

FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

"SO, YOU LOVE
THE LORD":
FELLOWSHIP
FOR YOUNG
BELIEVERS
FROM THE
2011-2012
INTERNSHIP

REPORT
FROM THE
CHURCHES:
A NEW
BEGINNING
IN AUSTRALIA

VOLUME 11, NO. 4
DECEMBER 2012

PUBLISHED BY
THE CHURCH IN CLEVELAND
LITERATURE SERVICE
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CLEVELAND, OH 44111

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About This Issue

This issue of the *Fellowship Journal* features a series of messages that Brother Titus gave to a group of young believers at the Ashland Woods Fellowship Center from May 29 to June 2 of this past year, during the final corporate week of the 2011–2012 internship. (The October edition of the *Journal* contained a brief overview of the internship, as well as testimonies from a number of the interns.) These young saints had each given a year of their life to come together in several different localities to pursue the Lord. During that year they gathered with Brother Titus five separate times to present what they had studied and to receive his perfecting and his fellowship with them. In this final gathering, our brother was very burdened to share a word with these young believers that would help to keep them for the Lord and His testimony throughout their lives, as they grow and develop in both their human life and their Christian life:

I...know that while I have been able to follow the Lord to a certain degree, you may not be able to follow the Lord in the same way that I have, or become useful to Him in the same way that I have. Yet, I have been granted to experience a number of basic things that any who desire to serve properly must go through, and if you desire to love the Lord and to serve Him, you yourself must know how to lay hold of these things as well. So, as we said at the start, in these messages we will consider some basic matters that may help you give yourself to the Lord and follow Him all your life.

— page 12

While this fellowship is meant especially for young believers, it contains a number of very practical points that should be quite helpful for all who desire to love the Lord and serve Him.

We also have a report from the church in Sydney, Australia. The brothers there are glad to share with us about what the Lord is doing among them, and would welcome any from the Great Lakes area churches who could visit the church for fellowship there!

A New Beginning in Australia

Yulin Wang

A coworker and his family recently moved to Sydney to stand with the church there, and Brother Titus also came to give a conference.

This past August my family and I moved to Sydney from Toronto, Canada. I had been sent by the brothers in Cleveland to stand with the church in Sydney, which had recently gone through a very difficult time, including a division of the church. The attendance had dropped from over 400 to as low as 30.

Because of this, we were not sure what to expect when we arrived, but we were very touched and encouraged by the love and care the saints showed for us. A good number met us at the airport, and we then went to

a love feast that had been prepared at the meeting hall. In addition, a few brothers had labored a great deal to renovate some rooms to accommodate us. Such care was very much beyond our expectation, and brought smiles to our faces, and to theirs as well; we realized that even when those in a church are few, they can still love and care for each other. In Sydney, the situation of the church may be difficult, but those who have remained have endured and continue to hope and trust the Lord for a new beginning.



Some Timely Help: A Conference with Brother Titus

After our move, and at the invitation of the church here, Brother Titus visited Sydney for a three-day conference during over Australia's Labor Day Weekend. The church had not hosted a conference for quite a long time, but all of the saints were stirred up to participate and help prepare for this gathering. The hall was cleaned, invitation cards were distributed, and many phone calls were made for gospel friends as well as those who haven't come to the meetings recently. The meeting hall here is quite large and we were concerned that perhaps only a few could come during the long weekend. But, praise the Lord, in first two days we had more than 100 attending and even on the last day, we still had more than 80, plus the children.

Brother Titus began by sharing about the experience of growing in life using Genesis 1. He then shared about the constituents of the church life — fathers, young men, and children — as seen in First John 2. Finally, he shared concerning the local church as it is portrayed by the seven churches in Revelation 2-3.

As a result of this time, many hearts were comforted and many people encouraged to give themselves to the church life in a fresh way. We were especially surprised and pleased by the response of the children, most of whom were between 10 to 15 years

old. We expected that they would be unable to sit through the conference; we thought they might just attend the morning sessions and then have some time to themselves in the afternoon. However, not only did they attend the entire conference, their testimonies also touched many adults very much.

We really believe this time will help us to have a new beginning for the church in Sydney. When my family and I first arrived, we heard from the saints of many difficulties they had experienced and the wounds they had suffered, but now there is no more talk about the past. The old things have passed away, and now our eyes can focus on the things that lay before us. Not only have the saints themselves become more committed now, but also some gospel friends have responded to the Lord; three sisters were baptized in November and we expect more baptisms in the near future.

The Church Situation Today

In addition to his speaking in the conference, Brother Titus gave the church suggestions for going forward. A fellowship of leading brothers has been established. Shortly after the conference we began a series of basic life lessons on the Lord's Day afternoon to uplift the saints' spiritual understanding, which we finished in early December; typically, 25 to 30 people attended



each lesson. Through these sessions many have been enlightened to see the value of various aspects in the church life. After this series ended, we began to have fellowship about practical serving. As a result, some brothers and sisters have committed themselves to be the service coordinators in order to help the serving in the church to become more effective.

During each of the last three months we have also arranged outings for the whole church, which have been a real blessing to the church life, encouraging the saints to have a closer and more joyful relationship with each other. Also, home meetings have been set up to meet the needs of the saints in different places around Sydney. During the week some brothers get together to read the Bible, while the young people contact each other via Skype. In the coming days we are also planning to have more gospel meetings. We look to the Lord that He would not only stir up our hearts, but that He would also add new ones to His church.

Recently on the Lord's Day, we have

had about 45 to 50 in attendance. For us this is encouraging, but what matters more is that the brothers and sisters are learning to build each other up in love. So far, the Lord has been healing us from our wounds, and we have been reminded of the blessings He has given to us. Seeing the young people love the Lord has been a big encouragement to the church. The saints coming together to meet, to pursue, and to serve is comforting to many leading brothers. We also see the power of God through the gospel work. Of course, there are still many things that lack, such as the campus work, and especially the fellowship with other churches. Nonetheless, the church is moving forward!

Although Sydney is far from the Great Lakes area, we still need the intercessions and support of the saints there. And of course, the saints here would welcome any visitors from that area. We look forward to the Lord's blessing through the stand and labor of many families here. May the Lord gain more souls for His testimony and build up His church in Sydney!

Testimonies from the Conference in Sydney

I'd heard that Brother Titus was a good speaker, but I didn't raise my expectations too high. Basically, I was just hoping that the younger ones would be able to sit through the meetings and get something out of this time. Well, they did get through them, and all of the saints were helped so much! A few points from the conference stand out for me:

First, John's ministry came after the early church had fallen apart to a large extent and John himself had been overlooked for almost his whole life. What he wrote was not for ambition but simply to help the saints keep going in the face of degradation.

Second, we all have to accept that we are little children in the church and simply do our part. There are little children—fathers, young men, and young children—and we all have our proper function. For some of us it is enough to come home to the Lord, while some need to go on and defeat the evil one by overcoming the world.

This brings me to the third item that touched me, which is how we defeat the enemy: By getting to know the Lord so well that we can handle the Lord! (1 John 1:1-2)

This was such a simple message, yet it was very helpful, and a spiritual infusion that very much energized the



church, to the point that afterwards we had to spend some time just playing games with the children; we were so happy! Spending time with the Lord gives you energy physically, makes you happy inwardly and makes you love all the people around you. The Lord is the solution for everything!

— Raymond Young

I recall that on Saturday morning, the day the conference was starting, I was groaning and not wanting to get out of bed, since I didn't want to attend a boring conference. I barely knew the speaker, Titus Chu, but it sounded like we were going to have to listen to boring, long lectures, droning on and on. I didn't really give him

my full attention during the first meeting, but now I regret that. I was a teenager who thought that anything that didn't have something practical was a waste of time. My thoughts were soon to be changed.

That first meeting, even though I wasn't fully listening, I could tell he was different. He had this flair about him that made me reconsider. Still, I talked myself out of it, making excuses. In the next meeting I attended, I gave him my full attention, and I was really touched by what he said. He gave his message by using stories and examples with us, the young people, making it like a gripping adventure novel you are reading that keeps you from going to sleep; that was what I felt. It was the same for the last two meetings. The talks made me feel like a ten



year old in a sports car, roaring down the highway again.

Through this conference I have realized that whatever happens in life is the best, even though we may not think that is the case at the time. I have been inspired to touch the Lord and spend more time with him.

These conferences will definitely be a highlight of my life and have left me wanting more, leaving me on the edge of my seat, eager to come to church to learn more. Finally, I must thank Brother Titus for revealing all these messages that were once hidden. Thank you for shaping my Christian life by refining it and making it better. Lord Jesus, I just love you!

— David, 14

Going into the first conference our church had held since 2010, I was very excited. However, I did not expect that this time would have such an impact on me.

This time helped to increase by understanding of the Bible, but even more, I feel I have gained some insight, and even had some experience, of what, who, and why God is who He is! Every time we touch the Lord, we are a new creation with a new beginning. God is constantly inviting us home, no matter what, because we are all “little children” (1 John 2:12). We are made in God’s likeness outwardly, and God’s image inwardly; as this is expressed, it becomes our testimony. The Spirit was truly among us through-

out this conference.

Some concepts I have yet to understand, but Brother Titus Chu has laid a very solid foundation (on rock!) not only for me, but for our whole church. Praise the Lord for His work! I will be praying that we may all grow and become spiritually mature. Amen.

— Hannah, 15

We want to practice Philadelphia. You need to see that your experience and handling of Christ is very important. Once you have that kind of experience, whenever you are declaring, it becomes fellowship, which means whatever you declare will make the other person closer to you. This is the way it should be. Thank you, Brother Titus, for giving us this kind of perspective. Let us all see this way. This is our local church. This is what God desires.

I have remained here for so many years, and gone through many storms. My brothers and sisters, you need to realize that only Christ Himself can sustain us, not what we have learned in our experience or in our life, because whatever is of the natural life will pass away; only what is constituted with God Himself will be eternal. So, brothers and sisters, I am so encouraged when our brother says that we are very good; surely there is something within us that is very good! May we bring forth something of the expression of Christ Himself.

— David Tan

“SO, YOU LOVE THE LORD...”

