

Having a Heart for People

Fellowship from Minoru Chen on May 2, 2021

Prayer

Lord, we praise You again for Your eternal purpose. Lord we are here for Your eternal purpose. Our being created, our being redeemed and saved, and even our being brought into Your recovery are for Your eternal purpose. Lord, we pray for that purpose to be done and for that purpose to be carried out in our lives in the church life. Lord, we pray even as we are fellowshiping concerning the bearing of fruit, that it would not be something just for our need, but something for Your eternal purpose.

Lord, we pray that You will really have a breakthrough in these days in all the saints and in all the churches that we would live a normal fruitbearing life. Lord, may we be the fruitbearing branches living in a normal way. We would enjoy You as the embodiment of the Triune God as the Spirit and life in us. Lord we pray that in all of our lives there will be a rich and normal overflow of life in the form of fruit, even much fruit and remaining fruit. This is for the Father's glory. This is for Your expression and for Your eternal purpose. We pray again for this. We pray sincerely and we pray desperately. We pray especially for the dear saints in these ten GTCA cities. Lord, we ask that in these days we would be brought into such a life and living. Lord, we ask for Your grace and Your mercy. Do something in all of us, Lord. Do something in these days. We ask this in Your name. Amen.

Perfecting Necessary

Amen, saints. It is always good to see you here for another hour of fellowship. I must say that this fellowship does have an element of

perfecting or training. I hope that you are receiving it in this way. Fellowship is general, but when we talk about perfecting or even training, then that becomes specific. Actually, brothers and sisters, we need to be perfected in everything. In our human life part of growing up is a continual perfecting by our parents, teachers, or someone who takes an interest in us and would like to see us grow up into a proper person in society. It is not just a matter of feeding our children with food and then they just grow up to be such a person. Of course, they need to be nourished, they need to have healthy habits, and they need to grow into an adult. But that is just on one side, the life side.

For any human being to be useful and productive, training is necessary. In fact, the better and stricter the training, the healthier and more useful and more productive this human being becomes. It is no different in the spiritual realm. We must not have a wrong concept that the Christian life is just about enjoying the Lord and touching the Lord. Of course, that is essential. There would be nothing at all without the experiences of Christ and without contacting Christ. But along with the experiences and the enjoyment of Christ that will cause us to grow, there must be a perfecting or training. That includes education and an equipping. Therefore, we need to go to school and get an education. The word “perfecting” is a special word in the New Testament and mainly used by Paul most famously in Ephesians 4. The four gifts given to the church are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and then the shepherds and teachers. These were given by the resurrected and ascended Head to His Body for the perfecting of the saints.

Direct Work of the Ministry

Ephesians 4:11-12 says, “And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.” This whole chapter (Ephesians 4) is about the organic building of the Body of Christ, and in this chapter a specific pattern is laid out. God has an ordained way

to build up His Body. The first thing was to give gifts in the form of these special persons to His Body, but these ones are not the ones in the end who would do everything. Their work is to *perfect* the believers, you and I, unto or with a view to the work of the ministry. In other words, after we believers are saved and regenerated, we need to be perfected in life, to grow, be perfected in the knowledge of the truth, gain the reality, and be perfected in our function as members in the Body. Each one is given a certain gift or measure. Therefore, we need that function perfected. All of this is unto the building up of the Body of Christ, so that in the end we become the direct builders of the church. You are in one of the ten cities. What are you doing there? Whether you've been there for a long time or you're a new migrant, I'd like to ask you a very plain question: Why are you there? You say, "Well, I got a job transfer." Okay. That's the outward reason, right? Or "Circumstantially, I needed to migrate to this place," or you may even say, "I have some burden to move to this or that GTCA city." Well, I'd like to ask you, what are you going to do there? What are you doing there? You must say that you are there to build up the Body of Christ by building up that particular local church. Otherwise, you have no reason to be there. We are in the church life to build up the Body. Day after day, that's what we're doing. That's our project, if I can borrow that word. That's our business or job on the earth today. Wherever we are located, that is where the Lord is temporarily placing us to build up the church there. Then, in the aggregate, together, we will build up the Body of Christ.

