

SECRETS OF SURVIVAL IN THE SERVING LIFE

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE NINE: FIVE WARNINGS CONCERNING OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

In the previous message we covered some practical exercise with regard to our developing life relationships with others. Firstly, we should exercise genuine concern with no hypocrisy. Secondly, we should be neither too high nor too common when we are with others. Thirdly, we should be intimate with others without becoming loose. Fourthly, we should learn to be with others according to who they are. Fifthly, we should show mercy and love readily. Sixthly, we should appreciate those we care for, since they are our strength and protection.

This message contains some warnings. These warnings should all become “taboos” to us. Every one of them is a serious matter and can lead to spiritual death. When you have raising up people in view it is easy to become impure. Your love for the church and for the Lord may remain pure, but your relationship with the saints can become unconsciously impure. For this reason you have to be very watchful regarding your exercise in the church life.

DON'T ESTABLISH SOULISH RELATIONSHIPS

Don't establish soulish relationships in the church life. This is the first warning because this is the most frequently confronted problem. Saints of similar tastes group together just as birds of the same feather flock together. Young brothers like to be with young brothers, cultured saints like to be with other cultured saints, and even those who hunt like to be with others who enjoy hunting.

To go hunting with a brother, for instance, is not wrong in itself. But if my going hunting is not of the leading of the Lord, it becomes a strong indication that I am in the church life and at the same time not in the church life. Why is this? The brothers I spend time with are according to my selection rather than God's divine arrangement.

The larger the church is, the easier it is to find others who are like you. When you are around them you feel comfortable. If you enjoy preaching the gospel, you enjoy being with others who also are gospel preachers. Those who read spiritual books find it easy to be with others who do the same. This doesn't mean that you have to purposely go to those that you dislike, but you have to take this warning.

The Lord has arranged you in His Body. Your being in a particular brothers' house is His arrangement, whether the brothers there are according to your preference or not. Even in the brothers house, however, you may find one or two who match you. Be careful, for whenever a few in the church life are together because of a soulish relatedness, a fermenting element comes in. When you few are together you feel emboldened, you feel you have a voice, an outlet. Your practice of the church life can no longer be healthy because your being together is not spiritual, but soulish. You not only hurt the church life, you also hurt yourself. Your group either becomes a problem to the church or you who are in the group become a problem to each other.

This is one of the hardest lessons in the church life. From the beginning of your church life this becomes a trial. Furthermore, this temptation is with you continually as you grow in the church life. If you never deal with it and one day you take the lead in a church, you will be selective as to who should minister, who should coordinate, and who should bear other responsibilities. They will all be according to your taste. This becomes very serious. Only those who are like you will become manifested.

Sometimes I wonder why certain brothers are so manifested in certain localities. An elder may boast of a certain one and somewhat promote him. Your feeling about the brother may be quite different, and then you realize that he and the elder are quite alike. That is why that brother has been allowed to come up. That elder has not learned to deny his soulish interest while practicing the church life.

God's arrangement and God's leading should be the reason for our being with certain brothers or sisters. We are together as the church in our locality because God has so arranged us. We fellowship together because we are burdened for the Lord's recovery. Then our relationship is healthy.

We know what happens to friendships over time. As interests and goals change, the sense of relatedness fades away. Real relatedness should be according to life. When I dispense life to you, and when you dispense life to me, when you help me to be under the divine enlightenment, and I help you to be for the Lord's interest, our relationship is kept healthy.

The real building is a matter of life. It comes about when the saints infuse life into each other. We should bring one another into the divine enlightenment. That is lasting. Whatever is soulish is not lasting. Don't establish soulish relationships in the church life. You cannot help going to those you like, but you should never establish such a relationship. We may even say that it is normal to be with those you like, but you shouldn't allow such relationships to become established.

**DO NOT HAVE THE THOUGHT
THAT YOUR LABOR WILL ENABLE YOU TO ACHIEVE
OR ATTAIN SOMETHING IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY**

Don't ever allow yourself to view those you bring to the Lord as your accomplishment. Never say that certain ones are here or that certain things are happening because of your labor. If you say this you most certainly will not survive in the church life.

Such a thought is just as damaging as the one that caused Judas to betray the Lord. Whenever you say, "Praise the Lord, when I first came there were only eight meeting, now there are eighteen because of my labor" that is Satan. You are claiming the saints as your achievement or your accomplishment. Once you do this you are finished. Why? You are divisive. Why would you need to use them as your accomplishment unless you desire leverage to reach some divisive goal? The reason you want others to agree with you is so that you can get something done. The saints become your capital to obtain some goal. You may not feel that you are divisive, but that is only because the opportunity hasn't come yet. If you plan to use some brothers as your strength to back you up in the church life or in the work, you have arranged for your spiritual funeral.