A Series of Messages for Young Believers
Given by Titus Chu

MESSAGE ONE

THE NEED TO LAY HOLD OF CHRIST (1)

Because there are so many challenges facing you as young ones in your spiritual growth, I want to use these messages to have some very basic fellowship with you about what may help you to give yourself to the Lord and enable you to follow Him all your life. There is adequate grace and mercy for each one of you to go on with the Lord based on what we have gained through our study together. In this time you have received a glimpse of the rich storehouse of God’s Word, but it will take you your entire life to enjoy what is contained there. Yet, in the past we’ve seen so many young people among us die spiritually, and had no apparent way to rescue them. This is why I gave a series of messages in 1985 entitled *How to Survive in the Church Life*. (Editor’s Note: These messages are now available online at MinistryMessages.org.) Now I would like to address this same topic again, speaking especially to the young people. This time, however, I will simply call these messages, “*So, You Love the Lord...*”

A Question Regarding the Young Ones Among Us

According to our history, we need to consider: Why is it that so few of the young ones among us are able to grow in a healthy manner? Some cannot even continue at all among us; why is this? We must ask, as we labor with the young people, how many of you will still be with us in ten or fifteen years? And among those who are able to continue in the church life, how many will develop to their capacity?

In all likelihood, most of you will eventually disappear. If you do not disappear, it will only be due to the Lord’s mercy. And even if you are able to

endure, it is not likely you will become that useful. Sisters tend to be more affectionate than brothers, and this is why we see more sisters than brothers loving the Lord. However, while being affectionate enables you to have a good start, it does not in itself cause you to grow.

The First Obstacle: What Is Common

The hopeful ones among you will probably marry, as they should. Soon after marriage, most will have children, and once this happens, the mother becomes focused on raising the children and the father becomes focused on the kind of employment that will support his family. Thus, even the most promising and prepared young ones can end up being occupied by the common affairs of life.

The Second Obstacle: Reaching a Plateau

The second obstacle you face is that of reaching a plateau that you cannot go beyond. This is a difficult obstacle to overcome. Talent manifests itself quickly, and so talented people seem to advance quickly, but eventually everyone seems to hit a plateau. Even if some can grow past a certain plateau, they soon arrive at another one. And as you grow, the plateaus seem to arrive more quickly and to last longer.

Young People Need to Dream, but Not in an Unreasonable Way

If this is the case, we who serve the young people might ask ourselves, why do we bother to train the young ones and seek to raise them up? According to how God has arranged the human life in regards to marriage, family, and the basic struggle to live, it seems that He does not even expect us to be able to serve Him. It seems that only someone who is crazy would invest himself in training others for the Lord's service, for perhaps only one out of one hundred young people he labors on will be able to love the Lord in such a way as to truly serve Him.

It is not an easy matter to give yourself totally to the Lord so that you might

grow to your full potential. The situation is very different from what many young believers think! Many seem to think they will quickly become Paul the Second or Watchman Nee, Jr.

Such a thing does not happen except in dreams, but even so, it is good for young people to have such dreams. If it were not for such aspirations, you would not be where you are today. To be balanced, however, you need to realize that you have been told all your life by your parents and teachers how promising or handsome or beautiful you are and what a bright future you have, and so you have no genuine idea of what is real and what is not real. In particular, to follow the Lord is not what you may think. Every rosy idea you have about a life of serving the Lord is simply not real.

You Can Only Serve the Lord by His Mercy, but You Also Need to Have Some Basic Experiences

As I say this, you might become discouraged and ask me, “If it is so difficult, why then do you still serve, and why do you still encourage us to serve?” My response is, it was by the Lord’s mercy that I went through what I went through and was given to lay hold of what I have laid hold of. From a certain perspective, this is all that can be said by those who find themselves profitable in the Lord’s service: it is all the Lord’s mercy!

I also know that while I have been able to follow the Lord to a certain degree, you may not be able to follow the Lord in the same way that I have, or become useful to Him in the same way that I have. Yet, I have been granted to experience a number of basic things that any who desire to serve properly must go through, and if you desire to love the Lord and to serve Him, you yourself must know how to lay hold of these things as well. So, as we said at the start, in these messages we will consider some basic matters that may help you give yourself to the Lord and follow Him all your life.

You Need to Lay Hold of Christ

First of all, I counsel you to lay hold of Christ. Why do I say this? Because so far, most of you have not laid hold of Him. To really lay hold of Christ, you must lay hold of His person, which is simply who He is; lay hold of His accomplishment, which is what He has done both in creation and in His salvation; and lay hold of His government, which is where He is now and what He is doing now.

When you desire to hold of the Lord, you can never depart from any of these matters. When we speak of Jesus, do we realize that the Jesus we love is to be found in these three aspects? He Himself is more than worthwhile for us to give our lives to, and what He has done is also unspeakably marvelous. Furthermore, where is He now and where He will be are absolutely for the purpose of our arriving at the goal of His calling. Where He is and what He is doing today are what should decide our Christian walk.

If who He is, what He has accomplished, and where He is today are clear to us, we have a very good ground upon which to base our Christian walk. If we have a problem in our Christian life, it will be because we have a problem with one of these three aspects concerning Christ.

Five Aspects of Your Relationship with the Lord

Your relationship with the Lord begins with love and is maintained in sweetness. It is substantiated by your trust in His person, your commitment to Him, and by your submission to His headship.

In Love and in a Sweet Fellowship

To lay hold of someone, you must love them. And if you truly love them, you will maintain a sweet fellowship with them. Are you able to generate such sweetness in your fellowship with Christ? Do you spend time with Him in sweetness? If you are not experiencing such sweetness with the Lord, ask Him to do something—anything—so that the sweetness between you and Him might be recovered! If you sense there is a distance between you that has lasted for some time, you must seek Him desperately, asking Him to do something that would re-establish that sweetness.

In Trusting Him and Committing Yourself to Him

Furthermore, are you able to trust Him and commit yourself to Him for your life-long journey? As in a marriage, are you able to maintain your vow “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part”? If not, that what is your relationship with Him?

In Submitting to His Headship

Then, finally, are you able to hold onto Jesus in His headship? Learn to trust His person. This is not easy. If you are relying upon anything else for your

Learn to trust His person.
This is not easy. If you are
relying upon anything
else for your living, there
is something wrong.
You must trust Him by
the way of faith.

living, there is something wrong. This is a hard lesson to learn, for Christ is not someone we can see. Therefore you must trust Him by the way of faith. Again, it is the same as in a marriage relationship; if suspicion or mistrust finds a way in, that relationship cannot remain solid. As you realize you are in the Lord's care, trusting in Christ causes you to become peaceful. Then, you must trust the Lord for your life-

long journey, living under the realization that all the days of your life are measured to you by Him.

Evaluate Your Christian Life by These Five Matters

Your relationship with Christ must be in these five items. First, love Him; second, tell Him that you love Him; third, enjoy a real sweetness in fellowship with Him; fourth, trust your life to Him as one who knows who He is; and finally, trust Him as the One who is the Head over all.

Use these points to evaluate your Christian life. Do you really love the Lord? Or, has your Christian life become something of mere practice? Between a husband and wife there should be genuine love. There should be sympathy, understanding, support, and encouragement; but even more, there should also be sweet fellowship in which you can say whatever is in your heart to one another. Between us and the Lord it should be the same. In His presence, you should be able to tell everything to Him, expressing whatever you feel, He should also be able to freely communicate whatever He wishes to speak to you. Then, as you experience these things, simply trust in Him. Love and trust Him. Trust in His person. Trust Him with your whole life. Trust Him as the one who is the Head over all for your sake so that you might always have a way to go on with Him to reach the goal that He has for you.



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE TWO

THE NEED TO LAY HOLD OF CHRIST (2)

In the Face of
Three of Life's Greatest Challenges

Loving the Lord is a very basic matter, yet it is also something that seems to be a great challenge, in particular—for young people—when it comes to three of the crucial decisions in your life: the college you decide to go to, the person you decide to marry, and the job you take. It may seem that these matters frustrate young people from going on with the Lord, but this is not the real problem; the real problem is that many simply are not able to love and trust the Lord in an adequate way. To overcome in these matters, you as a young person must know how to lay hold of Christ's person and Christ's accomplishments. In the previous message, we briefly covered the matter of laying hold of Christ's person. We will now go on to cover the matter of laying hold of Christ through His accomplishments

What Christ has accomplished has secured for us something eternal; praise the Lord for this! In this message, we will cover what He accomplished in creation, and in the following messages, we will consider what He has accomplished in His salvation.

Laying Hold of Christ through
His Accomplishments in Creation

*Seeing His Wisdom and
Foresight in Creation*

In the Lord's creation, we are able to see His wisdom and foresight. To illustrate, sometimes in a marriage a man and woman do not really fit together. Their relationship is difficult because the spheres they inhabit are very different in both content and scope. Such a marriage cannot be pleasant.

If this is the case, then what about our relationship with God? We must admit, our sphere is indeed very different from His! We do not understand His plans, nor at times can we accept what He seems to be doing. How then can we be together in our union with Him?

This is one reason why God provides us with His works of creation. In them, we see that God is someone who is incredibly powerful, wise, and pure. As we consider God's creation, we perceive His wisdom and foresight, and we experience a real rest, because we realize that with Him, everything is covered. We may not know exactly how things will go in our lives, but we know we are with the very God who created all things.

Seeing His Eternal Power in Creation

In creation we can also see God's eternal power. Human language is not adequate to portray all that creation is, but surely we can say that creation shows us God's power. How can anyone deny the power required for going from nothingness to existence, then from existence to order, and then from order to the interdependence of each part? Each element in this universe requires so many other elements to support it. If God can do all this, surely He can also take care of our daily bread.

Some think that they will be poor if they give themselves to the Lord, but we should not fear this. As those who live in the United States, we should even ask ourselves, what is poverty? It's actually a relative matter. When I was a child, because we had little money, we bought slices of bread rather than whole loaves. In Africa, if you have no money you stay home; if you are wealthy, you walk to the market. I visited one place where they sold bread on

The revelation of the power exhibited in creation grants us the assurance that He is able to do whatever He promises. When we see this power we are strengthened to surrender ourselves to Him.

the streets sliced in paper-thin wafers. Compared to such people, consider how rich we are in America; we could feed all of Africa merely with our leftovers! In contrast, some brothers among us can count themselves as being among the very wealthy. Still, no human wealth can begin to compare with the wealth that God possesses.

God possesses His wealth through His power. His plan is profoundly great, yet without His great power to carry it out, His plan would amount to noth-

ing. The Lord has a plan for each of our lives, and with His great power He has the ability to carry it out. The revelation of the power exhibited in creation grants us the assurance that He is able to do whatever He promises. When we see this power we are strengthened to surrender ourselves to Him.

Seeing the Attributes of His Divine Person in Creation

Yet, even more precious than seeing God's eternal power in creation is that, in His creation, we also see the attributes of His divine Person. In particular, we see His purity.