All Members Building

This is what the recovery is about. In Christianity today there is not this kind of view or thought. Most Christians are quite self-centered, and they defer this kind of ministerial work to a smaller group of clergy folks, and that is entirely wrong. The Lord's recovery is to recover the Word of God and God's ordained way to fulfill His eternal purpose by building up the church. We are all those builders. We are not just the stones or material for the building, but we are also the builders of this building. Later in Ephesians 4:16, it says that the Body builds up itself

in love. What does that mean? That means that all the joints of the rich supply would function, and each one part, you and I, would also operate and function and by these two things, we are joined together, framed together, and building up the Body. The members of the Body build up the Body. You are in the church to build the church. You cannot sit back, be a benchwarmer, or be a peripheral member. That is simply not right. That is wrong. We may have a job and we may have a family and children to take care of. We have so many life necessities that we have to attend to. The Lord knows this, and we must do a good job. But we should realize that mainly we are on the earth for one thing, and that is to fulfill God's purpose. I hope this view is strongly with us.

Then in every church, if there are fifty saints, then all fifty are being perfected, all fifty are functioning, all fifty are serving, and all fifty are building. Can you imagine what that church would look like? That church will grow, that church will be enlarged, that church will become richer, and that church will become stronger. It will just happen by every saint being engaged. Our problem, even in the recovery, is that this is not the case. In many places, if there's one out of four saints who would be active like this, then it's pretty good. One out of four or twenty five percent. But what if we don't have one hundred percent, but we have fifty percent, one out of two brothers and sisters who are actively committed, consecrated, and given to this work together? Just imagine what will happen in that church. That is not unreachable or unrealizable, brothers. It is what should be, and I am heavily burdened in these days not just to do a GTCA work. The heaviest burden within me is that the Lord's recovery would have another breakthrough and ascend to another level that will meet the Lord's need and will fulfill the word of the Scriptures. This will really work out something to build up the Body in our times and in our days. I hope you would receive this and give yourself to this.

Universal Fruitbearing and Shepherding

We have been on this theme of fruitbearing for some time, and I can

only say this that the more I am getting into this, the more I study this, the more I ponder this matter, the more I pray about this matter, I'm becoming very impressed in these days that this is what we need. This is not a movement or a new flow or something we want to "practice for a while." No. This matter of universal fruitbearing, and after this there's another big item, a twin item, called shepherding. This matter of fruitbearing and shepherding is more than what we call "a practice." We have this term, "the God ordained way practice." The emphasis is on the practice, and that is not wrong, but intrinsically speaking, the so-called God ordained way is embodied in just these two things: universal fruitbearing and universal shepherding. Every saint bearing fruit normally, commonly, regularly, constantly, and living that kind of life, and having that kind of a living of bearing fruit as a branch in the vine. Then continuing or dovetailing with that is shepherding God's flock, shepherding the Lord's sheep, cherishing and nourishing them, and perfecting them. There are four Gospels. The first three are called the Synoptic Gospels. That's Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But there are four gospels, and the last one is the gospel of John. What makes this gospel unique is that this gospel is entirely on the line of life. This is not to say that the other gospels are not important. Absolutely not. Matthew is on the kingdom, which is an important subject. But John is a gospel on life, and in this gospel, everything is seen from that lens of life. In terms of the church life, our function, our service, and all these things in John, they are all seen from the angle of life. The two strong things that stand out in this book as far as our service and our function is concerned are seen in John 15 and John 21.

John 15 – Fruitbearing

This chapter reveals a picture of the vine tree, the true vine and we are the branches having to bear fruit. At the end of each of the other three gospels, you have the word "Go." Go therefore. Go to the nations. Go to the whole creation to preach the gospel and disciple the nations. You don't find that in the book of John. But if you think that there is no such thing as going, you would be wrong.

John 15: 16 says, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you." You do have the word "Go," and even "Go forth," but it is in this picture of the vine tree. Branches don't go, but we go because we are living branches. We're human beings and we must go forth to bear remaining fruit. Here, it does not talk about going to preach the gospel or going to disciple the nations. It does not tell us to go and preach and teach and do this work and do that work. It just says, "bear fruit." The whole matter of the increase of the church, through the gospel, for the salvation of men, for the gaining of materials for God's building, is seen from the lens of life. Strictly speaking, a branch does not work. It just bears fruit. That's its work. That's its function. That's its service. That's just its living, its purpose, and its meaning. I borrow Brother Lee's word and say that this is gospel preaching on the highest plane. The highest plane of gospel preaching is fruitbearing.