To seek after strength in the church life means that there is something in your heart which is divisive. If you were not divisive, you wouldn't care about whether you had any capital or not. Why does anyone stress their achievement? They desire attainment. They view the Lord's recovery as an organization in which they can reach a certain status. But the Lord's recovery is not an organization, it is an organism. There is no need to exercise control. As an organism the Body will not allow any member to overly develop and function beyond its share. Once a member develops beyond its measure, there is an organic operation which rejects it. Just to have the thought that one day you will be a great apostle or elder declares your destiny.

Some elders have the ability to detect this and to lead a brother out of it. If, however, there is no such elder in your locality, I am afraid that after three or four years such a brother will be beyond rescue. Because for some reason he likes spiritual things, so he is here among us, exercising for his own attainment. This is to utilize the Body for ones own interest. Those who are in life, however, will reject such a one, and his divisiveness and impurity will be exposed.

Never try to “make it” in the church life; allow the Lord to manifest who you are in life. Eventually life expels those who seek their own attainment in the Body. There was a brother among us who was developing his own following within the Lord’s recovery. Brother Lee never openly exposed him. Actually Brother Lee does his best never to expose others or to make issues. He just ministers life, and this very life takes care of the situation. Life causes the situation to expose itself. The Body is totally a matter of life. There is no way that anything that is not of life can remain. It will be rejected from the Body.

We are somewhat strange in our thought. We either despise ourselves or we uplift ourselves thinking we are so capable. It is easy for impurity to creep into our heart. Be careful never to group people so that you may use them as your strength or capital for your attainment. To be a good brother and love the recovery and to be a pure brother who desires no gain in the recovery are two different things. The Lord desires us to be not only good but also pure. We should all be ready to put anything that is in our hands aside. Once we feel, “this is my region” or “this is my work,” the Lord will say, “You are finished.” Nebuchadnezzar became a beast because he dwelt upon his attainment. To have attainment is not wrong, but to have the thought of attainment is ruinous.

DO NOT LEAD PEOPLE TO YOURSELF

In the process of raising up saints do not try to impress them with yourself or conquer them with your ability. Infuse life into them. Usually people follow someone because they have either been impressed by him or they have been conquered by him. If you are neither impressive nor able you have no way to acquire followers. You must either attract others with your personality or subdue them with your ability. Your impressiveness draws others to follow you, or your ability brings them into submission. In your presence they feel neither as smart nor as able as you. In the spiritual life, however, people follow the Lord because they have the taste of life. Besides life, no other element is proper for the Body life.

Suppose a brother follows me because he has become impressed with my personality. How long can that last? In a few days he will become disillusioned with my personality. And if I conquer him with my ability, he will eventually find someone else more capable and I will lose him. If you are not geared to infusing life into the saints, you are unconsciously trying to impress them with your knowledge, your light, or your experience. You thus bring people to yourself rather than to the Lord, causing others to worship you. You also may try to subdue others. When they give a testimony, it is not as good as yours. When they expound the Word you show them a better way. When they make a suggestion it is not as wise as your idea. Since you are always there conquering them, what can they do but be subdued by you?

In the Far East the co-workers move around frequently. The saints get used to having a different one every few years. The new co-worker feels he must put a lot of effort into his first message so that he will impress the saints there; otherwise he feels they will not respect him. He makes sure his hair is combed, his suit is just right, and his message is full of rich utterance. On the one hand you should take care to do these things, for every message is important. On the other hand if you have the motive of subduing the saints with your message, that is not divine. Won't the saints appreciate you if you infuse life?

You do not need to impress anybody. The co-worker is with those saints for a few years. If he goofs on his first message, it means little; if he knows how to infuse life, the saints will appreciate and love him.

Not many of you here in this labor are the conquering type, but many of you are quite impressive. You don't realize that as you exercise your ability you may be drawing people to yourself rather than to the Lord. There is no need to impress others with our ability. What should impress others is our ability to infuse life and truth. When others are with you they should realize that you are rich in life and truth, not because you are trying to impress them, but just because of who you are.

Brother Lee could impress all of Christianity with his ability and his spiritual experiences, but this has not been his desire. He could share many experiences which could cause others to be subdued by him. But instead you just sense that he is a godly man full of life. He has no intention of bringing people to himself. His burden is to bring people to the Lord and the Lord's recovery. He desires to bring us to life. We must learn not to bring others to ourselves. Warn yourselves when this thought comes. It is serious.

