of how they got to the internship. With some the Lord moved in great ways to allow them to defer their graduate school admissions for a year. With others, the Lord moved them to set aside their career plans for a year. With others, they had a small feeling to do the internship, and the Lord held them to it until they had the peace within to join this time. Others forsook friends back at school to be in Cleveland for the year. We don't have a whole group of interns; we have one intern plus one intern plus one intern. Each is a story of the Lord's work.

We have gained many benefits through this year. One of the first is the connections that grew as all of us who were involved with the internship spent the year together. The coaches know the interns so much better, while the interns sowed seeds of connections with each other that hopefully will grow life long as they pursue the Lord.

The internship emphasized four things: studying the Bible, shepherding people, knowing Jesus as life, and being enlarged to serve.

Throughout this past year we have studied and talked about almost every verse in the entire Bible. Each intern submitted weekly projects with analysis and quotes covering various Bible verses. The next week, each intern led a round table discussion on the portion of the Word they had covered, so that all the others on their team could also learn from the project. We covered the gospels, Acts, the epistles, Revelation, the Pentateuch, the books of History, the books of Poetry, and the Prophets in this way. Yes, we

were inspired by Ephesians and also by Amos.

In addition, we had five corporate weeks with brother Titus, where we presented Bible projects and received his helpful correction and input. His ministry during these times was rich, practical, and edifying.

We also emphasized the gospel and shepherding. Our thought is that churches need saints who can reach out with the gospel, take care of others, and help other saints grow. There is no secret to doing this except to learn by doing it. We took brief gospel trips to preach the gospel in Fayetteville, West Virginia; Toledo and Mansfield in Ohio, and in other places. We preached the gospel in teams for one entire week in six different cities, during which many were led to receive the Lord. And day by day we also reached out on campuses in Buffalo, Ann Arbor, and Cleveland. We found that the gospel actually works! People actually got saved, baptized, and even began enjoying the church life with us. What a joy to just go and share the gospel in this way!

Another deep aspiration we had this year was to know the Lord more as our life. Some testified about how much they received in gatherings when they actually sought the Lord, rather than merely going through the motions. We learned many A.B. Simpson songs, read Andrew Murray's book on prayer, and sought to live our lives in the Lord's presence and joy. We hope this investment pays off in the future and that all will have a "Today" when they hear the voice of the Lord.

Finally, we wanted to use this year to enlarge all the participants. To this end a group of us spent five days working on the Ashland Woods properties. In addition, some groups visited other churches from time to time to be with the young people and minister to them; other groups visited the churches in Columbus, Pittsburgh, Evanston, Indianapolis, Montreal, St. Joseph's, and other places. This was a very broadening experience and we hope it instilled a real feeling of affection for all the churches. I do feel the fruit of these visits was evident at this past year's Mountain Top, in which our attendance was up by 90 over last year's; I feel this was due to the connections and love shown by all the interns to the churches.

We thank the Lord for what he has done this year and we are hopeful that the interns will continue to be a rich blessing for the churches in the coming years and decades.



Testimonies from the Internship

*How I was
Helped this Year*

Amazed by the Bible

Joining the Great Lakes Christian Internship was one of the most fulfilling decisions I have ever made. I was a senior in college when thirteen college students moved to my campus for the 2008-2009 internship. While getting to know my new friends, I attended a few of the Bible studies and... I was hooked. I spent the next two years planning and preparing for my turn to join the program.

I knew I would love the Bible studies, but even so, this year blew away my expectations. A few months in, I was amazed at how many times, after

I was amazed at how many times, after 4 hours of study, I would end the morning with far more questions than I had started with.

4 hours of study, I would end the morning with far more questions than I had started with. Even when questions were answered, four or five more would then imply themselves. The Internship opened my eyes to the unsearchable lifetime pursuit of exploring the Bible and finding Jesus Christ in every nook and cranny!

While many elements made the year fulfilling, I am most moved by the change I see in my fellow interns. I remember the awe I felt during our last corporate presentations. Something solid had been wrought into us so that even the most unsure speaker could say something boldly for the Lord. Jesus does transform lives and I know we return to our homes and campuses with renewed minds to serve Christ and His Church.

— James, Cleveland

A Redeemed Follower of Jesus

What can I say about the year long Christian internship except that it has completely changed my life, or rather God has completely changed my life and He has used the Christian internship as a unique environment to do so. Over the past two years God has transformed me from a self righteous sinner lost in darkness into a redeemed follower of Jesus.

My Christian walk began when I was five and I asked Jesus into my heart and after that time I seemingly got swallowed up by the world and Satan. But God never let me go and soon after bringing me back to Him, He allowed me to do the internship. And it has been such a blessing. Over the past year I have been able to just get to know the Lord. I got to know Him by reading the Bible, preaching His good news, and just spending time with Him. Every day I had the opportunity to get to know the Lord in an environment that was centered around Christ. Now that the internship is over I'm looking forward to getting to know Christ even more by being centered around Him even if my environment is not. — Paul, Cleveland

Growing Together with Others

When I heard that another Christian internship was coming, I thought about it for two seconds and then put it in the back of my mind. Six months later it was mentioned again and this time I felt that I should do it. For the next three months I prayed about it, saved up money, and jumped in feet first with no looking back. And let me say this, it was one of the best experiences of my life so far.

The question is “What did I gain from this year?” To put it simply... a lot. Four-hour bible studies five days a week will really engrave the Word into you. I feel I know where key passages are in the bible from memory and have a deeper understanding than I did before. Who knew one could find deep spiritual meaning in every object/law in Leviticus?

Another experience was all the methods/verses/ways to preach the gospel. I have never talked to so many different people in so many different ways about Jesus before. Even though some ways didn't work for everyone, hundreds of people were given the chance at eternal salvation; something many people have not had.

If you were to ask me what I gained the most, it would be the relationships with people. Just watching the other interns grow throughout the year and getting to know them in a deeper, more personal way was such a joy to

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and we grew together.

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me. Some of them I hardly ever talked to before but now I call them close friends. I have them to thank for making me a better person, for pushing me to and beyond my limits, and for being there for me even when I didn't realize I needed help. We traveled many places, watched as people changed, and saw the Lord do amazing things beyond our

own belief. We laughed together, we cried together, and we grew together. This is an experience that college, your job, or the world can never give you.

One last thing I would note is that if you chose to give up time for the Lord, He will reward you like you cannot imagine. It may not happen right away, you may not be rewarded for everything you do, and you may even have things taken away; but He is the Lord and everything He does is for the best. You give your heart to Him and He will give His to you.

— Joshua, Cleveland

Serving the Young People in the Churches

During this past year's Christian internship I had the opportunity to travel back and forth almost every weekend from Ann Arbor, where I was in the internship, to Evanston, Illinois (where I live and go to school) or to Detroit, to help support the young people and be with the saints.

Due to these circumstances, I was able to serve and operate in three completely unique settings and in three different capacities. In Ann Arbor I helped with the college campus group and learned to serve under older and more experienced saints. I soaked in what the other coordinators had to say, took mental notes on how they planned for events, and was inspired by how much they poured out their hearts for the young people. In Detroit I was able to take more of a leadership role by helping and encouraging the other serving ones in their going on. I implemented certain things I learned from the other college coordinators in Ann Arbor as well as incorporated my own thoughts to best suit what I thought the young people needed. Evanston, my hometown, is a very fresh field, so by going back twice a month I was able to continue help raising up something new by experimenting and learning from my mistakes.