Whenever we touch divinity, we touch purity, for divinity and purity are inseparable. Whatever comes from God is pure, whereas anything that originates from mankind is impure. Because creation expresses the attributes of the divine person, we see something very pure in creation.

Due to the fall, it is difficult for us to appreciate God's purity, but if we do not realize that God is pure, we will not be able to grow well. Because He is so pure, whatever God wants to give us has our benefit in view. Therefore, we must be able to receive whatever comes from His hand if we want to grow as we should.

If Adam had not fallen, we would all be in a very beautiful situation; instead of unending competition, which results from our impurity, there would be harmony. The unceasing fighting we see all around us in nature and in humanity is something that came about due to man's fall.

In contrast, in God's creation there is only harmony, which is an expression of His purity. As we consider God's creation, we realize His purity towards us, and that He only desires our benefit. Thus, we are able to take from His hand whatever He has planned. It helps us to realize that we can trust that the Lord is able to do whatever He desires to do. How much better is this than struggling for what we desire!

His creation also helps us realize that He would never treat us merely as objects for His work. God is for us. When He gains us, He gains something very pure as His testimony. In contrast, His often lose their purity when they pass through our hands. For example, our emphasis may be to gain others and to make them spiritual so they can accomplish something for His testimony; this is an impure desire towards them. With God, however, His desire to gain us is simply an expression of His love for us.



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE THREE

LAYING HOLD OF CHRIST THROUGH HIS ACCOMPLISHMENT IN HIS SALVATION (1)

In the previous messages we covered briefly the matter of laying hold of Christ according to His creation; now let us consider the matter of laying hold of Christ according to what He has accomplished in salvation.

When talking about salvation, we must focus on two things: the cross and the Spirit. Both lead us to Christ Himself. When the cross, the Spirit, and Christ are together in our experience, everything we experience is salvation. Whether He is dealing with the negative things in us or bringing us into the positive things, Christ Himself is our Savior! The cross takes away whatever is negative, the Spirit brings in all that is positive, and both lead us to Christ Himself.

Saving Us through the Cross and through His Life

Christ is saving us, first of all, as those who are in the flesh, and who thus have sin and weakness.

We are a battlefield; righteousness and sin struggle within us. So, how does the Lord save us from our sinful being? He does it in two ways. The first is His objective work on our behalf: the Lord has already nailed our sinful being to the cross. Praise the Lord, it is an objective fact that we died with Him! The second aspect of His work, however, is subjective, which means it is a work done within us: He supplies us with a life that is able to replace our sinfulness. Thus, the secret of victory is to not focus on victory. Young people want to overcome, but to be an overcomer is not to overcome some little sin or to live a perfect life. It is much more than this; the secret of being an overcomer is to grow in Christ.

The Lord reveals to us that we have been crucified with Him. As Paul says,

“It is no longer I, but Christ!” (Gal. 2:20). If this does not seem to work in you, it is for a very simple reason: *you are the one who wants to make it work*. The Bible tells us clearly, “It is no longer I!” But whenever you try, it *is* you. And when you think you have succeeded and are therefore good, it is not His salvation, but your working! This is the problem.

A Great Secret of Spiritual Progress: Being Selective in What You Remember

This brings us to a great secret to the Christian life, which is this: you should not remember everything you see. For example, if I saw two brothers fighting, and later you were to ask me about it, I would probably tell you that I had not seen anything. Why is this? Because I simply chose not to remember it.

In the same way, the secret of victory is to never see that you are defeated. When you see your defeat, you become angry with the Lord. However, if you do not see it, you won't be bothered by it. By this I do not mean that you should feel free to sin, but that when you are not fixated on your sin, it loses its power to become an issue.

When you come to the Lord, you should ask for the cleansing of His blood, and you should hide in His blood. When you do something wrong, learn to go to the Lord and admit your failure and hide yourself under His blood. No doubt there are things within you that are not yet submitted to Him. For these things, you need to hide under His blood. Such things should not paralyze you or prevent you from doing the Lord's work; although you are indeed sinful, you should not tell the Lord, “If you do not change me immediately, I will not speak for You; if the saints starve spiritually, it is Your fault, not mine!” For the things you cannot change about yourself, you need to hide under the Lord's blood. For the things you have already done, you must ask the Lord's forgiveness and receive His cleansing. If you have forgotten about something, simply forget about it! Yet because of self, and your occupation with your self, you may dwell on the things in which you feel you have done well, or on the things in which you have failed.

If the Lord grants you mercy, you must learn to not see the problems of others. When you expose others' behavior in the flesh, it indicates that you are even more in the flesh! The best thing is to say, “I didn't see it.”

It is the work of Satan to drag something out of your memory in order to accuse a brother, even if that brother is yourself. When it comes to such things, you must develop the ability to forget.

In addition, if the Lord grants you mercy, you must also learn to not see the problems of others. When you expose others' behavior in the flesh, it indicates that you are even more in the flesh! The best thing is to say, "I didn't see it." We choose to forget many of the things in our own life when it is to our benefit to forget them; we must learn to forget the things of others as well.

We all have a selective memory; we simply need to be more selective in what we remember, and we should not try to dredge up what we have rightfully forgotten. It is the work of Satan to drag something out of your memory in order to accuse a brother, even if that brother is yourself. When it comes to such things, you must develop the ability to forget. Choose to have a poor memory. Perhaps you lose your temper; ask the Lord to forgive you. Apply His blood, hide in His blood, and learn to forget about it.

Again I would say: the secret to overcoming is to forget! The secret of overcoming is to not pay attention to whatever it is you see as your obstacle. Paying attention to such things empowers them. The more you try to overcome such an obstacle, the more power it has over you. If you have a weakness, ask for the Lord's forgiveness, hide in His blood, and try not to pay too much attention to it.

The first virtue in the church life is to not see or hear. This is not easy, but as I have said, it is a great secret to overcoming. If two brothers fight, why must you tell others about it? It is your reaction rather than their fighting that creates the real problem. When it comes to the truth and the testimony, you should indeed be very vigilant; you should be sensitive to any change. But when it comes to the behavior of the saints or of yourself, you should learn not to remember.

The Best Way to Deal With Something Is Often to Not Deal With It

A wise father learns not to see certain problems and to develop whatever is positive in his children. If you pay attention to the peculiar things, it makes the peculiar things more powerful. Sometimes such things must be confronted,

but often the best way to deal with them is not to see them. Why is it that parents are able to love their children in such a strong and healthy way? It is mainly because they are able to remember the good things and forget everything else. If it were the failures that the parents framed and hung on the wall, that would certainly not be a healthy family!

Over time, we accumulate both negative and positive experiences in the church life. Good elders learn not to emphasize the negative. In fact, it seems they often emphasize the childish things! What you witness and what you remember should be two different things. Too often, however, the negative things are remembered. Such memories prevent those who focus on them from growing, and they also become a source of corruption in the church life. This is a very serious matter. Don't allow such things to abide in you. If you cannot learn to let the negative things go, you will be stumbled by wondering why they could happen in a place that is supposed to be holy.

When children make certain mistakes, their parents must learn not to see them. It is the same in the church life. Otherwise, the accumulation of the negative things in your memory will hinder your growth, or, even worse, tempt you to gossip. In fact, if anyone speaks to you of negative things, you should tell them, "Please stop. I am not a garbage can. This does not help me to grow in life."

Craftiness, Our Weakness, and the Lord's Care

Which is more serious, craftiness or weakness? We should be much more fearful of craftiness, for the Lord can care for us in our weakness. For example, when I was still young in the Lord, I learned that a leading brother smoked cigarettes. When another brother also discovered this and spoke of it to me, my reply was, "There are many things we should not see. Why haven't you noted his prayer, his testimony, or his burden? Why do you pick out this matter?" Not too long afterward, the brother who had a problem with smoking said, while giving a message, "We cannot even overcome something as small as a cigarette!" My sense was that the Lord had overcome it in

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How is this salvation applied? It is applied through the cross. We also need the bountiful supply of the Spirit to save us from our flesh and our weaknesses.

ers, for it indirectly makes us feel our own place is higher. In the church life, we need salvation, for only salvation can release us from the many difficulties presented by our old man. How is this salvation applied? It is applied through the cross. We also need the bountiful supply of the Spirit to save us from our flesh and our weaknesses.

him. This brother went on to become one of the most weighty and useful brothers for the Lord's testimony and served in the churches for many years. If an issue had been made of his smoking, however, it would have been difficult for him and the saints he served. Addiction requires the work of the cross of Christ. If it had been made an issue, he may have resigned from the leadership.

If there is some issue that you do not know what to do about, it is better to go to an elder rather than to some other brother in the church. It is the self-life that likes to see something wrong in others,

The Role of Weakness

However, while the Lord will care for you in your weaknesses, in general, your weaknesses can never truly be overcome; in fact, they are not even supposed to be overcome. Weaknesses exist so that you might see who you are.

Our self possesses many opinions, especially concerning how we are superior to others. We lift ourselves up so much, and at the same time we pity ourselves so much. When the Lord revealed to His disciples that He had to go to the cross, Peter told Him, "Pity Yourself, Lord!" (Matt. 16:22). The self either lifts itself up, or it feels sorry for itself; that is why I am not troubled when a brother or sister is going through something that helps them to see who they really are. You should realize that the Lord will allow your weaknesses to remain with you for your entire life just to expose who you really are, so that you will depend on Him and His salvation all the more.



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE FOUR

LAYING HOLD OF CHRIST
THROUGH HIS ACCOMPLISHMENT
IN HIS SALVATION (2)

In this message, we shall continue to consider the matter laying hold of Christ according to what He has accomplished in salvation. Then we will go on to consider how you as young people must lay hold of Him according to His authority and His government.

The Old Man, the I, the Soul-Life,
the Self, and the Flesh

With regards to our flesh—our sinful body, which is also referred to as the “flesh of sin” or the “body of sin”—the cross takes away all the negative things. In the Bible, there are certain terms that portray our fallen, terrible being in different aspects. Of course, in ourselves we are simply “I,” but overall, the Bible refers to our fallen being as the “old man,” which is our entire being apart from Christ. This old man has a life, which is the soul-life. Although we are never rid of our soul-life, we must learn to deny it. Accompanying the soul-life, there is a certain ability, or gift, which is the “natural man” or “soulish man.” In addition, our opinion and judgment have to do with the “self.” Finally, we are flesh. Within the flesh are elements that operate against God.