I am concerned that still today when we think about preaching the gospel and gaining people, we immediately think about how to do this. We think about the work. I would like to say a word to those among us who are workers and full-timers. It's easy for us if we're not careful, as we work for the Lord and serve the Lord, we can fall into the trap of just doing a work. Yes, we are workers, and I would be the first to admit that I'm a co-worker and I'm here to work for the Lord. But in John, you do not find anybody working. The branch doesn't work; it just bears fruit. So even the workers are here to bear fruit. Full-timers, some of you are here on campuses, sometimes you need to put aside the thought that, "I'm a worker; I'm going to the campus to work." No. You have to say, "I'm going to the campus to bear much fruit." What distinguishes a full-timer and a saint who is not a full-timer, it is just that a full-timer has more time. You have more time in the day to bear more fruit, but in the end, it must be a work of life, a work by life or work in life to bear the result of life, much more fruit.

John 21 – Shepherding

This is the chapter regarding the famous fishing and breakfast by the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. The Lord had a dialogue with Peter and asked him three times, “Do you love Me?” Each time when Peter affirmed his love for the Lord, the Lord had only one thing to say to him three times: Feed My sheep. Shepherd My sheep. Feed My lambs. You have another picture here, and that is the picture of a flock needing an all-inclusive shepherding. It includes protecting the sheep, feeding the sheep, and guiding the sheep. All those things we read in Psalm 23 are part of this shepherding work, and that, again, is also a picture seen from the angle of life. What am I saying? I'm saying that in the Lord's recovery today, there is a present strong burden and need to really recover the fruitbearing and shepherding life in all the saints as a matter of normality. This is not the service only for the elders to do. This is not for some spiritual gifted evangelists or shepherds and teachers to do. No. This is for each one of us. Until the Lord gets this the recovery is still off. So, the challenge in front of us is real.

I don't know what to say to impress you of this great need today right now. There you are in the churches in these ten places. I feel it is the Lord's mercy, blessing, and direction, that the church life is in these places. Now we can use this opportunity to build up such a church life everywhere. I hope that it will start with you. I see on the screen 235 devices and many of the devices have two people, so I think this afternoon we easily have over 300 people. In all these ten cities combined, we may have 500 to 600 active saints. Maybe a little more than half are here in this Lord's Day fellowship. Because of that, I feel very obligated and very responsible to you that these Lord's Day fellowship meetings would not be wasted. I pray that these gatherings would not be just light but would really work out something.

Confession

Today I'd like to say something particular as we are covering this matter of bearing fruit. Recall that last week I gave you some big

words, and don't worry about my big words, but do remember the point, which is that we need to practice doing these things. I started with being vitalized, first through a life of specific and thorough confession. I mentioned that above all, not just to confess our wrongdoings, transgressions and offenses, which we always need to do; just like we need to take a bath or wash our face and hands every day, we also need to keep current with the Lord by living such a confessing life. Confession is where our fellowship with the Lord and our abiding in the Lord begin. There we experience His forgiveness and enjoy the cleansing of his blood, which restores our fellowship and removes all the barriers and insulation that has been built up between us and the Lord. Then we can have an open sky and a free flow of fellowship with the Lord. This is a great, great thing.