Overall, being able to travel as much as I did this past year has helped me develop humanly due to the wide spectrum of people I spent time with in the different localities, and has greatly enlarged my person due to the different capacities and environments that I was able to serve in.

— Ben, Ann Arbor

Not Wanting to Miss a Single Day

With this past year's internship coming to a close, it's been difficult to pinpoint exactly what I gained through the whole experience. One thing I know for sure is that when the opportunity arises again, Lord willing, I definitely want to take advantage of participating in another internship.

Next time, I'd prefer to participate full-time, if possible. To explain, I participated in this year's internship part-time, because during the school year I babysat in the mornings and worked most afternoons. As a result, I often felt pushed to my limit, rushing and hurrying to and fro.

My internship days consisted of waking up around 6:00 a.m., scurrying to babysitting and spending time in the Word in solitude before the boys I babysat came downstairs. I then drove off to be with the interns, had some lunch appointments, and then drove back to work. Evenings were spent reading with various sisters or, when possible, working on Bible projects. Rinse and repeat each week.

In complete honesty, the year was pretty crazy and it was completely the Lord's strength that kept me going. Without His love through

the saints, I would have long ago collapsed into oblivion. Although my time was scheduled tightly and I often felt completely spent, it never crossed my mind to skip a day; I enjoyed being with the interns too much! Their enjoyment of Christ, discoveries of Christ, experience of Christ, and serving of Christ really inspired me daily. They were the driving force that made me to maintain my hectic schedule for the duration of the internship.

I often had to re-evaluate just who exactly God is in my life. I had to continually consider if He was God in my life as the Bible describes Him or God in my life as I describe Him.

— Esther, Ann Arbor

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God Wants to Heal Us

I just gave an entire year to the Lord and it was one of the most memorable yet also challenging experiences I have ever gone through. To give a year to Jesus is amazing and I saw Him do so many things inside of me and also in those around me. My initial thought going into the labor was that I would experience so much Christ and I would not face any temptations by the enemy and my year would be Christ! Christ! And more Christ!

Unfortunately that was not the case and I got a real experience and understanding of what spiritual warfare is. I learned that I could give a year to Christ, be totally invested in the church, the saints, and service but that will not keep the enemy from fighting and let me tell you, he fought hard and there was a period where I felt like he won. I learned that it is not by my own efforts to overcome the devil's temptations but it is Christ in me who can overcome.

There is a section in Isaiah 57 that brought me out of this dark place I was in. It's where God comes down to dwell with the contrite and lowly

It is Christ in me who
can overcome.

spirit and to revive the spirit of the lowly. God says He has seen the way of this backsliding heart but He says, "I have seen his ways, but I will heal him" (v. 18). This

touched me because God has seen everything I have done, things no one else can see, and yet, He doesn't condemn or punish; He wants to heal me. After reading that section I felt like my spirit was revived and healed.

I can give my whole life to the Lord but that does not mean I will not encounter the enemy's attacks, but I do know that Christ is victorious and He can bring anyone out of any situation because of His love which I sometimes still don't understand. But I know from this year that God is love and He will continue to heal.

— Jesse, Cleveland

A Very Different Experience of the Christian Life Before and After

I've thought and I've thought and I've thought about how to write a short testimony about this internship and my past year, and it's always seemed impossible because there's too much to say. I think the best way to do it is a before and after description of myself.

Before this internship, I had never read the Bible all the way through. I might have finished the New Testament once, or at least reached Revela-

tion before I got too confused and gave up. Either way, the Bible never interested me and I couldn't understand it. I had never shepherded anyone before. I didn't particularly care about church—didn't go to one while off at college, had very few Christian relationships, and had no interest in the church life other than as a social setting where I could see some of my friends. I was Christian by gravitational force—because my parents, my siblings, and my friends all were, and I followed because I was dragged along. I wouldn't say I had never touched Jesus before, but I certainly wasn't in love with Him, and even those experiences of the Spirit were few and far between.

After this internship, I've read the Old Testament through once, and the New Testament through three times. I've stayed up late at night memorizing His word, and I've had moments where some of the verses struck my heart so strongly that I had no option but to praise God, to pause and to pray and to thank Him for His grace, His mercy, His love. I experienced that sensation of caring so much for someone that you can do nothing but pray: pray in the mornings, pray before getting coffee with them, pray on the drive back. I've had people in my heart in ways I've never experienced. I've developed companionships with the Christian interns around me. I've fallen in love with the Lord, with the church, with the saints, with His Word. After this internship, I can honestly and truly say my life and my heart has been changed by Jesus Christ.

This is brief and general and I didn't speak in specifics. I'd like to say this, though: this year was never easy. It was a huge adjustment from my college life and my previous lukewarm Christian experience. But it was so, so worth it. I think this was the most valuable and meaningful year of my life, and I now want to live my life for Christ. — Grace, Cleveland

The Lord was There!

I feel like this whole past year has been something of a fairy tale to me. It was a whole year of studying God's Word more intensely than I had ever thought possible. It was my responsibility to lead Bible Studies and to hang out with awesome people. I got to preach the gospel for a whole week straight with hardly any other responsibilities. It was like getting to do the most amazing and awesome thing you can think of ... and it's your job to do it! Of course, there were many, many sleepless nights, and days of inner struggle and turmoil, and of course the up's and down's of dealing with people, but I know one thing for certain: The Lord was there. Never would

I exchange that for anything. It has set the tone for the rest of my life, that the one priority in my life is gaining more of Christ and devoting my life to the church and the gospel.

Best thing ever!

— Julian, Cleveland

A Sense of Glory

A year just ended which I would call the sweetest year of my life. We were a humble group of Bible students, and I was barely able to sit still for four hours every morning, but there was some sense of glory in everything we did. We had our good days and our should-have-stayed-in-bed days, but even on the worst day we were still reading the Bible.

The Bible is not a nice book. We would leave the discussion every morning with minor cuts and bruises; if not to the body then definitely to the

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ego. Still, I soon found that the Word of God is the most precious asset I could possess. My gospel became more effective. I saw the power of sin broken in my life and in others' lives. Where there is deceit in

friendships, in wealth, and in worldly pursuits, I have seen it melt away. People, sinful people including myself, are able to come to God. I praise the Lord for the time that he's given me to pursue him, and I pray that he gains more ground in all of us, his saints.

— Peter, Cleveland

The Lord Really Supplied Me

I did the Internship in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It was an amazing growing experience and it was awesome to see everyone grow so much in the Lord. Every morning, we had time with the Lord, both corporately and individually, and Bible studies. Apart from learning more about the word, we learned how to care for people.

I think that I was able to gain a lot from this year. I learned a lot but I really feel like I left this year being more able to care for people and to study the Bible with them.

Every other week, Daniel, Jonathan, and I had a bible study with some saints from Kalamazoo. This was a new experience for me but I learned how to prepare for this as well as how enjoyable it can be. I also was able

to shepherd a couple of people, which was kind of hard at first but it was so rewarding. One girl I met and started reading with came from a Mormon background, but as the year progressed, she found the Lord. That was the most awesome thing to see; the Lord was really working in her.

This year, the Lord really supplied me. I don't know how I got through this year because thinking back, it was pretty tiring. Meetings, projects, caring, etc. But rather than being tired, I felt refreshed and happy. I was able to establish a more solid relationship with the Lord and establish a habit of reading the Bible according to a schedule. I also found singing, praying, reading, and pray-reading to be a great way to find the Lord. Rather than being tedious tasks, I really had precious times with the Lord. I'm so glad that I did this internship and that I was able to find the Lord so much through this year.