In general, the strongest thing related to the soul-life is the self. If the self is not that strong, the soul-life will not be very manifest, but when the self is strong, the soul-life will be manifested. Sometimes it will be expressed in good ways and at other times it will be expressed in bad ways.

The self is very crafty. When it is pointed in the right direction, everything becomes healthy, but when it is pointed in the wrong direction, everything becomes extremely messy.

The self and the soul-life go together. The expression of the self is the soul-

life, which is manifested through our abilities. When the self is manifested in a good way, it is our talent, and when it is manifested in a bad way, it is the flesh, but both are the soul-life.

Even Though We Are Saved, We Are Still Flesh and Need the Cross

The church life is very good at removing all the impure ones, because the church life environment resists what is not pure. Yet, if we are honest, we must admit that, in an absolute sense, no one is pure, for we all possess the flesh. If we have much natural ability, it means that we have a large soul life, whereas if we are opinionated, it means that we have a strong self-life. However our old man is manifested, we are all still in the flesh.

The Lord's Answer: The Cross

How does the Lord deal with all of these problems related to who we are? It is very simple: He applies the cross! The "I" has already been crucified with Christ, and eventually, everything is dealt with by the same cross. On the negative side, the Lord saves us by nailing us to the cross. When He died, I died. When I died, my old man died. When, in my experience, my old man dies, my soul-life is denied, even though I myself still live. In this way I am able to forsake the self to follow Christ. Even that which is good in me, my natural man, must still be purified through the cross.

Thus I am an old man who is already crucified, along with my flesh. But the self-life, which is my natural life, needs to be forsaken and denied, which I am able to do based upon the work of the cross. Therefore my old man, the self, is dead, my talent, my natural man, is purified, and my flesh is crucified. All this belongs to the first aspect of salvation through Christ's cross, which is to save us from being simply "I."

We Are a Battlefield

Sin abides in us, and the Lord also abides in us; therefore, we are a battlefield. The Lord is always moving in us, and sin is also always working in us. This is why Paul wrote, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall rescue me from

this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24). We have our own life, and two other lives are also in us, the life of sin and the life of the Lord; we are sandwiched in between these other lives. One life encourages us to give ourselves to the Lord, while the other life presses us to give ourselves to things that would cause us to depart from Him.

We Need the Lord's Mercy to Keep Us

There are countless fields you can give yourself to. Many parents recommend that, if their children want to serve the Lord, they should go to theological school so that they might still have a comfortable future. This shows us that even serving God has its own field in the world; even theological schools and the desire to attend theological school can turn us from the Lord.

Therefore, you should tell the Lord, “I love You; save me! I consecrate myself to You! I am just a battlefield. As I pursue You in love and truth, watch over me. Watch over my being; watch over my emotion, mind, will, desire, and purity.” Your purity is what gives you the ground to pursue Christ and what keeps you for the Lord. In contrast, if you are like wild horses in pharaoh’s chariots (S. of S. 1:9), you shall carry what is of pharaoh right into the church life.

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Thus, as you labor, ask the Lord to keep you pure as you pursue Him.

To be fruitless can be discouraging, but to be successful in fruit-bearing can cause you to lose your purity. How complicated and terrible we are; we really need the Lord to save us! If we do well in giving a message, we become puffed up, but if we do poorly, we feel we are no longer qualified to serve.

Pursuing the Lord is by no means an easy matter. You must remember that the reason you pursue Christ is to gain what Christ gained you for. You must continually ask Him to save you. You need to consecrate yourself completely to the Lord, so that in your daily walk and through all the incidences of your life your focus remains on Christ alone. If you are to fulfill your ministry, we must be consecrated in this way.

To Follow the Lord Is to Be for the Lord Himself, with No Other Goal

There are so many people on this earth who love the Lord, but out of all these, how many truly love Him? In saying this, I have a deep feeling for how much we need the Lord's mercy. If we love the Lord, we must pray to be saved from all the ways and all the places that are not healthy. It is to the Lord alone that we consecrate ourselves. Even as we declare we are for His testimony, we must not ignore the Lord Himself.

It is not as simple as you may think to be a consecrated person. The spiritual battle you fight only becomes more difficult as your spiritual life progresses. As you walk in the divine and mystical realm, Satan will do all he can to dislodge you. The more you walk in oneness with Christ, the more Satan will attempt to defeat you. Look at how many strange events we have passed through in the church life. There are both benefits and dangers, advantages and disadvantages, to having passed through these things, but be grateful if the Lord has not deemed them necessary for you.

Tell the Lord that you love Him, and consecrate yourself to Him and Him alone. We are here uniquely for Him, and for His testimony.

Laying Hold of Christ through His Authority and Government

You must recognize that all authority and all government are in the Lord's hands, and you must honor His authority and government. While it may appear easy to do this, in your experience you will find that it is not so easy. Because of our self-life we still feel the need to make independent decisions, and so many times we will try to find our own way to accomplish something.

To have the full benefit
of the Lord's government
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determined to allow Him to
have His way in all things.
This is what it means to
be someone who is
under His government.

Whenever you go your own way, however, the Lord's authority is no longer present in your life.

The Lord's government is always with you, but if you are not absolute for that government you can push away His governing hand. To have the full benefit of His government in your life, you must be determined to allow Him to have His way in all things. This is what it means to be someone who is under His government.

The Lord's Government Covers All Things

The Lord tells us that every hair on our heads is numbered (Matt 10:30). Why does He say this? He does so to assure us that everything is in His hand and under His government. Under His governing, all things work together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). This does not mean you should do things out of fear, but that you must trust Him if you want the best He has for you. Remember, though, that this requires that you love Him, and to love Him really means to give Him the first place in your life. Therefore, whatever happens, you must ask the Lord to do whatever is best in His eyes and then submit yourself to His government.

You must trust Him if you want the best He has for you. Remember, though, that this requires that you love Him, and to love Him really means to give Him the first place in your life.

Trusting All Things to the Lord's Hands

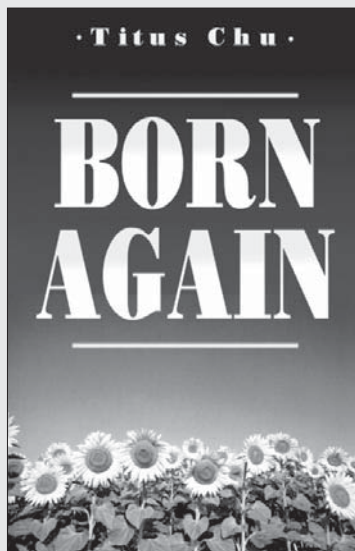
When I first moved from Taiwan to the United States in the '60s, I became separated from my fiancée, for in those days it was not a simple matter to fly here. I knew I would see many people and labor in a new field, and I knew she would also see new people, so I had to trust the Lord for our marriage. My prayer was simple: "Lord, if this is of You, keep it. If this is not of You, stop it." Inwardly, I felt it was of Him, but I knew I had to trust the Lord for everything. Eventually, of course, we did get married.

There is nothing wrong with having a preference or a choice concerning your marriage, and you should be able to freely tell the Lord what you desire. You may want to marry a certain person, and there is nothing wrong with that. But in His government, the Lord has already arranged all such things. You can fully trust His government for your marriage, your job, and where you should live. If something you desire goes against the Bible, it is obviously not of the Lord, but still, even if it is not against the Bible, you need to allow the Lord to adjust you in that matter, if that is what He decides to do.

You do not really know the Lord until you are one with His government; before then, no consecration is real. Once your consecration is established, however, many things will begin to happen. There may be times when you

will want to draw back, but the Lord will supply you to go forward. Accepting the Lord's government means giving every part of your being to Him, and allowing Him to take care of every part of your being.

Eventually, you should be able to say, like Jacob did when he blessed the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:15), that God was your shepherd your entire life. This is not to declare that you made it, or that you will see the Lord with no shame, but that you can say to Him, "As I look back at all my days, I see how You have been with me all the way. I owe it all to Your shepherding hand."



*Available online 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.

“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE FIVE

TREASURE THE THINGS OF CHRIST (1)

A Review

In this series, we have seen that we must lay hold of Christ. We must lay hold of His person, which is simply who He is; of His accomplishment; and of His government.

What has God in Christ accomplished? He has accomplished His creation and He has accomplished salvation. In His creation, we are able to see His wisdom and foresight, His eternal power, and the attributes of His divine person. In His salvation, both the work of the cross and the work of the Spirit are involved. Both the cross and the Spirit lead us to Christ Himself.

When we say we are crucified, it means that it is no longer we who live, but Christ. The cross never ends with the cross; the cross brings us to Christ. In addition to the cross, the life-giving Spirit supplies us with all of God's divine riches. As we enjoy this divine supply, we will also love the Lord more. Thus, the Lord's salvation leads us to the Lord Himself.

In His government, the Lord shepherds us all our lives. May we therefore pray, “Lord, save me with every step, in every environment, and on every occasion, that I might gain You in all things.”

Now we will consider another matter this is crucial to our going on with the Lord, which is our need to treasure the things of Christ

Treasure the Organic Body of Christ and All the Members of the Body

Where is Christ today? Christ is in the heavens, and yet He is also on the earth, for the Christ who is in the heavens is testified here on earth through His believers, who are the members of His Body.

Therefore, as you follow the Lord, you should never see yourself as being in competition with your fellow believers. You may have received revelation

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because you treasure
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from the Lord, but that does not qualify you to despise any other brother or sister, for are the believers all joined to the same Christ. You should have a godly feeling towards any gathering where Christians are worshiping the Lord. I am not saying you should honor what is of religion, but if there is even an ounce of Christ involved in what His believers are doing, you should say, “Lord, I worship You,” because you treasure His organic Body.

This is not a small thing. Divisions arise among Christians because some feel that they are above others. You

may have received some of the genuine riches of Christ, with much revelation, while in comparison others may seem to have little. Still, they deserve your respect, for they are your fellow-members in Christ Jesus; they are your family!

If you do not have this basic attitude, you cannot know how to treasure spiritual things. The riches of the Body will be the riches of the Body; you can never know from where or from whom some element of life or revelation of truth will flow forth. So, you must treasure the organic Body of Christ if you are to receive that portion.

When I go to visit a group of Christians, such as at a theological school, I honor them as fellow-members of the Body of Christ. Does this mean I should pick up a burden for these believers? I simply cannot, for my ministry and the standard of the saints there mean that years of labor would be required, even if they give us the freedom to share what the Lord has shown us. Nonetheless, all of God’s saints are lovely, wherever they are, and we fellowship with anyone who has the life of Jesus Christ as a fellow-member of the Body of Christ.