Consecration

After this we would consecrate ourselves. To consecrate really means that we offer ourselves to the Lord. We make ourselves available to Him for his work to dispense himself into us, and for his commission to us, requiring us to do something on His behalf and for His purpose. We consecrate ourselves to the Lord as a holy, well pleasing sacrifice, which is our most reasonable service. Consecration is also a life, not just an event. We need to consecrate every day and every hour, "Lord, I'm yours. Lord, here I am. Lord, I give myself to you." In these days brothers and sisters I'd like you to begin to consecrate in a particular way, "Lord, I consecrate to bear fruit." Don't be afraid to do that. "Lord, I might not have borne fruit before, or ever, or very little, or not for a long time, but Lord, now I realize the purpose of my existence as a branch in You is simply to bear fruit. I may not be a great preacher or an evangelist, but this is not about being an evangelist or a preacher, this is simply about being a branch in the vine. Lord, help me to be a normal saint, just living a normal life as a believer bearing fruit for you periodically." You know, most trees and plants have an annual harvest, annual fruit, that's standard. We're not talking about a stirring up to preach the gospel, busting out of the meeting hall and doing this and doing that. I'm not saying we should not go and set up

tables, that we should go out to do something. The word in John 15 is to go forth, that means you leave where you are and you go somewhere else, but I am talking about bearing fruit in the form of persons, by our burden for them.

Brother Lee talked about this matter of fruit bearing very much. I'm so burdened about this matter right now that I am working to have a lesson book on fruitbearing totally based on the ministry. This matter is so great and yet so lacking in our perfecting of the saints, resulting in many of us not quite living in a normal way and having a normal church life of regularly bearing fruit. What I want to talk a little bit about today is people. The fruit here in John 15 are persons, human beings, people.

Making a Resolution

After consecration, the next thing is that we need to make a resolution. Remember that we may need to make a decision, and we need to tell the Lord about our decision. Don't be afraid. There's nothing wrong in making a resolution, making an oath. I even use that word *oath*, making a vow to the Lord. "Lord, I vow to bear fruit." There's nothing wrong with that. If you don't decide to do something, chances are you won't do it. Only when you make a decision to do something will you do it. In this matter of fruit bearing, of course we need the Lord. There are actually four parties in John 15: the husbandman, the tree, the branches, and the fruit. Eventually these four are one; it starts with the Father, the vine dresser, the husbandman, and then the tree, Christ the Son. Then we, the branches, are grafted into this tree. You ask, where is the Spirit? Well, the Spirit is there, even without speaking, as the flow of the sap of life from the vine to the branches. Finally, these branches will bear fruit, the fruit will become branches, and the cycle goes on. Do you see this picture? It's a very organic picture. I hope the branches will make the decision. You may say I'm too old, I cannot even go out. I tell you, even if you stay home, you can bear fruit. We all can bear fruit in some way.

Petition

The next thing is to petition. That means we need to start to pray. Remember I asked you to make a list of names starting with your Jerusalem? This list will include all the people you know, especially those that are not saved or may be saved but are not really practicing or living a Christian life. Or you may know some that are saved believers, but do not know the truth and have no way to go on. Whatever the case may be, you make this list. You start to pray for them specifically, just like confession and consecration. Don't just pray for the world, pray for the names, the names the Lord has deposited in your heart. There have got to be names, pray for them. Don't say, this one is impossible, that one will never come. Don't do that. Just list the names, and as the Lord puts the names in your heart, you pray. Don't just pray for them once in a blue moon, pray for these ones daily. Have we prayed for people daily, remembering them before the Lord?

When I was nine or ten years old, every time I saw my grandmother, she held my hand and pulled me into her room. I was scared stiff; I didn't like that. Do you know what she would do? Sometimes she would read the Bible with me, but she would always end up praying with me. Sometimes while sitting she pulled me to her bed and we would both have to kneel down. Because I had done this so much, I always knew her prayer. Do you know what she prayed for? At least every time I was there, she prayed for all her thirteen grandchildren, from the oldest to the youngest. I knew that's what she was going to pray for. Brothers and sisters, it's that kind of prayer that causes us to be saved. Dear ones, this sister, my grandmother, did not know so much truth, she was not so powerful. Let me tell you, she bore much fruit, even within her family, her descendants. Pray, dear ones. Here I would also like to encourage you on the one hand to pray very personally to the Lord. Did I tell you in one of these fellowships about that famous hymn, *Must I go, and Empty-handed?* I think I shared that hymn with you. You just pray in faith and by faith. Even if nothing happens, don't stop praying. Brothers and sisters, we're too much, in

this society of ours, for a quick fix, for fast food, for instant results. No, God's way of life is the other way, it's a process, it takes time, it's solid, and it's lasting. Don't give up so quickly, take this way of fruitbearing by praying. While you're praying you don't know what the Lord is already doing. We have seen this again and again. The prayer of a righteous man is effectual. On the other hand, did I ask you to gather one or two more to read these chapters last time? I tell you that the twos and threes can have a beginning here. It could be a couple, that's two right there, or three brothers, or two sisters praying together once or twice a week for ten or fifteen minutes. It's not much time, just pray. Pray for what? Pray for one another's fruit and for one another's fruitbearing. There's strength in the twos and threes, a three-fold cord is not easily broken, two is better than one. There's a principle here.