— Renee, Ann Arbor

My Most Valuable Investment

Before the Internship started I was asked this question a lot: “Are you ready?” I never knew what people meant when they asked that, because I don't think you can ever be ready for something. I mean I did do things to try to prepare myself; I got into a routine of praying more, reading the Bible more, and going to sleep earlier, but even after doing those things I didn't feel more ready. As the Internship approached I remember praying a little prayer one night, “Lord, in You I'm ready.”

This past year was probably the sweetest, most enjoyable year I've ever gone through. From beginning to end, my days were full of joy. And of course some days seemed dead and repetitive, and I would find myself wondering, “Where is the joy?” The Lord showed me that the joy wasn't missing, but I was missing. The joy was always there, but I wasn't in the joy of the Lord that day. The days where I struggled made His joy ever so sweet and His life evermore abundant.

It was in experiences like these where the Lord showed me a lot of who I am, who I am not, and, most importantly, who He is. God's eternal divine life became more real to me than it has ever been. The Lord showed me and made real to me that I am a person with His divine life living inside of me. He revealed in me that to follow Him is to take care of the divine sense of life that is living inside of me- and to do this is abiding in life, being nourished in the Lord, and being one with Him in His divine being. After this whole year I feel like my center has shifted to more Christ. Within me, I now have more of a spontaneous care for the Lord, for the saints, for the

church, and for the things in the church life.

After having gone through the Internship, I can say that giving the Lord one year of my life was perhaps the most valuable investment that I have made thus far. Now that the Internship has come to an end I get asked this question often: “Are you ready for classes to start?” And I’ve realized that it’s not a matter of me being ready, because I don’t think I could ever be ready enough on my own. But the Lord is always ready, and in Him I am made ready. So I can say that I am definitely ready in the Lord to experience more of His constraining love, His sustaining grace, and His keeping mercy. And I am privileged to have Him as my life, and to let my life be His. All that I am and have is the Lord’s and His alone. What a joy and reward it has been to give the Lord one year of my life, and what an even greater joy and reward it will be to let all the days of my life be His.

— Sarah, Buffalo

Caring for Growth, Not Numbers

At the beginning of the labor, the brothers gave us goals to help us stretch ourselves during the internship. We were asked to find at least five people to shepherd. For me, I thought, that will be easy, because I was already taking care of at least five people. Soon after that, however, God touched me: Where is each one in their growth with me?

I try to do things efficiently and effectively, so I know that at times I can get really caught up in doing something for God, and yet do it without Him. But I was just touched that maybe I was trying to take care of too many people. I realized that it wasn’t a competition of how many girls I could take care of, and it wasn’t a matter of quantity over quality. Colossians 1:28 really spoke to me: “that we may present every man full-grown in Christ.”

I would say this year really taught me to not only superficially meet up with the girls to get lunch or coffee, and just maybe pray, maybe read the Word, maybe sing a song, but to ask, “Where are you with the Lord? How can I help you to grow more?” I learned not to focus so much on how many friends I could fit into my schedule, but to care more about their growth, that they may no longer be little children, but become full-grown in Christ.

— Ruth, Buffalo



Using the Summer to Labor with the Saints

Mark Miller

The end of summer usually reminds us of how swiftly time passes by. This year, however, it is our great joy to look back on all of the regional events that took place among the local churches. With such a consideration, we are not sad at the passing of summer, but are instead turned to worship the Lord for how greatly such a short span of time affected eternity. We hope the short reports of each summer event would cause the saints to rise up in praise and thanksgiving to God, and our prayer is that such events would continue to be a blessing to His children and His churches in the years to come.

Junior High Family Camp

The first regional event of the summer was the Junior High Family Camp, June 24-29, which was attended by 61 junior highers and 62 parents, older serving ones, and high school/college age serving ones. The burden of the time was two-fold:

- 1) To help strengthen the young people's foundation on the Word (specifically their base in the Old Testament), and,
- 2) To raise up more serving saints in the churches by allowing the high schoolers and college age young people to serve in active, meaningful, and even leading roles while being supported by older saints.

While the young people certainly enjoyed the activities like swimming, dodge ball, and capture the flag, the high points of the week were the corporate gatherings held twice a day. Through the lively singing and sharing on the characters and stories of the kings and priests, many young people touched the Lord and discovered that the God of their parents and servings

ones was *their* God as well! The week culminated in the baptisms of two young sisters in the camp's slowly flowing stream. One of them prayed before her baptism, "Lord, I am ready!"

Vision Week

The Vision Week training, July 8–14, was a weeklong time at the Ashland Woods Fellowship Center to enjoy the rich ministry of our Brother Titus Chu, and to be together with all the saints. Over 180 saints of all ages participated in the training full-time, while another 30 participated in a part-time capacity.

The topic of the week was the epistle to the Galatians, yet the majority of the time was spent examining the experiences and person of the apostle Paul, for it was his background and experiences that qualified him to be the

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apostle to write such an epistle. Such a study revealed how the Lord used the first 10 years after Saul's conversion to shape him into the apostle Paul, able to receive and bear the commitment given to him. Some of these qualifications included his ability to abide in the Lord for his growth in life,

his ability to be with the disciples, coming in and going out among them, and his ability to be set aside for a period of time under the Lord's sovereignty, while still remaining faithful to the Lord Himself.

These abilities, along with several others, eventually constituted Paul to become the committed apostle who could write the epistle to the Galatians. His fighting against the Judaisers, on behalf of the Galatian believers, was clearly expressed in the strong language of his epistle (Gal. 1:9), and he strongly testified to the Galatians of his deliverance from his former manner of life (1:13-15). His epistle revealed to the beguiled believers that the Spirit, not the law with its ordinances, is the substantiating reality of the gospel of Christ and the One who substantiates all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

Overall, the week was a refreshing and strengthening time in the Word and with one another. The Lord surely spoke through His members, for which cause we thank and praise Him!

Interest Camps

This summer saw the continuation and addition of many gatherings for young ones under the “Interest Camps” umbrella, from July 20 to 25. These times are seen as an opportunity for young people to explore different and creative ways that Christ can be expressed and realized in their lives. It is also the hope of the camp leaders that the time could be used to reach out to all kinds of young people, helping them realize that Jesus is relevant to them and that expressing Christ creatively can enrich both their church lives and outreach to friends.

This year, 201 young people attended eight Interest Camps. Five of these camps have been held in previous years, included Dance, Drama, Music, Studio Art, and Writing. The three new camps were: Culinary, Film, and Sports.

Each camp primarily focused on the talent expressed by its name. Culinary Camp explored how the skill of cooking can be used every day to show love to others. Film Camp received a crash course on what goes into making a good movie, and even created their own 25-minute film about several people coming to Christ. Sports Camp not only practiced and played many sports, but spent time considering how athletic talents can be used to glorify God, both on and off the field.

The week concluded in a corporate presentation time on the last day of the camps. Additionally, many of the camps also contributed greatly to the Mountain Top conference. The Studio Arts Camp created stunning decorations for the main Mountain Top meeting room, while the Music, Dance, Drama, Film, and Writing Camps all presented material from their week together.