NEVER PRODUCE OPINIONS OR FACTIONS

All factions are due to shared opinions. Anytime you find yourself leading others to join you in your opinion you should drop it immediately. Regardless of how profitable or how good your opinion is, it can divide the church. When others join you in voicing or holding a certain opinion, a faction results.

How is it that opinions come to be held in common? One way occurs when we express the same view on a subject. Another way occurs when we take the same stand on an issue. Others join us in our view or in our stand, producing a faction in the church life. I can assure you that the Lord will have no way to use one who makes issues in the church life.

Whenever you generate opinions or make issues among the saints, I can assure you that you will be unable to produce life, because you yourself are without life; you are dead.

Once, visiting a church, I heard two brothers share. Afterwards on the way to my hospitality I heard a few young brothers voicing their appreciation for these brothers. One said he appreciated the first brother who shared and another said he appreciated the second brother. None of the brothers said anything negative about either sharing brother, but by their comments they disagreed about who was the better sharing brother. (If they had agreed, however, it would have been a more serious situation, for a faction could have been produced.)

Actually many churches today are frustrated because of the views of some of the dear saints. Any time a view is stressed, a faction will result. If you stress the campus gospel and view it as the crucial factor for the church life, a faction may result. If you feel there are too many meetings and find some who agrees with you, you have produced a faction. A faction results when someone's view has found a matching voice in others. Sometimes a group of saints can form a faction, sometimes an entire church can be of the same opinion and become a faction, and sometimes even an entire region of churches can become a faction because they have taken the same stand on some issue.

The factions in the church in Corinth were the result of the opinions of the saints. Perhaps the views all had merit. Those that made Paul an issue perhaps had his revelations in view. Those that backed Peter may have considered how the Lord had committed to him the two keys and how he had brought so many to the Lord. If Apollos was a younger man perhaps the Apollos faction would have seen him as someone who would eventually surpass both Paul and Peter. Then there were others who looked on the others as fleshly and formed the "Jesus only" faction. Their seemingly spiritual view became another issue. All the views had their points. The result of each group's reasoning, however, was the exclusion of other saints in the church life.

Don't stand with any view that you feel is being pushed upon you by another person in the church life, but neither disagree with it. If someone says that they feel that someone is simply the best at something, say something like "Praise the Lord for all the rich portions!"

Never try to sell your view to others. We cannot help having a particular view on things that touch upon the church life. The problem occurs when we voice our view to others. If we have some opinion about something in the church life, the best thing to do is to share it with the leading brothers and see how they feel. If they don't feel good about it, just drop it. If you hold on to it you may become the cause of division. Once your view produces a faction the church is really going to suffer.

**NEVER DECLARE THE RESULT OF YOUR LABOR
EXCEPT FOR THE SAKE OF THE LORD'S TESTIMONY**

Don't declare the result of your labor unless your desire is to encourage the saints. If your testimony is not for the saints' sake, don't share. Don't abide in the thought of what you have produced; learn to forget about it. Don't think, "Praise the Lord, because of me this brother is here and is going on." To abide in this kind of thought is to take in poison. Up to a certain point this poison will accumulate to a fatal amount.

If we declare the result of our labor it indicates that we have an impure heart. When you are declaring the result of your labor you are exalting yourself. The reason you declare your work is that you love and appreciate yourself. Even you idolize yourself. You become your own idol. I don't believe there is anyone who doesn't appreciate himself, but every time you declare your fruit you add to this self-appreciation. You may seem to have no other symptoms, but if you have the habit of declaring to others what you have produced, you will surely die. The poison will creep in until one day one further dose, no matter the amount, will finish you off.

If the Lord has used you to bear fruit, why don't you just give the honor to the Lord? Why don't you just love the Lord and the recovery? Some of you will become full-time. When you are full-time, fruitfulness surely awaits you. Either you will become fruitful in truth or you will become fruitful in the gospel. You may learn a little more of the Bible, and this may become your declaration. You will be tempted to share about your fruitfulness. I know a brother who holds a Ph.D. in languages and yet who never displays his knowledge to others. There is a proverb which says that only a half-full bottle of vinegar makes noise. In other words, a full bottle doesn't declare its contents. If you are of the habit of declaring things about yourself, it shows you are only "half-full."

There are occasions when it may be profitable for the saints to hear about the result of your labor. You should judge this according to the need. If it is for the testimony's sake or for the saints' encouragement, then we should exercise to share something of what has been produced. But this shouldn't be our habit. If it becomes our habit then we surely are not in a healthy condition.

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