

FELLOWSHIP FOR FULL-TIMERS

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE THREE: BEING A SPIRITUAL PERSON TO SERVE THE LORD FULL-TIME

INTRODUCTION

Paying Attention to Life, Truth, and Operation

As full-timers, we must pay attention to three crucial matters. First, we must pay attention to life, which includes the growth in life, the principles of life, and the operation of life. Second, we must pay attention to the truth. And third, we must pay attention to our operation. These three matters should be balanced. Some scholarly full-timers pay too much attention to truth and neglect their operation, while some energetic full-timers pay too much attention to their operation and neglect the truth. We must be balanced in the matters of life, truth, and operation.

Being Careful of Our Time, Our Disposition, and the Work

We also must be careful concerning three items. First, we must be careful of our time. Second, we must be careful of our disposition, because our disposition decides our usefulness. Third, we must be careful about the work. We could even say, in a sense, that we should run away from the work. We may think, “What is wrong with the work? The reason I am full-time is to do a work. Even the Lord Jesus said that He came to do the Father’s work.” But the work itself can actually ruin us.

The work can be a trap to swallow up all the life we have, all the truth we have gained, and all the discipline we have learned related to our disposition. Full-timers are quick to run after works. We often think, “In what way can I be more productive? In what way can I do more?” Brothers, we need to labor, and we need to be productive, but we must run away from the work. We are full-time to serve the Lord, and not to do a work.

Maintaining a Healthy Condition: Fresh, Charged, and in Relatedness

Finally, as full-timers we should maintain a proper, healthy condition. First, as a full-timer we must be fresh. Every day we should take care of our freshness before the Lord. Second, we need to be charged. To be charged is to be burdened, and in our serving life we should be burdened all the time. Once we are fresh and charged, nothing can confine us. To complain about our environment only shows that we are not charged. If we are charged properly, then in whatever environment or situation we are in, we will have an effective operation.

As full-timers who are freshly in the Lord’s presence and who are charged, whatever we do in our serving life must be in relatedness. There must always be others we can fellowship with. In our whole life we must learn *never* do things all by ourselves. Being related to other brothers serves as our protection. It is healthy and necessary to have a charge, but no charge can be executed without the proper relatedness. With everything we do, we should tell ourselves, “I always need someone I can fellowship with. I must have someone who can stand with me.” On one hand, relatedness gives us encouragement. On the other hand, relatedness takes away our pride. When we produce something in our serving life, we should be able to say, “Lord, thank You. This was not just from me. By Your wisdom this was the operation of several members in Your Body. Thank You, Lord, that something was produced.” This is to be properly related.

THE NECESSITY OF BEING A SPIRITUAL PERSON

To practice these matters that we have covered in our fellowship, we must be a spiritual person. A spiritual person is someone who is spiritual in everything. What does it mean to be spiritual? We need to realize that being spiritual is a relative matter, not an absolute matter. This is similar to being physically healthy. Healthiness is relative. A doctor may say about an old man, "At his age he is very healthy." But if the doctor observed the same condition in a young man, he would say the man was unhealthy. Spiritually it is the same. A person may seem to be spiritual, but according to how many years he has been saved and how many years he has followed the Lord, his spiritual condition is actually quite poor. We must see that spirituality is a relative matter. In essence, spirituality is simply a matter of being in spirit. How much we are in spirit determines how spiritual we are. If we learn to be in spirit, then we will learn to be a person who is spiritual.

Suppose there is a brother who is going to get married. His whole person is characterized by love. When a brother is in love, everything he does is out of love. When he buys something special for his fiancée, he is not concerned about the result. He is not concerned with how much money he should spend. Because his person is in love, everything he does shows his affection. Spiritually it is exactly the same. We are now serving the Lord full-time. We are handling church affairs, and we are daily involved in spiritual things. But if everything merely becomes items that we must do, then we have already failed. If we are in the realm of, "What time is it now? It is time for me to read the Bible," then we have failed. If we think, "What time is it now? It's time for us to come together and pursue," then we have failed. Once reading the Bible, preaching the gospel, or laboring together with the brothers become merely things to do, then what we are doing is no longer spiritual. When our person is spiritual, then whatever we do will be spiritual.