Mountain Top

The Mountain Top conference, which is for young people from junior high up through college, is typically the largest event of the summer. This year's gathering was from July 25 to 28, 415 young people, serving ones, and practical helpers attended the conference, up from last year's number of 337 participants. Especially encouraging was the number of saints who came to serve as small group leaders—80 in all, many of whom are in still in college.

The theme of the conference centered on finding the difference Christ makes in our lives. Topics that were covered over the first half of the

conference included our destiny of sonship through Christ (Eph. 2:3), the healing power in the touch of Christ (Mark 1:40–41, 5:23, 28), and the work of Christ in making anyone in Him a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). Over the second half of the conference, the ministry focused on the practical matters of *what we are called to do* as those who have been made “new creatures.” These issues of a Christ-centered identity included love (1 John 4:19), light (Eph. 5:8), and perseverance (Acts 4:23–31).

Overall, the Lord used this conference to touch many young people concerning their identity in Him. During the second night of the conference, many saints both young and old were moved by Second Corinthians 5:17, leading to an outpouring of prayer and praise. On the third and final night, touched by the message regarding light, young people stood or knelt for almost two hours to pray for their unbelieving or backslidden friends and family members. To signify their desire to shine for Christ, almost all in attendance wrote on candles the names of loved ones written in their hearts, before lighting the candles and placing them together on the stage.

In total, 21 young people were baptized. Some young people prayed to receive the Lord for the first time, and many others re-consecrated themselves to Christ.

Gospel Odyssey

The word “odyssey” indicates an adventurous long journey. At this year’s Gospel Odyssey, August 5 to 11, something new was attempted that did indeed add some adventure to the week. About 100 young people came to the Metro Cleveland area, but instead of remaining together, they were split into small groups and sent out to the surrounding localities. Each of these groups was responsible for handling their own time. Some groups gave out free lemonade, others rode bikes at skate parks, and others walked around wearing sandwich boards advertising “free prayer.” In all of these creative contexts, the goal was to talk with people face-to-face and to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. In all, 106 people prayed to receive the Lord over the course of the week, two people were baptized, and many new faces were seen at events sponsored by the local churches.



Experiences in the Gospel

Jesus Pushed the Barrier Away

This year at Gospel Odyssey was an amazing experience for me, and it just really helped me to open up to people about Jesus. But there was one conversation I had that was especially awesome.

Ian and I spoke with a woman in down town Cleveland who believed in Jesus but had stopped going to church. She said she used to be very close to Him but now she felt like there was a barrier between her and the Lord. We showed her a few Bible verses and then prayed with her. After that she started crying, and you could just tell that something had changed in her; Jesus just totally pushed that barrier out of the way. So that just really touched me, just to see how God can move in people's hearts?.

— K. B., Kalamazoo

Knowing that God Always Forgives and Loves Us

I had many good conversations with people during the Gospel Odyssey but there's one that really sticks out to me. V.K. and I went to the court house and were going around offering to read the bible and pray with people and the first guy we talked too was probably the only one who wanted to pray with us. His name was Charles and he had been given a ticket for D.U.I. We went through Romans Road with him, and after we were done reading he was beginning to tear up; he was just really happy to know that God always forgives and loves us and gives us strength to fight sin as long we ask. He ended up taking a Bible and praying with us and said that he felt like God sent us to talk to him. Just knowing that God worked through me made me feel really good about myself.

— S.A., Toronto

Baptized and Cleansed through the Blood of Jesus Christ!

On August 8, 2012 Wendy S. was saved and baptized through Jesus Christ and now is in the Kingdom of God!

The first day, Tim M., Tim W., and I were strolling along preaching the Gospel, and we saw Wendy and her daughter walking toward us. Tim M. asked Wendy if she has a moment, she said that she had a few minutes but that she was in a hurry. So we talked with her for just a bit, and then she needed to go. But, as she was about to walk away she told us, "I'm interested what you have to say," so she gave us her number and told us to call her that night so that we could schedule a time to meet.

We met with her on Wednesday at her apartment with her daughter and her friend John, who is a saved and baptized brother in the Lord; he was a huge encouragement for Wendy. So we talked and prayed in her kitchen for awhile. Eventually, Wendy was saved and wanted to be baptized, so Friday morning she was baptized and cleansed through the blood of Jesus Christ! Praise the Lord for a new sister in God's Kingdom!

— I.B., Kalamazoo

I Really Learned Where I Stood

I didn't get anything at the Gospel Odyssey that blew my socks off, no conversations where people prayed for salvation, or people who were even interested in the Lord, who weren't already. But I did have a lot of conversations with people. I met strong Buddhists, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Jews, other religious people, people who lived there lives without a single regret, people who didn't care, people who were strong with the Lord, and people who were once with the Lord and were falling off.

I really learned where I stood. Through many discussions I found and increased my relationship with Jesus (of course... Peter M helped me fight those battles in my head as well) I also learned to appreciate that the Lord is doing His work. We may never see what our small contribution was in saving a particular person, but I believe that the Lord put me through what I went through and I believe that I made a difference whether it showed or not... I also found that, although people didn't pray, when I prayed with them, their whole being was lifted.

— A.W., Ann Arbor

Great and Genuine Questions

On Friday, while at Case, we met a woman named Elizabeth, from Pittsburgh, who was touring the campus with her niece. (What a fabulous aunt!) She grew up in the Catholic church for some reason had lost faith in that system. She had a very seeking heart and shared about how she had been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness about ten years ago and it was around then that she began to really consider her “relationship with the Lord.” (Words straight from her mouth!)

She had some really great and genuine questions and at the end of the conversation, she shared about how earlier that day she was wondering why she was even at Case, and she felt that it was exactly so that she and we would meet and converse!

— E.H., Ann Arbor

It Was Amazing to see God Working in People!

J.P. and I met 22 year-old Marcus Tuesday afternoon. We asked him if he had any spiritual beliefs and he said he believes in a higher power, who is possibly God, and that he was open to hearing anything. We talked to him for a bit and had him read some verses in Romans. He said he liked talking to us and was interested in meeting up later in the week to talk more or have a Bible study.

Two days later we picked Marcus up and took him to a pizza restaurant with David H. and a boy named Chris. At first it was awkward and J.P. and I didn't know how to lead the Bible study, but then Marcus talked about his search for something more. He realized something was missing in his life. We saw that he was “thirsty,” so we read the chapter in John about the Samaritan woman at the well who had an unquenchable thirst. I think this story really hit home with Marcus, because he was able to relate to it. He asked us a lot of good questions and we gave him the last piece of pizza and his own New Testament Bible! I was really encouraged to see that he was thirsty and wanted to pursue his relationship with God.

This was my first Gospel Odyssey and it was amazing to see God working in people! All of my expectations were exceeded and it was the most worthwhile week of my life. I hope to make Gospel Odyssey a lifestyle and to help build up the church family. Glory to God for such a precious week!

— M.B., Mansfield

A Prayer for Salvation

I really enjoyed this entire week. All week, I was praying to get someone saved; I really, really, really wanted to pray with some people for their salvation, but by Thursday I still had not seen anyone saved. That day, however, I was going door-to-door with S. and we talked to one guy who was really, super open. We got to pray with him for his salvation and I was just really encouraged. The last couple days, I could really see the Lord working and it was just really cool. Once I gave the Lord the week, he could use me a lot more and seeing the end results of what He can do in one week...well, I was really encouraged. — R.B., Lorain

Praying With Someone for Salvation!