We cannot simply say, “I love everybody,” because to say this means that, practically speaking, we love no one. Watchman Nee warned us about praying, “Lord, save everyone in the world!” Instead, we should pray, “Lord, save this particular person,” or “Lord, work in this place.” To say we love everybody means we love nobody in particular. When we love the organic Body of Christ, we will be one who loves the testimony of His Body, and who cares for specific members of the Body of Christ.

Treasure Each Local Church Alike

Why is it that some people love one church above another? It is because they do not see the Body. If you treasure the Body, there will be no particular local church you love above another, or any particular church you set your heart on. When you see the Body, you see that Chicago is Cleveland, and Cleveland is Buffalo, and Buffalo is Columbus, and so on, because there is only one organic Body!

Of course, we who partake of the divine things are fallen beings. Thus, in this age there will always be some discrepancy between what is real and what we possess of that reality. Still, we need to treasure the organic Body of Christ.

This organic Body is manifested and testified in the localities. That is why we can say “the church in Toronto,” “the church in Chicago,” and so on. When you say that you love the Body of Christ, you must love the local churches, for they are the practical expressions of this Body.

Treasure Your Local Church

While you need to love all the churches, when you say, “I love the local churches,” you must focus firstly, and practically, on the locality you are in. As one who loves the Body of Christ, you must learn to love the testimonies of the Body of Christ, the local churches. And as one who loves the local churches, you must give yourself first of all to the church in the city where you live.

Treasure Those the Lord Has Placed Beside You

Then, as you treasure the church in your locality, you need to practically treasure those the Lord has placed you with. This may be more difficult for some from certain cultures, because some cultures place values on things that make them picky. Some emphasize competitiveness while others emphasize mutuality. Some people are so smart that they lose their wisdom. Still, it is better to be receiving than to be wary. If you are a competitive person, you may see the saints beside you as your enemies rather than as your dear fellow-members. Furthermore, the faults of others close to you are more evident than the faults of those who are far away.

Treasure the Brotherhood

In addition, you need to treasure the brotherhood. The church life should be an expression of brotherhood, which means that the saints in a locality are together in such a way that whatever is done, is done for the profit of all. There may still be some who are more responsible for certain things than

Rather than being a place of work, every local church should be a testimony of such brotherhood. If the saints in a locality love one another in this way, the Lord's testimony will surely be there.

others, but what impresses us when we see such a situation is how everyone loves one another, stands with one another, and considers what is profitable for one another. What characterizes such a brotherhood is a profound mutual love and care. The well-being of the saints is what is always in view. Those who experience this kind of life count it a joy and honor to serve one another. Rather than being a place of work, every local church should be a testimony of

such brotherhood. If the saints in a locality love one another in this way, the Lord's testimony will surely be there.

Treasure Every Opportunity to Gather Together with the Saints

Finally, in treasuring the Body of Christ, you also need to treasure the corporate living and gatherings in your locality, for it is the Lord who has placed you there together with the other saints. You need to treasure every opportunity to gather together with those the Lord has placed you with.

Treasure Intimacy with Christ through Your Fellowship with Him

The second great matter you need to treasure is your intimacy with Christ through fellowship with Him. You have Christ, and your relationship with Him should be one of intimacy. Those who are engaged to be married are not interested in moving on to other interests just because they have decided to get married; rather, they continue to enjoy and progress in their relation-

ship with each other. In the same way, you should always seek to develop your relationship with Christ. You do love the Lord Jesus, and His desire is that you would walk closely with Him.

Treasure Your Human Spirit

Treasure your relationship with the Lord firstly by treasuring your spirit, since that is where the Lord dwells within you. Don't do anything that would deaden your spirit! Too often saints allow things into them that hurt their spirit. It may have nothing to do with right or wrong; you must go instead by the sense of life and death. Anything that brings in death, you must avoid, while in contrast, you must do whatever keeps your spirit fresh. Therefore tell the Lord continually that you love Him.

Treasure the Bountiful Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

Secondly, treasure the bountiful supply of the Spirit (Phil 1:19). Whenever the Spirit's supply is present, it terminates any negative thing that damages your fellowship with Christ, and it also germinates something that strengthens your relationship with the Lord. The more you tell the Lord you love Him, the more you receive the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3b), and the more you spontaneously find that whatever is negative is terminated. In this way, your relationship with Him is strengthened.

Treasure the Fruit of the Spirit

Then, thirdly, treasure the fruit of the Spirit. In whatever you do, do you have the fruit of the Spirit? If you care only for the feeling of the Lord's presence, it is possible that you might be fooled. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is real; it can never deceive you.

Eventually, if you care for the Lord in this way, you will find yourself living in the face of Jesus Christ.



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE SIX

TREASURE THE THINGS OF CHRIST (2)

You should never let go of Christ or of His salvation; neither should you let go of His sovereignty and government. When you have Christ, these things are always with you, at least in a general way, but you need to have a proper appreciation of them before you can fully benefit from them.

Treasure the Hand of the Lord

For the most part, I don't trust the consecration of young people, because young people tend to be restless. This restlessness is good in one sense, because without a pioneering attitude, your life will amount to nothing; no one should think about retiring at age 25; if you do, you are a hopeless person. On the one hand, you should have a pioneering spirit, but on the other hand, even the pioneering life must have some regulating principles, though too many regulating principles can become oppressive. In any event, learn to take all things from the hand of the Lord, for nothing takes place outside the sphere of His government.

Treasure His Hand in His Administration

How do you know the Lord's hand is present? First, His administration is involved. Second, there is His leading; the Lord's leading always has something in view, and what He has in view is extremely precious. Third, there is His protection. Fourth, there is His support. Finally, there is His discipline. All of these matters have to do with the Lord's hand in our lives.

A good administration operates based upon a proper constitution or by-laws. No proper administration is merely for itself. No worthy administration seeks to merely gain followers for the sake of extending itself.

Sometimes children set up a lemonade stand. Adults do not buy their lem-

onade for its own sake, but to encourage the children. The children may be very proud of their business, but no parent would allow them to sell lemonade as a career; rather, it is part of a process. This is a good example of how the Lord deals with us. In His administration, the Lord works with us at every level with His ultimate goal for us in view.

Treasure His Hand That Leads You

The Lord's leading always involves His administration. You may have a plan and an administration to achieve some goal for your life. For this goal, you may go to college to get the necessary training. This is your own administration for your life, with your own leading. Still, God will lead you by His hand all the way. As He leads you, He does so fully according to His administration. He does not lead you just for some particular step; He leads you your entire life with a clear view about where your value is within the overall view of what He desires. Each of us is, so to speak, a piece in this puzzle. No one will be able to see the overall picture until it is finished, for each of us is among the millions of pieces in this great puzzle.

Those who work with puzzles know to start with the corners and edges. In God's puzzle, perhaps Adam being created was one corner, and so on, and perhaps when Jesus came the center was filled in. But, to fill in this puzzle still requires each one of us. This is why God leads each one. Unfortunately, it seems He needs three or four sets of pieces to produce the completed product, because so many of the pieces run away! When He picks us up and tries to put us in the puzzle, we may resist, and He may have to put us aside.

This is why you must realize that the Lord never does anything in your life in a light way. He leads you with this great picture in view. He wants to place you exactly where your part lies within this universal puzzle. Therefore, you need to pray, "Lord, don't let me become a frustration to You. Don't let me become a missing piece. I want to be one with You as You lead me according to Your administration." If you hold onto this hope, you would never

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To arrange your future, the Lord must tear some things down, just as to be successful in a career, you must do many things that go against your own being. Unless you seek to escape and take some line other than the Lord's, you have to allow the Lord to destroy, to take away, what you have built, for the sake of what He has for you in His administration. This is one of the ways in which experience of His hand; it was Watchman Nee's experience; he cared for nothing but serving God. Because

of this, he allowed God to tear down anything in his life that God desired to tear down, including his spiritual accomplishment.

Some of you worry about what university you should attend, or whom you should marry, or what your career path should be, or what city you should live in. In God's administration, you must allow God to work in your environment so that you might become whatever it is that God desires of you. When you resign everything to God's hand you may be at rest and know that everything will be the best that it can possibly be. When you realize it is God who has placed you where you are and that He is responsible for everything in your life, you really know what it is to be at peace.

The decision you make as to who you marry is perhaps the single most important decision you will ever make in your life. In the church life, we do not match people up, nor do we prevent people from marrying the person they want to marry. Marriage is a matter that is up to the judgment of those involved. When you come to the point of deciding who you will marry, there may be both something not so good as well as something very enjoyable. The older saints may warn you, but when someone is in love, it is difficult for them to discern between the soul-life and the Lord's anointing. Whatever the Lord leads you into, however, including your marriage, is for His administration. Whatever the Lord leads us to, it is so that we might become that completing piece in His puzzle.

Treasure His Hand of Protection, Support, and Discipline

As the Lord's hand leads us for His eternal plan, His hand also protects us. And as He protects us, He supports us. As you follow the Lord, you will need His divine strength to support you every step you take in your career, your moving, your marriage, and whether you serve the Lord full-time or whether you take a job. With every step you will need the Lord's support and protection.

Because you are still somewhat naughty as far as the Lord is concerned, His hand will also discipline you, and the Lord's hand of discipline can sometimes be very heavy. Because His leading is for His administration, His discipline often goes far beyond what may seem just. When this happens, you need to remember that what He seeks is not something according to right or wrong, but something according to your person. Many things that will happen to you in your life will have nothing to do with right or wrong. Rather, for the sake of forming your person, just for you to become spiritual, the Lord will do some things that seem to be completely unreasonable. When this happens, you should not feel that God is punishing you; God never actually punishes you, but He will discipline you, not because of your deeds, but for the sake of increasing the measure of Christ in you.

When you enjoy God's hand, you will have the feeling that your life is truly in His care, and as you are in His hand in such a way, you find that you just cannot give Him adequate thanks. He leads us with something so high in view! As He leads us, He supports and He protects. Outwardly and inwardly we possess a real certainty. He deals with us with His hand of discipline so that we may be pure.

The Lord Will Lead You with His Administration in View

The Lord first opened up the door for me to go to Africa in 1979, when I received a letter from a brother there asking me to visit. The first thing I did was to call Brother Lee, since he knew the situation there better than I did. Brother Lee had also received a letter from this same brother asking him to send a coworker, so he mentioned the name of a brother whom he was considering to send. I said, "That brother would be good." But then Brother Lee said, "Since you have received this letter requesting you to go, why don't you go?"