As those who serve full-time, everything we do is in a spiritual realm. This means that we ourselves must be spiritual. Why do we come together in the morning to labor with the brothers? It is something spiritual. Why do we pray together? It is something spiritual. Why do we preach the gospel? It is something spiritual. If we consider these matters as things to do, as merely part of our “job,” then we are not spiritual. Brothers, if we don’t learn this lesson we can never serve properly. We will handle all the spiritual things with our natural ability, with our natural mind, and with our natural disposition. When some brothers become full-time, they spend all their time reading the Bible. When other brothers become full-time, they spend all their time on the street preaching the gospel. This all may be according to their disposition. It is true that we some brothers are gifted in a particular area, but they still must learn to be spiritual.

Being spiritual means that there is something spiritual involved in what we are doing. We should not serve full-time based on our preference. “I am preaching the gospel because I enjoy it. I am studying the truth because I enjoy it.” Whatever we are doing must be spiritual. This means that we have the Lord’s leading, the Lord’s presence, and the Lord’s encouragement in whatever we do. If while we are studying the truth, we realize, “The more I study, the more I feel the Lord’s presence,” then we know that what we are doing is spiritual.

We must realize that in our serving life there are many things that we can do. However, in all the events and all the activities, we must be those who are spiritual, and we must respond spiritually. There is not one thing we should do as a “thing.” Each of us must be a spiritual person who behaves spiritually. Whatever we do as full-timers must be handled spiritually, and not in the realm of “I should do this” and “I shouldn’t do that.” There are many things we should do, but whatever we do must be spiritual. For this, we must be a spiritual person.

OUR SPIRITUALITY IS DETERMINED BY FOUR ITEMS

There are four items which determine whether a person is spiritual or not. Genuine spirituality must be related to:

- 1) The Lord's person
- 2) The Lord's speaking
- 3) Harmony
- 4) Self-awareness

The Lord's Person, with His Presence and Lordship

To ask whether we are spiritual or not, we must ask, "Is the Lord with me or not?" If the Lord's presence is with us, then we are at least somewhat spiritual. Many times we do spiritual things, but our focus is on the things and not on the Lord. We must have the Lord's person, with His presence and lordship. If we were asked, "Are you spiritual?" how would we answer? If we would answer, "Yes, because this morning the Lord was close and intimate with me," then that is to be spiritual. However, that in itself is not sufficient. We should not only have the Lord's presence, but we should also have His lordship. His lordship includes His dealings with us.

Suppose we visit a church to have fellowship with the brothers, and then we give a message that inspires everyone. The saints may tell us that our speaking was so helpful, yet everything we did may not be spiritual. Why? We have to ask, where was the Lord? Where was the Lord's presence? There are certain signs of having the Lord's presence. When saints just come to a meeting and enjoy a good message, the Lord may not be so present. But when the saints are so judged and convicted by our speaking, that shows the Lord's presence was there. This shows that the gathering was spiritual.

Through our ministering the saints had a spiritual transaction. They were convicted, and thus became different. This is a sign of the Lord's presence. What we carried out was spiritual, because the Lord's presence was with us. In whatever we do, as we travel, or visit, or minister, it must be spiritual. There may be things that we need to do when we visit a certain place. When we do those things, we must handle them not as "things." As we carry them out, we must have the Lord's person, with His presence and lordship. Otherwise something is wrong. We are handling spiritual matters, but we ourselves are not spiritual.

*The Lord's Speaking, with His Living
and Enlightening Word*

The second matter of being spiritual is to have the Lord's speaking. We must have the enlightening word of the Lord. How do we know that we are spiritual? Because God speaks to us. We have a living word from God's speaking. This word gives us some enlightening and affects our operation. This enlightening may be for us alone, or it may go through us to others. When there is such a word, then we are spiritual. If there is no word, then we are merely doing things. We are carrying out a Christian work without the spiritual reality behind it. When we have the Lord's living word to enlighten and supply us, then we know that our operation is spiritual.

To be a spiritual person, we must first have these two items. How can we determine whether we are spiritual? First, by having the person of the Lord with His presence and lordship. Second, by having a living word from the Lord, with His divine enlightening. When we lack the presence of the Lord, we may have a Christian living, even a full timer's Christian living, but without genuine spirituality. However, when we do have the Lord's presence we should realize it is not sufficient. To have the Lord's presence alone can be too much in the realm of sensation. We also must have the Lord's living word.

If the Lord is often speaking to us, if we are rich in the Lord's speaking, then we know that we are spiritual. We should be able to say, "When I come to the Lord, and when I come to the Bible, the Lord speaks a living and enlightening word to me." Whether it is the Lord or the Bible, this speaking is alive. This is crucial to a Christian's life. If at any moment in our serving life we are short of the Lord's presence or are short of His living word, then at that moment we are merely doing things for the Lord. We are not a spiritual person who is living in the spiritual realm and struggling for the Lord's interest. To be a spiritual person we must have the Lord's presence and the Lord's speaking.