One good experience I had this week was on Wednesday night. Our group went to Menchies. When we were all done eating our yummy ice cream and about to head home, Shulamite saw two girls walking across the street, so we went over and started talking to them. We talked to them for about an hour, and at the end we asked if they would want to pray with us. They agreed and both got saved.

Another time was Friday afternoon. Our group went to downtown Cleveland to preach the gospel. Our first few conversations weren't too encouraging, and I was feeling somewhat down. But Cody and I walked around one last time to see if we could find anyone to talk to, and we did. He said he was having a hard time in life, but he was really open and wanted to know more. So we read some verses to him and in the end he really wanted to pray with us! So we did. I was just so happy and filled with joy after that conversation. From my day not going too well, to praying with someone for salvation! My overall experience at Gospel Odyssey was, lets just say: Amazing!! God can really work in awesome ways.

— S.B., Kalamazoo

Caring for Others' Salvation

It was Tuesday, I think, when Derek, Joseph, and I went out preaching on the Kent State campus. There weren't that many people and I was pretty discouraged. We were just walking around and Derek went up to this one boy and started talking to him. We let him do most of the talking, and he

had some pretty weird beliefs. Throughout the conversation, I would just add some of my thoughts on what he had to say. It lasted about 20 minutes, and at one point I asked him if he ever read the Bible. He said he did, but not very much, so I asked if he wanted to read more. He replied that he didn't own a Bible or have the money for one, so I gave him the New Testament I was holding and encouraged him to read it. Then we all prayed for him.

This was the one time during this whole week that I could actually relate to someone and actually really cared about their salvation. I knew first hand what he had been going through and I so badly wanted for him to be saved! Even though he didn't get saved right there, I felt peaceful in the end and had faith that something of the gospel and God had gotten through to him.

— C.S., Cleveland

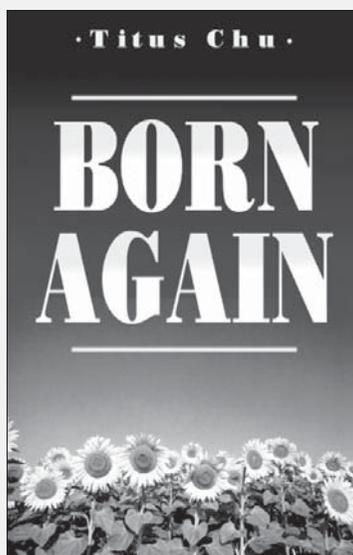


Book Excerpt

Born Again

We do not realize how much took place in that instant when we first believed in the Lord Jesus. When we repented of our sins and opened our heart to the Lord, we probably prayed something like this: “Lord Jesus, I’m a sinner. Please forgive me of my sins. I open to You now. Lord Jesus, I receive You as my Savior.” After we prayed, we were thankful that our sins were forgiven. We were glad that we were no longer going to hell. But we had no idea that the Lord had prepared something greater for us than “not going to hell.” We didn’t realize that the Lord Himself had a desire. The Lord’s purpose in saving us was much higher than our understanding. In fact, only in eternity will all the riches we received at our salvation be completely revealed to us. Only in eternity will we fully realize how deep and how precious it is to be born again. When we were born again, something marvelous happened that is almost beyond comprehension. — page 7.

*See the next page for
information on this book.*



Available at MinistryMessages.org
as a free download in PDF format for your
iPad, computer, or other electronic device.
You can also order printed copies via that website.

To be born again with the life of Christ is the greatest blessing that any human being can ever receive. *Born Again* makes an excellent Bible study tool for this topic, because it simply goes through the Scriptures to cover, point-by-point, a number of the crucial and wonderful things that happen to us the moment we believe in Jesus Christ.

Chapter Titles

Preface

- 1. What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?*
- 2. We Have Received the Divine Life*
- 3. We Have Received a New Life*
- 4. We Have Received a New Position*
- 5. Our Wonderful New Position*
- 6. What We Have Become In Christ*
- 7-9. We Have Received the Necessity of a New Living*

Practical Matters in the Christian Life

Titus Chu

During the final week corporate week of the 2012 Great Lakes Internship, in one session the interns asked Brother Titus a number of questions about serving the Lord, the church life, their relationship with the Lord, and personal affairs. The fellowship provided below is compiled from his answers to those questions.

On Laboring Full-time

If you want to help the church in a certain locality, do not go there to try and reform it, but rather go to impart life and truth. On the one hand, you should function aggressively, but on the other hand, you still need to appreciate the faithfulness of the older saints. Often when you labor where there is already a church life, you will learn more than you would in a new place laboring on your own.

To be full-time is a living, not a status. It means you spend all your time pursuing Christ and taking care of the saints' spiritual needs. It is a manner of life. You live on another source, for it is the Lord who supports you.

Tell the Lord, "Don't let me live a common life!" Young people by nature are not common, but they become common when they fall into the routine of living to care for their own needs, such as in going to get a job. Learn to fight for the best that the Lord has for you!

On Consecration

You can always enjoy grace in the Lord's presence, but you still need to insist on His best. Too many saints reject what He has for them, leaving

Him no option but to give them something less than what He desires to give them. If you are unable to follow Him in a certain matter, He will still be with you, but how much better it is if you are able to follow Him absolutely!

On Burden

A burden is something spiritual from the Lord that you feel weighs upon you. If you feel to do something, you should do it. If the leading brothers feel differently, you may need to wait, but in principle a spiritual burden should not be confined.

All things have their time. For example, during Jesus' time people may

If you do not love the saints, do not say you love the church. In my case, I can say that it is the saints who are really in my heart, not the localities. Learn to bear some saints in your heart and care for them.

have received others into their homes more easily than we do today. If you have a burden to reach out to others in a certain way, you may have to adjust what you do based on the situation.

If you have a strong desire to do something and find you cannot accomplish it, it is probably because you are focusing on your desire to do it rather than seeking the Lord Himself. Actually, when you are still so young and unsettled you may not even know what your desire really is.

When a burden becomes formed (that is, when you cannot rest well until you do something about it), follow the Lord.

If you do not love the saints, do not say you love the church. In my case, I can say that it is the saints who are really in my heart, not the localities. Learn to bear some saints in your heart and care for them. Consider how you can be with them in the best way so that they can help you and you can help them.

On The Nature of Growth

It is never easy to grow, but with every kind of life there is a basic pattern for the growth of that life. When you raise up young people, you have to consider many, many things. There is so much that lies in front of the young ones that can frustrate their growth! This is what consumes me.

Even as you desire to grow, realize that you are limited and be thankful for that, and in your limitation tell the Lord that you love Him.

On Love and Marriage

If you are young, you do not yet know what love is. Your marriage is from God. Only the Lord knows what is real. Allow the Lord to be the government, the One who is over all; allow Him to manifest “that one” to you. There is no need to compete with others in this matter.

Don’t simply trust your feelings. If you are a sister and you feel that you love a particular brother, you should not automatically assume that your feeling for him is genuine. If it is real, it is real. If it is not, it will not be real no matter how much you feel.

We in the churches don’t forbid marriages, but we do advise. Sometimes it may be acceptable for a sister to initiate the contact with a brother for whom she has some feeling. Still I would ask, could you as a young sister “date” the Lord for two years, rather than boys? Watchman Nee said one statement that has affected my entire life: Anything you can do in life can be overdone; it is only our love to the Lord that will always be inadequate, regardless how much we love Him. In other words, you can never go too far when it comes to loving the Lord. Particularly if you are a young sister, don’t think about boys. If you do think about a certain one, don’t be anxious, for if it is the Lord, He will give that one to you in His time.