When I arrived, I was taken to eat at a restaurant where the cost of one meal for eight brothers was equal to one month's wages for an average worker in that country. I asked to pay, but the brothers told me they would take care of it. Then they told me a story of another brother who came to visit them, who told them, "I would like to just eat fruit every day." After a few days of that, however, he asked whether they might take him to a restaurant. They brought him to the same restaurant, and after eating there he asked to eat at that restaurant every day! This was very difficult for them, because the brothers there were quite challenged financially. I appreciated that they brought me there, but I let them know that I would not go to that restaurant again unless they allowed me to pay.

It is not an easy thing to serve the Lord. I went to New Zealand and told the brothers, "Please let me take care of all the bills." I asked a brother to drive me to view the island, and it was very beautiful. I asked to see a native fishing village, and even helped to push a boat ashore. Did the Lord lead me or tell me to do this? No, but I enjoyed it. Was it something against God's economy? I needed to rest, and this particular situation provided itself as we drove along the sea. God may have felt, "If you want to go to the beach to rest, that's fine, but it is My goal that I have in view at all times."

As you can see from this example, the Lord will lead you in small things, but what the Lord is after is something much higher than that. God will lead you with His administration in view. And in the process, He will discipline you to purify you so that you might gain the profit from Him. God doesn't respond to things; He responds to your need to be constituted with Him.

Treasure the Lord's Present Speaking

As you follow the Lord, you should experience His speaking. If you have not experienced the Lord's speaking for some time, something is wrong. Tell the Lord, "Be fresh to me, not only in life and anointing, but speak to me so that I might be in Your living presence!"

Knowing the Lord's Speaking through the Anointing and Sense of Life

How do you know the Lord is speaking to you? First, the Lord speaks through the sense of life and anointing. Don't make His speaking something superstitious! It is often just as simple as the sense that it is time to stop playing

on the computer and go to bed, or a gentle rebuke when you overly admire yourself in the mirror. The Lord's speaking is not necessarily, "Go thou into the wilderness to save the people there." The Lord's speaking is normally something very tender and intimate. In it, you will always sense the element of love. When He speaks, you will sense that someone who loves you is speaking to you.

Sometimes We Mistake Our Culture for the Sense of Life

Many times what you feel is not actually a sense of life, but your culture. For example, many differences among us come out in the matter of diet and eating. In one place I visited, we had a meal in which the fish was still breathing. I told the waiter to take it away, but the others protested, for to them that was a delicacy. This is a matter of culture, but as a human being you wonder how it is that you can eat a fish while it is gasping its last breath. I cannot say I had a sense of life within not to eat it, but I was turned away nonetheless.

We need to learn to respect the culture of others, even though we may be unable to participate. In Africa if they eat with their hands, learn to eat with your hands. Sometimes when you reject something, you must realize that it may be you, not the Lord, who is rejecting it.

Honor How Others Feel Led

Some Christians practice things that may seem strange to others. The Shakers got their name because they shook chairs back and forth while praying. Whether or not that was something of the Spirit, honor them. Do not call the practices of others foolish, for that only produces enmity.

How to Know the Lord's Speaking

It is likely that much of what you call the divine speaking is actually your own feeling. The Lord will not typically speak to you in clear words from heaven. Even if you have had such an experience, it really should be confirmed through fellowship with other brothers.

Divine speaking is not something according to your natural culture or according to who you are. First, it is the sense of life and anointing. You simply

sense an inner soothing. You feel comforted, sweet, and satisfied. You sense the Lord is close. That is the anointing. But, regardless of how rich that sense is, we must realize that the genuine speaking of the Lord will always match the Bible.

For example, suppose a brother wants to marry a certain girl. He may claim the Lord is leading him that way, but if that girl is an unbeliever, then it is doubtful that such leading is genuine. My word would be, "A believer doesn't date an unbeliever unless they were already dating before the one got saved. And even then, according to Paul, the unbeliever should be freed if they so desire." The Bible is very clear on this matter; Paul tells us directly that if the unbeliever leaves, we should simply let them leave (1 Cor. 7:15).

However, suppose this brother continues to insist that he wants to date this unbelieving girl. My word would be, "Give her name to a sister and see if this young lady is willing to be saved. If she receives Christ, then pursue her. The Bible is very clear on this matter." The Bible doesn't tell us that we must marry someone who loves the Lord as much as we do, but it does tell us we should marry someone who is also in Christ.

One day someone was driving me somewhere in a red car. It was quite beautiful. It made me want to buy a red car, too, because an older man likes to show others that he is not that old. I hope that if I were to ride in a red car, you wouldn't condemn me, because there is no verse against it. You might tell me, "Love not the world," but driving in a red car may not be the world to me.

How do you know the Lord is speaking to you in a certain situation? If you feel the Lord is speaking to you there should be the sense of life. And when we give the matter to the Lord, there should be the anointing. Along with this basic feeling, there should also be some confirmation. First, the Lord may give you something from the Bible; there are many things not in the Bible, but

How do you know the Lord is speaking to you in a certain situation? If you feel the Lord is speaking to you, there should be the sense of life. And when we give the matter to the Lord, there should be the anointing.

which the Lord's word can nonetheless confirm. Then, secondly, it should appear to be right according to the environment. And thirdly, it should be confirmed in fellowship with the brothers. Remember, however, that fellowship should be the last thing. The brothers are not God. They cannot tell you what to do; they do not decide your future. After you are somewhat clear within, you fel-

lowship with others to confirm or deny your feeling. This is why fellowshiping with the brothers is last instead of first.

If you are a music major and ask me whether you should be a music teacher or a performer, I may tell you to that to teach is easier. However, as for the environment there may be no teaching jobs available, in which case my fellowship means nothing. Therefore, your habit should not be to go to the brothers first; rather, you should abide in the sense of life. Then, you should have the Bible; the Lord may cause some word in the Bible to stand out to you. Also, see how the environment relates to this leading. Finally, go to a brother for fellowship, to see how he feels concerning this matter. This is how the Lord leads.

The Lord's Speaking through the Anointing, the Bible, the Environment, and Fellowship

In principle, the Lord's speaking comes to you through four things: the sense of the divine life, the Bible, the environment, and your fellowship with the saints. Fellowship, however, should never be the first thing, because the Lord doesn't want anyone to take His place in our lives. Too often, those who serve others like to tell them what to do. If you go to others for fellowship, it should be based on an inner feeling you already have. The anointing teaches you all things; in particular, it teaches you to focus on Christ (1 John 2:27). Then, as you gain a sense of the anointing, a verse may come to you to further establish this sense, and further agreement should come by way of your circumstances, that is, your environment. If you have all these, surely it is good to then fellowship with the brothers to see if they confirm your feeling.

Sometimes when we refer to the hand of Christ, we mean there is a particular move or direction, in which a certain brother may take the lead. This is right, because in the Lord's work, the leading brother may fellowship with his co-workers about what they should do or where they should go. Thus, treasuring the hand of the Lord can also mean treasuring the Lord's move. Even then, however, the inner sense of the brother involved should match the fellowship; the sense of life within should always be taken as the primary factor. In principle, this is the proper order for gaining the Lord's leading. The Lord is the one who should initiate.



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE SEVEN

TREASURE THE THINGS OF CHRIST (3)

Treasure the Lord's Speaking in His Word

Be Equipped with the Facts in the Word

In the matter of following the Lord, it is crucial for you to know the Bible. I have said before that you should have a Bible that you can freely mark and take notes in. If you go through the Bible in such a way for a period of time, you will at least know what is in the Bible. To be equipped in the Word, there should always be a living word that serves as your encouragement, strength, and energy for your pursuing and direction. If you don't have the living word with you in this way, your Christian life will fall short.

When you follow the Lord, there should always be some speaking within, particularly when you are young. Such speaking encourages and strengthens you to pursue in the proper direction. If you have read and studied the Bible, and yet no particular word from Him is alive within you, it indicates that something is wrong with your spiritual condition.

We are working to provide the young saints with around 350 portions of the Bible to memorize. Each portion is a few verses long, which will make it easier for the portions to stay with you. By using these portions, these young saints should be able to memorize about 3,000 verses in one year. After a year, we may provide you with another year's worth of verses. If you memorize the Bible in this way, the Word shall dwell in you richly! It is precious to tell the

It is precious to tell the Lord that you want to follow Him, but eventually what counts is what is inside of you.

Lord that you want to follow Him, but eventually what counts is what is inside of you. Of course, you do not need to wait for someone to provide you with a schedule; you can just begin to memorize whatever portions you feel are precious. You always should have some verses available to you that you can ap-

ply. If you want God to speak to you, you have to love His written word.

You must eventually learn what the Bible is really saying, for what the Bible says is much more important than what you think. If you are not focused enough on what the Bible actually says as you read it, you will find yourself wondering later, “How is it I did not know that was in the Bible?”

Read the Bible to know the facts. It takes time and patience, pens and paper, and even many translations, because the facts are not as readily understood as you may think. But the more you know the details, the more you will be able to ask the right questions. The great challenge is to find out what the Bible really says.

To give an example, you may ask, why is the same Greek word translated differently in different contexts? This is the kind of thing you must investigate. And as you dig into the facts, allow the Lord to speak to you.

Touch the Spirit in the Word

Then, as you study to know what each verse is saying according to the facts, you should also use your spirit to touch the Spirit in the word, for the Lord’s word is Spirit (John 6:63). If you realize this, the Lord should be able to really speak to you. When you receive the divine speaking in this way, it literally inspires you; Second Timothy 3:16 says that it all Scripture “in-breathes.” The more you have the experience of touching God’s Word in this way, the more you will be able to see the revelation contained in the Word.

There are 260 chapters in the New Testament, and each averages about 25 verses. If you study just a few verses every day for four years, you should begin to grasp the facts. The question, however, is whether you can be inspired. Can you exercise your spirit while contacting the word, which in its nature is also spirit?

Walk in the Word by Allowing It to Become the Divine Breath in You

One way to do this is to pray over the word as you are studying it. Breathe it in and breathe it out to the Lord! As you pray over it, you may experience being exposed before God and finding yourself having to confess many things to Him. For example, while studying and praying over the matter of abiding as a branch in the vine in John 15:5, you may find yourself confessing that you have little experience of this. At the same time, however, you may

Learn to abide in whatever you have received of the Bible as the divine breath.

realize you already are abiding in Him, since He is already abiding in you. You thus may end up praising the Lord by simply quoting the verse out loud: “You in me! Me in You!” Later, as you find

yourself in some habit apart from Christ, that word may return to you, for you have taken in something of the word as the divine Breath. Learn to abide in whatever you have received of the Bible as the divine breath.