Prioritize

After petition, the next thing is to prioritize. That means you need to plan and schedule your week. Out of one hundred and twelve waking hours, can we not give one or two hours to the Lord? That's just one percent of our waking hours. We easily waste one or two hours on unprofitable things. Give one or two hours to the Lord, use that time to contact people, write to them, call them, zoom with them. Take the time to be interested in them, to get to know them, to restore communication with them. All this is with a view to eventually lead them to the Lord, to impart something of Christ or the word into them. This is to minister to them, to bear them as fruit.

Coordinate

The last thing that I listed was to coordinate. Actually, I've talked about this already with the twos and threes praying together to bear fruit. We don't need to wait or say that the pandemic is here, so we can't do anything. No, by zoom you can do a lot. Things also are now slowly opening up in our communities, which will allow us eventually to contact and visit people.

I gave these points quite generally, but today I am very burdened about this matter of having a heart for people. This exhortation and these instructions will not work unless we have an interest in people, unless we reach out to contact people. In all of Brother Lee's speaking on fruitbearing, contacting people is a main point. But before we talk about contacting people, how to learn to contact different kinds of people, I want to talk about our love for people. Let us consider man: our interest in mankind, our value for human beings, our compassion for the lost, and our burden for souls. If you have read the book that I asked you to read, you would already get a feeling about my burden, that is of having a heart for man.

Having a Heart for People

In 1974 through 1976, I was in my mid-20s. During those three years, we followed Brother Lee to migrate from Los Angeles to Anaheim and Huntington Beach in Orange County. That move was to find a way to gain people in the suburbs. After Brother Lee moved there, while the Ball Road meeting hall was being built, we met in different places and he began a series of trainings for the saints, especially for the young people. During that time, I finished college and grad school and started to work and got married. Those years are very vivid to me, even today. In those three years Brother Lee gave trainings which are now included in the book, *The Normal Way of Fruitbearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*. These messages absolutely changed my life forever. In what way did it change my life? Principally in this way, I began to realize, and I was fully exposed by the Lord, by the Spirit, because of Brother Lee's strong speaking that I didn't have a heart for people.

Dispositionally, I was disinterested in people, and as an introvert, a conservative Chinese young man, I liked to be private and alone. I didn't have any problem being by myself for a long time. But at that time, the Spirit worked within me and caused me to realize that if I stayed this way, nothing would work. At that time, I was one thousand percent consecrated and fully in the recovery. I was a front row

brother, fully serving and coordinating. But I didn't have a heart for people. In those trainings, the Lord had mercy to allow me the beginning of a breakthrough. If I remained in this self-centered state, caring only for myself, my pursuit, my spirituality, my this and my that, then I'd be done. If I continued without a heart for people, I would not and could not be useful to the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, here's another chapter that I recommend to you to read. Chapter two of the book by Watchman Nee, *Character of the Lord's Worker*. This is a classic message not on brotherly love or on loving the brothers. The chapter is called "A Lover of Men." Watchman Nee said in this message, addressing the workers of the Lord, that if you don't love men, if you don't consider men precious, you cannot be a servant of man. The Lord said this in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." This is not to serve God in this verse, this is to serve men. Watchman Nee referenced this verse a lot in chapter two of *The Character of the Lord's Worker*. And I recommend that you read this chapter very prayerfully and allow the Lord to expose and touch you to the point of a deep conviction. The Lord will show us that we are still the center of our universe, and not people.