When you are newly married, during your honeymoon period, extend your love to the saints as well; make it a habit to invite others over your home. The joy that you have together, extend to the saints as well.

On What to Do If You Are On Your Own

If there is no church life in your area and you are alone, you still have a number of ways to contact people in other places, such as cell phones, Skype, email, and so on. There are adequate means for you not to be lonely.

Keep a daily spiritual life if you can. Learn to be in the Lord’s presence and appreciate His work. Also, learn to let people know you are a Christian soon after you meet them; this will protect you the most.

If the Lord gives you grace in meeting one or two in that locality, try to come together to pray and read the Bible and so on. You may even raise up

the church there; that will also protect you. However, don't seek after a number; seek after the Lord and His testimony.

On The Need for Full-Timers and Their Exercise

In general, the work of a full-timer could be done by one who has a job. Actually, the churches themselves would be fine for the most part if there were no full-timers at all, and in some ways they would even do better. However, they would end up going nowhere. This is because, if you want

If you want the church life to spread and rise up continually, you must have some who are able to give all their time to the Lord. For the Lord's testimony to be prevailing there must be some who serve full-time.

the church life to spread and rise up continually, you must have some who are able to give all their time to the Lord. For the Lord's testimony to be prevailing, there must be some who serve full-time.

If a full-timer serves only in one locality, his service will most likely have little impact. He can be based in a local church, but his service should not simply be for that local church.

A full-timer's living with the Lord is very romantic. Someone who has a job knows what their paycheck will be and when it will arrive. A full-timer must look to Christ for his day-to-day existence.

Why should you serve the Lord full-time? The sole reason for someone to be full-time is that his ministry might be developed.

Character means everything to the full-timer. On the one hand, there is no environment that has more potential for dissipation. On the other hand, it is the hardest manner of life a person can choose. There is the difficulty of using your time properly, handling yourself, pursuing with wisdom, and operating in the church life just as a brother. None of these things is easy!

On Answering the Lord's Call

If you cannot do something the Lord seems to be calling you to do, be at peace. To know your inability is a blessing. No matter how strong your desire is, it is good to know who you are. Wanting to do something for the

Lord becomes a problem when we aim at fulfilling that desire rather than at the Lord Himself.

Actually, if I were to ask you what your desire really is, you may not even be able to say, because you're still young and unsettled. Yet, be thankful for your limitation, and learn to love the Lord in your limitation.

At the same time, be ambitious, and be ready to be challenged by the Lord. Many ruin themselves just because of a sloppy character.

On Submitting to the Responsible Brothers and Coordinating With Them

A leading brother may ask you to do something that goes against your will, but they will not ask you to do something that goes against Christ. If it is not against Christ and merely against your will, what's wrong with that? Did the brothers say, "From now on, for your entire life, just do that?" After it is finished, you can still fellowship your burden. I never endorse fighting or arguing with a leading one. Learn to submit to the authority. At the same time, it is not healthy to avoid fellowshiping what is within you.

Don't simply come to the elders and say, "I have worked out a complete plan. If you listen to me, I am sure it will bless the church." The elders may consider your plan, feel it is not what is best for the church, and make a different suggestion. Still, don't react, but spend more time with the elders until you all feel clear.

Learn to be open. There is no need to be afraid of the leading ones. Learn to be their friend. Be a support to them, a spiritual help. If they make a decision you find difficult to take, simply accept it. But when you are in a very good, sweet relationship with them, you can fellowship your feeling.

It is when you are very set in what you want to do that you will clash. Many of the things you propose are things the older brothers have tried already. That doesn't mean you should give up, however. Perhaps you could say, "The people who are involved are different this time." That is a good approach. If they reply that they don't trust you, don't become discouraged. Love them and ask them what they want you to do, and go on.

On Knowing the Lord's Leading

How do you know the difference between the Lord's speaking and your own feeling? My answer is, if you love the Lord, do whatever you feel is

If you love the Lord, whatever you do is right. If you don't love the Lord, even if you do exactly what the Lord calls you to do, it won't work. So, just love the Lord.

best. If you love the Lord, whatever you do is right. If you don't love the Lord, even if you do exactly what the Lord calls you to do, it won't work. So, just love the Lord. It is God who works in you both the willing and the working for His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). If you see this, your life will be so restful. You can ask the Lord to forgive you, for whatever you do, it is because you

love Him so much! Besides, who can say whether something was really a mistake? So, learn to be restful, and just love the Lord.

The best act of obedience is when you do not even know you are obeying. Sometimes you know when you are performing, sometimes you are not aware you are performing. If you know you are obeying, that is not the best. The best is that you love the church life so much that you just want to participate in whatever is happening in the church life.

On The Principle of Service

In principle, everyone should follow the Lord full-time. Paul did say, "I wish you all were like me, except for these bonds" (Acts 26:29). Thus it is good that many might follow the Lord in this way, but it is up to each individual. If you choose to go this way, you need to spend time to learn. Then you also need to labor in a field, so that the field will confirm what you have learned. When what you have learned matches what you do, you have become skilled. The more who serve full-time, the better.

On Teaching

When it comes to helping others, the Lord's word is simple: Don't be a teacher (Matt. 23:10). After you have been in the church life for a time, you may have some experience, and you want to share this experience with others. Praise the Lord for that! If they do not receive from you, praise Him, and if they do receive from you, praise Him.

In reality, it is not the experiences themselves that matter; what matters is why you have had those experiences. According to your understanding,

you have had these experiences because you are consecrated and have touched your spirit and given yourself to Him; thus, the Lord has had a way to bring you through a certain experience. We should learn from this, when we try to help someone, not to simply bring an experience to a person, but to consider the person himself. Is he as consecrated as you are? Is he willing to go through the things in the same way with the Lord as you have? If you can help that, then everything you have will be his. If not, even if he takes your word, it will not change his being.

Psychology's Effect on Our Pursuing

A person's existence is at least one-third psychological. I have not seen one bride or groom get sick on their wedding day. Why is that? Because they cannot afford to miss that day.

Many times when you are so healthy with the Lord, you are in one condition, and when you are not so healthy with the Lord, you are in another condition. How is your relationship with the Lord?

To pursue and to rest are two things in the same line. Being anxious to rest makes it difficult to obtain rest. If you are proper with the Lord and you are tired, you may indeed need some rest, but most likely it will be difficult to rest. Exhaustion also has much to do with what is really in you. For some reason, I can be very exhausted, but in my exhaustion I cannot rest; I just don't know how to rest.

Being Joyful is the Sign of a Healthy Church Life

The healthy manifestation of a church life is seen when the saints are joyful together in Christ. Joy is always the sign of life; this is why babies often smile.

I never present myself as an old person. I have been through many hard times, but there is always something joyful within me. You know the church life is positive when the saints are joyful in Christ and with one another.

If you go to a place where people come into the church life and quickly leave, that indicates joy is lacking. It is not enough to expound the Word. People go away when they feel they don't find what they need.

On Being Flexible for a Relevant Church Life

Too often we practice the church life based on what we feel it should be rather than according to what people need. The church is Christ, so we do not have things like Bingo Night. Still, must we keep our meetings as they are? When a few new ones come in, you adjust because you want what is best for everyone more than your program. Some places behave as though you must like their program to remain with them. This is not right; the church should be organic, alive, and flexible.