The Word Should Become a Controlling Revelation to Us

In this way, the word as a whole can eventually become the controlling truth in your life, to the point that it regulates your work, your pursuit, and your labor. The word itself in its entirety must become, in an organic way, what regulates you. The whole Bible must therefore come together as a revelation that controls your life. At this point, you receive the highest speaking. It will no longer be to you a matter of arguing over some portion, for the Bible itself will be the vision that controls your life; it will regulate your walk, pursuing, and labor.

There are many things you might be able to do. You might even have the ability to attract thousands of people. Still, your question should be, “Is that what the Lord wants?” As for me, I am not concerned about whether I have a large congregation to follow me, because there is a heavenly vision that controls my living. In the process, people may appreciate me or they may shun me, but that does not matter, for what I see is this heavenly vision!

When the Bible becomes so much to you, it is no more a verse here that comforts you, or another verse there that inspires you, but the entirety of the Bible that regulates you. The Word overall becomes a picture set before you. Your person becomes very clear and you begin to pursue and fight for what you have seen for the rest of your life. The whole Bible is the truth, and the revelation it contains must become the dominant factor in your life. When this is your situation, your living will become something very high and you will be able to testify that everything you do is according to what God desires, for you see what He has delivered to His children in His Word. At such a point, your life becomes valuable, for you have the divine speaking.

May the Word become such a factor in all our lives!



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE EIGHT

LIVING A LIFE WITH ASSURANCE (1)

In this series of messages we have seen that, as young believers who love the Lord and who want to continue loving the Lord all your lives, you must lay hold of Christ Himself, His accomplishment, and His government. We have also covered four basic matters related to treasuring the things of Christ: treasuring His organic Body, treasuring intimacy with Christ, treasuring the hand of the Lord, and treasuring His speaking in His Word. There are other things we need to treasure as well, such as the hymns, our spiritual companions, and every God-given circumstance. However, we must now go on to cover another basic matter for your Christian life, which is that you must live a life with assurance.

Overview

To live a life with assurance, you must first of all be pure. For a Christian, impurity is more serious than weakness. When you are young, there is the possibility of one kind of impurity, and when you are older there is the possibility of another kind of impurity. Each kind of impurity is a matter of degree, but basically, if you become impure, there will be no way for the Lord to truly use you; how serious is this matter!

If you want to live a life in true assurance, you must be one who boasts uniquely in the Lord's grace and mercy and who possesses a clear vision and commitment. You must also be one who is willing to go through whatever trials the Lord has arranged for you, pursue with a godly exercise, fight and struggle for the Lord's best, enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, express the divine attributes in your human virtues, and love others and pursue with them by forgiving and forgetting. Finally, you must be one who is not stumbled by your weaknesses and who does not focus on your shortcomings. Eventually, you should be one who is unconcerned for your own gain or manifestation, because you have in view only Christ and His testimony.

Boasting Only in His Grace and Mercy

As a Christian, you should never say that you are “lucky.” For those of us who love the Lord, all things happen with God’s purpose in view (Rom. 8:28). So, if you love the Lord, the crucial thing is that you do not murmur or complain. Instead, simply trust in the Lord. Be assured that all things that happen to you come from the Lord. This realization is a great secret for your going on.

This may also be, however, one of the hardest lessons for you to learn. When choices are set before you, it may be difficult to testify that you are resting in the Lord. Instead, you may become busy making decisions, and then hope that the Lord will bless what you have decided to do. In fact, in your view the decision you make may be genuine and very much for Him, but that does not mean it was what He Himself desired.

Whether you fail in some of the following points or succeed in all of them, your overall realization must be that your following of the Lord is all His by grace and mercy. This is all that you can boast. In other words, no one can boast in any attainment. You may make many mistakes and miss many things that seem essential, but He still comes in alongside and says, “I understand. I am with you.” How wonderful this is! Whenever we are unable to receive His grace, He comes in with His mercy. I can testify that this is what has enabled me to follow the Lord all these years.

Going through Trials

There are many things waiting for you in your life. For instance, who is the one you shall marry? If the Lord provides you with someone, enjoy that. If not, learn to remain in whatever He provides. Still, to the single saints I would say that if you are over 30 and not married, that may indicate that you are overly selective, that you have a very strong self-life, or that you are cowardly. Always fight and struggle for the best. Your marriage is crucial to your life, so seek the Lord in this matter.

While following the Lord, you will encounter all kinds of environments. It is good even to confront times of need, for in such times we find out how real the Lord is. Do you have the willingness to trust in the Lord? Make yourself available to the Lord. Whether things are smooth or difficult, stay focused on Him.

In fact, it is actually easier to stay focused on the Lord when things are somewhat difficult. Generally speaking, unless the circumstances are so ex-

treme that they tempt us to rebel or doubt, difficulties drive us to the Lord, while in times of ease we tend to drift away from Him.

Having a Pursuing Life with a Godly Exercise

When you pursue, pursue according to the Christ you see. Your entire pursuing life should be with a godly exercise. You should not react to others who seem to frustrate your pursuing. If your Bible-reading gets interrupted by someone who asks for your help, do not be angry with them; rather, let them interrupt you. I have seen some brothers get angry with others even as they were speaking for the Lord. This is not proper; rather, we should learn to let our labor be frustrated in such a way.

When I was young, I would never say a good word about anyone. I often told the saints, “Go and do better!” But when there is godly exercise, self-effort disappears, and your exercise begins to express something of God.

Your exercise must be to gain Christ alone. How good it is to seek what is best in light of Christ, versus what is best in light of your desires.

Madame Guyon married a husband who did not love her. So many of us learned from her of the inner life, yet I wonder why she married. Sisters, if you marry, you must be for your husband; don’t be overly spiritual. Madame Guyon’s husband married someone very educated and beautiful, yet for some reason she refused to really be his wife! She even allowed smallpox to scar her face; did she have the right to do that? Her beauty did not belong to her, but to her husband. Therefore she was not fighting for the best, but for the best of her spirituality. This is wrong; you should not fight for spirituality, but for gaining Christ. Fight for the best to win Christ, not just for some kind of spirituality. I assure you, you can find Christ in cooking for your family, even if it means you cannot read the Bible as much as you wish. To gain the best does not mean to become peculiar. Actually, it is often the most “normal” saints who gain Christ the most.

Expressing the Divine Attributes through Human Virtues

The divine attributes and the genuine human virtues are two sides of one matter; the divine attributes enliven the human virtues. As you enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, something comes forth. The Christ you gain supplies the divine

attributes to become your human virtues. When these attributes are expressed through your human virtues, they become manifest. Praise the Lord, we can live a life of love and power due to His being in us!

Being a Person of Love, Forsaking, Forgiving, Forgetting, and Enduring

To love by forsaking, forgiving, forgetting, and enduring becomes one of the greatest challenges for any Christian who desires to truly pursue the Lord.

Are you ready to forsake yourself? If you refuse to go to a certain place even though the Lord is trying to put you there, that is the self. At such times you may even say, "The Lord is not leading me," when the fact is that you simply do not wish to go. If this is so, you have not learned to forsake yourself. You must realize that God has the right to decide for you. You may feel attached to a certain place, perhaps for a very good reason, yet can you say the Lord led you there? This should be the only thing that really matters.

The matter of forsaking yourself can apply to very practical matters, such as how you eat your food. For example, Americans eat their food differently than the Chinese do. If you are a Chinese cook, you would feel insulted if someone salted the food you prepared, but it is simply the case that Americans like to add salt. That is a trait that symbolizes the American character, for Americans seek to make things according to their own liking. If you really love the Lord, however, you must have the ability to forsake yourself. If you do not forsake yourself, you cannot really say you love the Lord.

Learning to Forgive Others

As to yourself, you must learn to forsake yourself and your own interest. As to others, you must learn to forgive them; how difficult this is! Others will be bothersome to you simply because they are not you. People will do things

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that hurt you or damage you, but even so, you must forgive. Many things will seem very unfair and even unrighteous, yet you must forgive. Can you do this, even if someone has done something underhanded to cheat you? You must forgive, and you must see that all the brothers are lovely.

Learning to Endure and to Forgive

When it comes to being with the saints, it is difficult to endure, for in general the saints simply don't grow as we think they should. Yet, if you give them up as hopeless, the Lord will also give you up. The real joy is to stay in the church life and live and walk with others for their growth. In the midst of such a living, many things will take place that seem to contradict that process. Therefore, you need much endurance.

If a crop of young believers is raised up without much struggle on your part, it will not really help you to become a true farmer, spiritually speaking. In contrast, what does help you is a group of difficult saints; this will manifest your ability. You don't learn much when everything is easy; rather, it is when things are difficult that you learn how to labor. You may desire to wash your hands of some saints and go find others who are more hopeful. However, if you do this, you will end up having no one to care for due to your selectiveness. There is no other way; you simply need much endurance.

If you are a person who loves Christ and the church, practice these things. Deny yourself. If you go back to something, let it be the Lord who has given it back to you after you have given it to Him. Towards others, forgive. How readily we remember five dollars we loaned a brother, and yet we are willing to forgive five thousand dollars that we owe someone else! Can you forgive that brother the five dollars and forget about it? It is very true, as someone has said, that when you loan to a friend, you will either lose your money or lose your friend. Learn the skill of forgetting, and, for the saints' growth, endure.

Belonging Solely to the Lord, Without Any Personal Gain in View

Each one of you should realize you belong to the Lord Himself and to His Body. No one belongs to a locality. The Lord may lead you to a place, but it is the Lord and His Body that is your testimony, and not your locality.

If you wish to be healthy in the serving life, you cannot have personal gain in view. The Lord may send you to a special place, such as Africa or Europe, and you should be willing to go there. However, your labor there should not become some kind of capital for any sort of gain or special attention.



“So, you love the Lord...”

MESSAGE NINE
LIVING A LIFE
WITH ASSURANCE (2)

Boasting Only in His Grace and Mercy

In your life-long Christian journey, it is not your own merit you rely upon. Rather, you must realize that if you are able to follow the Lord and eventually finish your race, it is all due to His grace and mercy!

Having an Assured Commitment
with a Clear Vision

The commitment you have must come with vision. If you have a commitment that does not involve vision, that commitment is not so real. I am clear as to why I live this manner of life, and I know why I labor as I do; this is because I have a vision. My goal is very clear.