Treasuring Man

Number one, we need to value men, as God values men whom he created. We need to put the highest value on a human life, whatever race, color, nationality, ethnicity, condition, or class. We need to love, to value, and to treasure people. I find I need to put on new glasses to look at people. I just see people, and they're just people but then I need to put on glasses to look at each and every person and see that this one is made in the image of God, this one is made for God's purpose. This one is a sinner and heading for the lake of fire. If you recall in First Peter and Second Peter, the highest development of the Christian virtues is not just brotherly love. There's something higher, it's called love. Love, that means love to all. It does not work, when we

say we want to bear fruit and we want to contact people, yet we don't love them, we don't value them, and we don't care for them.

Taking Interest in People

The second thing is, saints, we need to be interested in men. We're so interested in our own affairs, we do not have much room, time, space, or energy to be interested in others. We need to just have an interest in what people are doing, how people are doing, what their condition is, or what their situation is. We are very wrapped up with our own affairs and interests. But what about having an interest in another person.

A Heart of Compassion

And number three, not only interest, but we also need to have compassion for men like the Lord did. Compassion in Greek has the root word of bowels, your inward parts, kidneys, lungs, heart, etc. Compassion means that you are moved in your inward parts. That's the meaning of compassion. I was assembling a lot of verses in the gospels about the Lord. I just touched so many verses. He had compassion on the leper, on the two blind men, on the woman with a dead son, on the crowd that was following him. Eventually, as the Good Samaritan, who saw this one beaten half dead, left by the roadside, he saw him, and had compassion on him.

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to the gospel, when it comes to bearing fruit and caring for people, we cannot do something without a heart of compassion. We can do a work. But the "work" is very cold, very impersonal. There's no feeling there. There's no moving of the inward parts in just doing the work. The fruit that we gain for the Lord is not a feather on our cap or a trophy on the ledger. It's people, every one of whom God loves. Another word, besides having compassion, is to empathize and sympathize meaning the ability to feel how others feel. You might say, I'm not born like that. Well, I was not born like that either. But that is something we can acquire because we have the Lord's life within us. We can empathize and step into another person's shoes, to feel how they feel, to suffer how they are suffering, to

rejoice in their joy. Without this, we cannot care for people and we cannot gain people.

Contacting People

And lastly, brothers, we need to contact people. We need to reach out and contact people, which sometimes is the hardest thing to do. In my experience, I can study the Bible, write outlines, or give a message, but every time I have to reach out and contact a person—that's always the biggest challenge. Now how to contact and so forth, we won't talk about that today. Today, I just want to leave you with this deep impression again, brothers and sisters, of being people-centered. This means to have a heart for souls, being anxious for people's fate, having empathy for people's condition. The Lord's work is not a work actually. The Lord is just among people and for people, He was not just serving God, He was serving men. I hope in the churches, there will be a renewal of the church's heart, the bowels, the inward parts, and of the church's attitude towards human beings: sinners, seekers, saints, all manners of mankind. If the Lord can break through this in us, then we have fulfilled the basic requirement to bear fruit and to shepherd.

Help from Reading

I encourage you to read *The Character of the Lord's Worker*, particularly chapter two. And I encourage you all to pray regarding this matter. I have more stories to share about my experience and to testify that what the Lord did was not just overnight, it was over time, and the work is not done yet. In this matter, this allows me today to have a little use in the Lord's hands in His recovery. Brothers and sisters, it's about others, it's about people. Let's live for them. Let's serve them like the Lord did.

I also encouraged you to read *The Way to Bear Fruit*, chapters two through seven, and *The Normal Way of Fruit-bearing and Shepherding for the Building Up of the Church*, chapters three through six. In these chapters, Brother Lee touched these matters that I'm talking about now, in a way that only he could do. His speaking is extremely

convicting and exposing which is a necessary thing, at least in my case. It allows for a deep touch by the Lord in a more enduring and long-term way. I call it a heart transplant, which is what I needed, and for someone with this kind of disposition, that is not interested in people, it is not easy. But the Lord's constraining love is there, and the word of the ministry is always speaking. So I encourage you to not just read these chapters as just trying to get through them all in one sitting, but to read them each time prayerfully a few pages at a time, having some dealings with the Lord and let the Lord touch you. Praise the Lord.