Then, when we are together, do the saints feel they are getting what they should be getting? Or, instead, are there saints who are snoring in the meeting? We should provide people with a church life that they feel is for them. You should give others the feeling that we enjoy what we have, and that our church life is very buoyant.

Finally, just love the saints. If the ones who have visited us depart and are missing the meetings, you must care for them.

Yet, even if we practice all of these things, some will just not take this way; some seeds do end up on the wayside, for not everyone is destined to grow in a certain way.

On Raising Up Others to Be Your Reproduction

What does it mean to raise up someone as your reproduction? It means to raise up someone who has the same kind of heart that you have: to love the Lord as you do, to be as diligent as you are; to be as consecrated as you are, to love souls as you do, and to give themselves to the church life in the same way that you do.

I have never seen a brother who had a genuine ministry, and yet in his life had never raised anyone up. You develop your ministry through raising up the saints.

I have never seen a brother who had a genuine ministry, and yet in his life had never raised anyone up. You develop your ministry through raising up the saints. A full-time serving one should not be a pastor, merely taking care of a congregation. We are not for a congregation; we are for the Lord's testimony! We cannot judge the merit of someone else's

labor based on the number of people brought into the church life. We are supposed to develop ourselves into persons with ministry.

Why must you raise up someone to replace you where you are? So you can travel. This is why I have the peace to go away as often as I do. Many have been raised up among us who work together for the Lord's testimony. Today our frustration is not a shortage of full-timers, but a shortage of full-timers who have raised others up who can serve in their place. We would be much more free today, and the Lord could do so much more, if more full-timers were able to move on because they had raised up others to serve in their place.

How do you take care of someone spiritually when you feel you do not have what they need? Learn to be with people. If you never know how to be with people, how can you help them? If you have the desire to see someone grow, just love him and spend time with him; that will lay a good ground for that person to grow. Don't be a Christian worker, saying, "I want to serve so-and-so." Live a simple life. Be someone who loves to be with the brothers close to you and with the saints in general.

On Weaknesses

Compared to what God is doing, your little weakness means almost nothing. You only make your weakness great because you think you are great. Most people who repent for their weakness are not really repenting for their weakness, but merely regretting that they are not as great as they think they should be.

The way to overcome habitual sin is to not look at it. You don't have it! You may protest that you do, but you don't. It is based on what you like to focus on. Tell the Lord you hide in His blood and that you are hopeless. Tell Him you love Him. By focusing on the Lord's person, your mind is no longer set on what you think is so real. Tell the Lord, "I am going to do it. Amen. Lord I love you." Then you may realize what a foolish thing you are doing and go to sleep.

Most people who repent for their weakness are not really repenting for their weakness, but merely regretting that they are not as great as they think they should be.

On Reading the Bible

If you have a difficult time reading the Old Testament, start with reading Genesis and Exodus and then skip over whatever it is you do not like; the first time through, only read the verses you like. The next time you read it, you will enjoy it more. It may not seem as though you are really reading the Bible, but you are reading the Bible. What does it mean to “really” read the Bible anyway? Don’t be afraid of the Bible. Come to it and love it.

Don’t worry about how to balance your time in reading the Bible and serving, etc. Just do what you feel you can, but remember, daily food cannot be avoided. You must spend time with the Lord. Every day spend some time to take in the spiritual food.

If you really read the Bible, you will see that life is stressed in every book. The matter of life is always present. What is the difference between the presence of the Lord and the anointing? The presence of the Lord comes and goes, but the anointing stays.

On Loving the World

If you realize that you love the world, do not be overly concerned about it. If the Lord tells you to stop something, stop if you can. If you cannot, you must tell the Lord to take that taste away. Don’t try to fight it on your own; that will only make the situation worse.

On Loving the Lord's Appearing vs. Knowing about His Coming

My feeling is that those who know so much about the Lord’s coming back will most likely not be the overcomers; the overcomers will be those who love the Lord and look for His coming. So tell the Lord, “I love You. Come back soon!”



Three Principles for Being a Seed of Life

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat
falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone;
but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

John 12:24

Titus Chu

If we want to serve the Lord effectively and have a proper operation before Him, there are secrets we must learn. The first, most crucial, and most basic of these secrets is the secret of being a seed. This may seem very simple, and we may think that we know it already. Still, we must ask, what does it really mean to be a seed? If someone considers us to be a coworker, a full-timer, a leader, or an elder, that makes us feel quite special. To be a pillar in our locality, or to be an operative blessing to the churches, appears to be quite glorious. In contrast, a seed is not seen or appreciated; there is no glory, and there is no manifestation. Nonetheless, if we desire to serve the Lord effectively, we must be a seed.

As we shall see, there are three basic principles for being a seed. First, a seed is hidden. Second, a seed is full of life. Finally, a seed is ready to grow and bear fruit. If we want to be a seed, we must learn to live according to these three principles.

Being Hidden

Every seed, when it is in the right place, is hidden. This does not mean that it is merely put aside, but that it is buried and ready to die. If you are a seed in a certain place, you are buried in that place; you are prepared to die so that your outward shell can be broken and the life inside of you can come out. This is the first secret that all who desire to serve the Lord must learn.

You must be saturated with this realization. “I am here as a seed. My future is just to die. My fate is just to die. I am to be hidden, and I am to go through the process of death and burial.” Everything else may be easy, but to be a seed in this way is very difficult for all of us.

Many times we consider that to serve the Lord, we must work in the same way as if we had taken a worldly job or career. Suppose you are a very bright person, you are knowledgeable in a certain field, and you are also a hard worker. When you choose a career, these characteristics will combine to help you succeed. When your person, your knowledge, and

your energy work together, you will produce something in your field, and eventually you will become successful in your career.

He will tell us, “I was
a grain of wheat.
I buried Myself and died.
Eventually, I bore much
fruit. A servant is not
greater than his master.
Do you want to serve
Me? Then the path I took
is the path you must take.”

Unfortunately, many times we bring this same mentality directly into the Lord’s recovery. When a young brother in the recovery desires to serve the Lord, he may declare, “Lord, I’m here! Look at me!” The brother thinks the Lord is so blessed because he loves Him. This brother is bright, charming, and capable, and

now he is willing to serve the Lord. Isn’t that a blessing to God? However, this brother is operating according to the principle of the world. With every career, and with every field, your talent, ability, and energy are useful; the principle of service is different only when it comes to serving the Lord. In fact, serving the Lord is totally different from everything else on this earth.

If you desire to serve the Lord, then you must be a seed. If you are ready and willing to serve Him, then the first thing the Lord will say to you is, “Are you really willing to serve Me? Are you prepared? If so, I am digging the hole for you right now, so that I can bury you. You are a good seed, so I’m going to dig very deep. Are you ready? Then jump in! From now on there is no more ‘you.’”

What is this? This is to serve the Lord. If you want to know the secret of how to serve the Lord effectively, then this is the first thing. You must be ready to disappear; you must be ready to die; and you must be ready to be buried.

As a seed, we must be hidden, which means that we must be buried. If we want to serve the Lord effectively, He will tell us, “I was a grain of wheat. I buried Myself and died. Eventually, I bore much fruit. A servant is

not greater than his master. Do you want to serve Me? Then the path I took is the path you must take. The way I followed the Father is the way that you must follow Me.” This is the first secret of serving the Lord with an effective operation.