Allow me to boast. I was still only in my twenties when I came to this country, but nonetheless I was very clear as to why I labored. I did not try to start a church or work that belonged to me. I simply desired to see local churches raised up in many places, with many saints giving their lives to Christ for His testimony in the local churches.

Willing to Go through Trials

On the one hand, you should not be afraid of the cross, but on the other hand, neither should you jump onto a nail. If a cross comes, it comes. The Lord will always provide sufficient grace to bring you through any situation He allows you to go through, or which He brings to you. If the Lord puts you into hardship, do not seek to avoid it. However, do not purposely put yourself into hardship.

Having a Pursuing Life with a Godly Exercise

Pursue, but do not seek or expect material advantage due to your pursuing. There is no group of rich people who support the work among us, and no worker among us receives a salary. We simply survive according to the manner in which the Lord provides for us, and as we pursue in our serving life, we simply live before the Lord.

Those who are co-workers possess a co-life and a co-living for Christ. We all live for Christ. We should have no other thought. As those who serve the Lord together, we trust in the Lord together.

Always Fighting and Struggling for the Best

If you become a full-timer, you should always fight for the best. Many consider what is profitable only in light of their own interest, but in fact, that could never be considered the best.

The Lord can testify for me that I am always struggling and fighting for what is best for your heart. I have no feeling to become rich or famous or to possess a congregation to which I can preach or even to be a “servant.” I want to gain and fight for the best!

Enjoying the Fruit of the Spirit and Being a Person of Love

It is not easy to live in the church life with the saints. In fact, to deal with material things is easy when compared to this. When the Lord gives you grace, you are able to forsake material things, but to forgive others, or to forget an offense when an insult it involved, is more difficult. Still, you must learn these things.

What is the most difficult thing? It is to endure the saints as they are in the process of their Christian growth. Some who are serving the Lord may fail to the point of ruining their own ministry, but you have to realize that God is the Savior, not you; you can advise them, but in cases where they are attacking you, it may appear that you are attempting to defend yourself. In your heart you may realize a certain brother’s ministry is finished. Even so, you still learn to endure. One brother came to a place when it seemed he was almost ready

to blossom in his ministry, and then he stumbled; I simply did not know how to help him.

Not Focusing on Your Weaknesses

Many hate their weaknesses, but you should actually appreciate such things. When you are aware of your weakness, you do need to be on the alert concerning it. Still, you must appreciate it, for it is your weaknesses that force you to Christ. You are not a complete and perfect person; if you were, you would not need the Lord Jesus. The reason you really need the Lord as your Savior is due to your imperfections and shortcomings. The very exposure of your shortcoming is what forces you to Christ. Therefore the Lord allows you to experience weakness just so that you might know that you really need Christ.

Even so, don't focus on your specific shortcomings. Every time you are tempted to be lifted up due to some apparent spiritual success, the memory of your weakness is what keeps you before the Lord; whenever you think of it, it causes you to cast yourself upon the Lord for His mercy. Would you rather have a life that is always overcoming, or one in which your weaknesses remind you that you are nothing? There is no one who is not weak.

There was a brother among us who was really a model in his living; he never even walked out of his bedroom without a tie on. I really appreciated that, but I also realize that I am not him. I have my weaknesses. Therefore I cannot exalt myself or uplift my ministry or say, "Follow me!" I can only say, "Follow Christ!"

Trusting the Lord with Surety

Can you have the assurance that all things are measured to you by the Lord, and that He is trustworthy? It may seem like you can be wrong in who you marry, the career you choose, the city you live in, and whether you serve the Lord full-time, but you cannot be wrong unless the Lord allows you to be wrong. The Lord may want you to do something, but you may be unable or unwilling to follow, and instead decide to choose your own path. Even so, you can only be wrong to the point the Lord allows you to be wrong. A parent may allow a child to go his or her own direction, but if the child ends up in something dangerous, the parent will intervene.

Take the matter of marriage, which is quite crucial. Everyone, it seems, feels they have married the wrong person, and yet, every marriage is the right marriage. Some think they are marrying an angel rather than a fallen human being. You never know what you are getting yourself into.

Try to walk as a person who is one with God. Be consecrated. Tell the Lord, “You know how wild and disobedient and foolish I am, but Lord, I am Yours. I know You truly are my Savior and I trust myself to You.” Learn to live such a life of trusting in the Lord, and be pure. In this way, you will be much more restful in your life.

Not Seeking Self-Gain

Don’t seek for a place, way, situation, manifestation, function, or even location that is best for you. Watchman Nee commented that the wealthier localities had many more co-workers who were burdened to serve them, while another place that was poor had no one who was burdened for it.

Many seek for manifestation, but I appreciate the purity of those who labor among us. I don’t perceive that any of them are seeking a following or visibility or position. Still, we must be careful. When you are growing and developing, for some reason, place becomes an issue, and therefore there is the temptation to maneuver ourselves into something else.

Once, while I was still a young believer in Taiwan, an elder chose some whom he considered hopeful from among the young people and took them to the mountain for a special training. I was not one of those chosen, and therefore I believed I was not so hopeful. That was discouraging. But in that discouragement, I asked myself, “Even if you are not so hopeful, can you still not love the Lord?” My response was to tell the Lord, “Even if I am not hopeful, I will still love You!” I learned something precious in that experience. I told Him that, regardless of how useful I might be, I just wanted to love Him my whole life.

Manifestation is a great matter, but if you want to be useful to the Lord, you must have no self-gain in view. Where would you like to go? We all would like to go where the blessing is the highest. We all would like to go to the places where we can see a good result, while no one likes to go where the labor will be met with many difficulties. Go wherever the Lord sends you, and learn to be with any kind of person. Let the Lord develop you. You should love your local church, but remember that the local church you are in is only one among the many local churches.

If we declare that we are for our local church and loyal to it, it indicates that

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we are close to having a denominational concept, because the basic principle of a denomination is that people are attached to the meeting place. What we have seen is the expression of the one Body of Christ. Therefore, wherever the Lord leads us, and wherever He puts us, it is the same to us. We simply remain in a place until the Lord leads us elsewhere.

You should love the local church you are in, but you should not live only for that locality; you are for the Lord and for the Lord's testimony! Because we are for the His testimony, we should never have the thought that we will live in a certain place until we are buried there. We love the saints, not physical localities. Wherever the saints are, we can also be there.

How to Die Spiritually

Now we want to briefly cover three very serious matters that can be fatal to our spiritual life: to be impure, to compromise, and to be common.

To human thought, an immoral living is more serious than these things. In reality, however, the Lord can have mercy and turn such a situation by means of His disciplining hand. Morally speaking, people fall short, but the Lord has His mercy and His discipline. Such things may limit a person spiritually, but in general they will not kill him. For instance, if you are a drinker or habitually lose your temper, the Lord can still use you, albeit in a more limited way. However, to be impure, to be common, or to compromise means that you are finished with the Lord.

Other things besides these three matters may arise that will limit how much the Lord can measure to you, but they will not terminate your Christian life. If you fail in any of these matters, however, you are finished before the Lord. Even though you may still love the Lord and serve and labor among the saints and the churches, and still do many things for Christ, if any of these elements are present, you become useless as far as the Lord is concerned.

To be impure is the most serious of these three matters. As long as you are impure, you may have a bright future—but not in the Lord.

Those who are impure usually feel that others are also impure. For example, they see a brother who comes to their locality as a threat because they

themselves want to hold onto what they see as their own kingdom. Such people do not realize that a pure person never needs their field, for they have the Lord's interest in view wherever they are. Therefore they can go and labor anywhere.

There are a number of ways for impurity to be manifested. If you are someone who seeks to please another with a view to taking over his work when he is gone, that is impure, and it will really damage you. It is also impure if, while loving the Lord, you also wish to have a career, position, and manifestation so that you can serve the Lord in a certain capacity. If you become such a person, you might still preach, but you will no longer be able to fulfill your ministry.

Impurity is something that must be repented of. My desire for you all is that you might survive to fulfill your ministries, as the apostle Paul charged Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-16; 2 Tim 4:1-5). We do not aspire for you to become merely obedient and partially useful serving ones; that will not meet the Lord's need or the need of the churches. The real need is that many of you would grow unto what the Lord has measured to you.

We are not an institution that sends people out to deliver or repeat certain messages. We are interested only in seeing ministries develop that give life and light and build up the church.

If you grow up with only serving in view, there is not necessarily any ministry involved. A pastor of a megachurch can serve well even without ministry. Your question should always be, "Am I fulfilling my ministry?" The little thing the Lord has given to us, can we be faithful to it without compromising?

In addition to dealing with any impurity within you, learn not to compromise concerning the Lord's testimony. We cannot change our stand, for we have received divine revelation. However, in the past, some among us changed, and then they felt that we had caused a problem. They charged us with causing division, when in reality it was they

who became the factor of division. Anything that separates us from others is a division. We must practice inclusiveness. We may be small, but we are inclusive; we are willing to meet with all who love the Lord.

Finally, you should also refuse to be common. What does it mean to be common? It means that you know what is coming next in your life; you

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know your future. In contrast, a person who is not common does not know his future, except that he knows his future will be to love the Lord until he dies or until the Lord returns. Therefore, a young person should not be common. In principle, however, when you come to a certain age, the tendency is to become common.

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If you are impure, it will cause your service to the Lord to be reduced, but perhaps the central thing the Lord has committed to you will still remain. In contrast, when you become common, you may appear to be very great, and yet your service to the Lord will have very little value. For example, to be the leader of a megachurch or a successful preacher is something very common.

You should refuse to be common. If you declare, “We have practiced this for years,” or “my future is planned,” it means you have become common. You should never know where the Lord will send you, but wherever you go, something living and vital should be produced. You should have value in the Lord’s hand.

So be pure, be uncompromising when it comes to the Lord’s testimony and the truth, and refuse to become common. I have seen so many who were very aggressive for the Lord when they were young, but who, when they reached a certain age, became common. Every full-timer should refuse to be common. He should desire to be challenged, to be led, to be vitalized, to receive vision upon vision, revelation upon revelation, and to operate to the full capacity of what the Lord has given to him according to the heavenly vision he has. We are for the vision we have received of the heavenly Body of Christ with its testimonies, the local churches, and for Christ as the unique person in this organic Body. Because of this, when you speak, ninety-nine percent of Christians will not know what you are talking about, for what they know is preaching the gospel and getting people saved so they go to heaven instead of hell. In contrast, what the Lord has committed to us is so high and organic. May the Lord have mercy.