We must learn to say, “I am a seed. I am hidden. I am ready to be buried underground. No one will see me. No one will even know me. I am just a seed.” This is a secret that we all must learn.

If we attempt to serve the Lord as though it is worldly career, then we won’t allow ourselves to be buried. Instead, there will still be some part of us that we will try to keep alive, because for some reason we just cannot go through this first step.

Again, the first step in serving the Lord effectively is this: “Lord, I am a seed. I want to be hidden. I want to be buried. I want to die.” This is completely different from picking up a career in the world. If someone is serving a worldly institution, then his desire, talent, ability, and energy are all useful. But once a person decides to serve the Lord, he must realize, “My talent needs to die. My ability needs to die. My zealotness needs to die. My energy needs to die. Everything I have, everything I am, everything I can do, it all has to die. I must be a proper seed; I must die, and then I can grow.” This is the first prerequisite for serving the Lord.

Being Full of Life

After we have learned the first principle of being a seed—that of dying and being hidden, even buried—we must go on and learn the next principle, which is that we must be full of life. Any seed which is healthy must be full of life. This is true even when there is no manifestation. On the one hand we have to say, “Lord, I want to die. I want to be hidden. I want to be buried.” On the other hand, we have to say, “Lord, I want to be filled with life.” How will this life come out? How will this life operate and manifest itself? We don’t know. But we do know that each of us must be a person who is filled with life.

When a person first gets saved and begins to love the Lord, he may have no idea what it means to be an apostle, or a prophet, or an evangelist. These things are very distant, and he doesn’t know how he will eventually be manifested. Nonetheless, every day he enjoys Christ. Every day he has the Lord’s presence. Every day he tries to spend time before the Lord. Every day he can say that he has life, and that he even has life abundantly. He doesn’t know how life operates. He doesn’t know how great or how

We don't know how life will manifest itself, and we don't know how life will operate. However, we should simply enjoy life and be filled with life. This is the second principle of being a seed.

powerful this life is. He doesn't know how sufficient, rich, and fine this life is. He has no idea how glorious it will be when this life is manifested. Still, he is simply filled with life. Even if we have been following the Lord for a long time, we are in the same process as those who are newly saved. We don't know how life will manifest itself, and we don't know how life will operate. However, we should simply enjoy life

and be filled with life. This is the second principle of being a seed.

We cannot lose sight of this principle. To be a seed means that we are full of life. We must be in life. Practically speaking, this means that if we want to be a seed, we must learn how to sing a song to the Lord; we must learn how to call upon His name; we must learn how to touch Him and abide in His presence; we must learn how to stay in the anointing, and let the anointing supply, nourish, encourage, regulate, and strengthen us. If the element of life, our experience of the Lord's life within us, is weak, then nothing works. To serve the Lord effectively we must be a healthy seed that is full of life. Then when the seed is buried life will operate in a greater way, and with a greater capacity.

Being Ready to Grow and Bear Fruit

The third aspect of being a seed is to have a certain kind of readiness. First, the seed should be hidden, which means that it is buried. Second, the seed should be full of life. Finally, as we shall now consider, the seed should be ready to grow and bear fruit. The proper understanding of being a seed is to say, "God has dug a deep hole and buried me. But while I am hidden here, I will enjoy the riches of life, and then I will be ready to grow and bear fruit." The seed is always seeking the opportunity to grow and bear fruit.

When it comes to the matter of being a seed, we are often extreme. Suppose the Lord tells us, "I don't want you to do anything. I just want you to be buried and die." We may respond, "That's fine; if you want me to go and die, I will go and die." Then we lock ourselves in a room and cry, "Lord, I'm ready to die. I can do nothing but die. I'm hopeless." However, when the Lord's speaking comes to us again and the opportunity for growth comes, for some reason we are very numb; we don't respond.

A seed doesn't just stay hidden and then feel sorry for itself. A seed always takes the opportunity to grow. We may say that a little plant grows because the good soil and the weather cause it to grow. However, we may also say that the plant is taking the opportunity to respond to its environment. When the environment is right, it will take the opportunity to grow.

It is the same with us. When a person who is serving the Lord grows in a healthy way, on one hand it is the environment that causes him to grow. But on the other hand he grows because he sees the environment and he takes the opportunity.

The problem with us is that either we refuse to be buried or we insist on being buried. Either we think that we are so hopeful and useful, or we say, "I will just be a normal church-going member of the Body, because I'm supposed to be buried."

To be a seed does not mean that we are passive; rather, we must be those who can respond to the opportunity for growth; we must be willing to invest ourselves into something that may help us to grow. We should not be slow in our responding. We may think, "My time of being buried is not over yet. I'm still in the dying process." If we have such an attitude, then after the process of dying is over, we will be unable to produce anything.

We must learn, when the sun shines, to take advantage of it; when the good soil is there, take advantage of it. We must practice this for our whole life. Whenever we see the opportunity to learn or gain something, our response should be, "I am ready."

This is the third aspect of being a seed. When the environment is in season, take advantage of it. Always be ready to grow, and always be ready to bear fruit. This is to serve the Lord as a seed.

If we have the understanding that we must always be ready to bear fruit,

then we will realize that even to preach the gospel is different from what we typically think. To preach the gospel is simply to be ready to grow and bear fruit. However, we are either too focused on doing a work, or too focused on being buried. This means that either we kill others, or we kill ourselves. The secret is to be buried, and yet to also be full of life. Then we should have the readiness to grow and bear fruit.

We must learn, when the sun shines, to take advantage of it; when the good soil is there, take advantage of it. We must practice this for our whole life. Whenever we see the opportunity to learn or gain something, our response should be, "I am ready."

If someone is always ready to bear fruit, they have a certain kind of sensitivity. Wherever they are, they are ready to beget. When they are in a store, or in a restaurant, or on a plane, they are able to sense that a certain person is ready to hear the gospel.

If someone is always ready to bear fruit, they have a certain kind of sensitivity. Wherever they are, they are ready to beget. When they are in a store, or in a restaurant, or on a plane, they are able to sense that a certain person is ready to hear the gospel. Most of the time, however, we don't have this sensitivity. The Lord arranges the environment, but then we complain. When the Lord gives us riches, we become full and don't seek the opportunity to grow. We should be able to say, "Lord, I'm ready to grow, and I'm ready to bear fruit."

When we have the realization that we must always be ready to bear fruit, we will find that the door is open. We meet someone who is in need. We meet someone who is seeking the Lord. We meet someone who is ready to be saved. Actually, this is true all the time, but we don't sense it, because we are too occupied with what needs to be done and are not seeking to grow and beget. This is why, after we are buried and are full of life, we must still look for the opportunities that present themselves for us to grow and bear fruit and be exercised to reap the benefit.

A Review

A proper seed must have these three aspects. First, a seed is hidden. This is the hardest lesson of all for us to learn. We all like to be manifested. We all like to be appreciated. We all like to be somebody. But when the Lord came, He told us, "If you desire to follow Me, you must be as a grain of wheat. You must fall into the ground and die."

We must be a seed. We must be hidden. Then while we are hidden, day in and day out, we should learn to enjoy the Lord's presence. And while we are enjoying the Lord's presence and are full of life, we should also say, "Lord, I'm ready to grow and to bear fruit." Every opportunity that comes, we take it. This is to be a seed.

Adapted from the article, "The Secret of Serving the Lord as a Seed,"
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