***Harmony with the Lord and with
His Environmental Arrangement***

After having the Lord's presence and His speaking, we must also have a certain harmony. This is the third item of being spiritual. Whether or not we are spiritual is related to whether or not we are in harmony. This harmony includes: harmony with the Lord Himself, harmony with the Lord's move, harmony with the Lord's arrangement, harmony with the Lord's leading, and harmony with the environment the Lord has put us in. When we ask ourselves, "Am I spiritual?" we must ask, "Am I harmonious?"

Harmony is the highest experience humanly as well as spiritually. When a person can say, "I am in harmony," whether it be with his wife or his family or his environment, it is the highest human life. A life of harmony is rare. For example, most families are not in harmony. Most husbands and wives fight. When a bride and groom get married, they are so happy. Then after they get married, they can become so depressed. What is the reason? It is not because they don't love one another. They may still love one another, but they may not have harmony in their marriage. When there is no harmony many problems will come.

What characterizes the best family life? The answer is not love, but harmony. The happiest family life is when the husband, wife and children are in harmony. It makes no difference if they have a lot of money or almost no money, or if they live in a large house or a small house. Everything else is not crucial. As long as they are in harmony, their family life is the best it can be.

Spiritually it is the same. The greatest harmony is not the harmony in the family life. The greatest harmony is when we are so harmonious with God, with God's person, with God's leading, with God's governmental arrangement, and with all of the environments that God allows. When we have such a harmonious situation, we will be thankful to the Lord. The Lord Himself had this kind of harmony. When the Pharisees despised Him and attacked Him, and when His disciples said things that showed they didn't understand Him, the Lord was not discouraged. The Lord said, "Father, I thank You. This is Your good will." What a harmony! That proves how spiritual the Lord really was. During the time when the Lord was not assured of that harmony, as at Gethsemane, He prayed, "Father, Your will be done." He desired to maintain His harmony, so He prayed for the Father's will to be done and not His own. What distinguished the Lord as a spiritual man? Throughout His whole life, the Lord was in harmony with the Father.

It is easy for us to agree with the fact that we need the Lord's presence and the Lord's speaking in our serving life. Who could argue with that? But when it comes to the matter of harmony, we are more likely to murmur and complain. Instead of having harmony with the Lord and His arrangements, we often tell the Lord, "Lord, why did You do this to me? Lord, why have You put me in such a place?" Whenever we personally feel unrestful, when we feel that our harmony is gone, then we know at that moment we are not spiritual. Whenever we say, "Lord, why did you send me here?" as we look around for somewhere else to serve, then our understanding is not spiritual. We are not striving for the real thing. We are not focused on our operation. Instead we are focused on a work and on our status in the work.

How many of us practice to have this harmony in our daily lives? How many of us can pray, “I don’t care what the environment is. I don’t care how many difficult things are happening. I’m not interested in going to some other place. Lord, I’m so thankful that I am here today loving You. I am here today serving You. There is harmony between You, and me, and what you have measured to me.” This is genuine harmony. This harmony is like a triangle, with the Lord at one angle, ourselves at another angle, and our environment at the third angle. “The Lord is here, and I am here, and all that God has arranged for me is here. I have no struggle, and I have no unrest. I am in harmony with the Lord and with what He has arranged for me.” When we have such a harmony, then at that moment we are spiritual.

Harmony should characterize us as those who serve the Lord full-time. We should be able to say, “I am tranquil. I am restful. I am peaceful. Lord, I thank You, because this is Your will for me. Lord, I thank You that You love me to such a degree. Not only did You die for me, but You called me, developed me, trained me, and put me here to serve You. I am so thankful that You and I today are in such a harmonious situation. I can come to You without fear, without shame, and without frustration. I am so thankful that You put me exactly where I am today.”

We must have a harmony with the Lord. This is a divine harmony that is generated from our spirit and exercised in our living. When we are short of this harmony before the Lord, then even if we are good, capable, faithful and diligent, we are not spiritual. What is it to be a spiritual person? There should be a restfulness. There should be a harmony with the Lord, with His leading, with His government, with His arrangement, and with the situation He has put us in. Then we have a real peace. We know how to draw life from our environment. This is what it means to be spiritual.

Self-Awareness

The fourth item we must have is self-awareness. To be a spiritual person, we not only need to have the Lord's presence, the Lord's speaking, and harmony with our environment. We also need to be self-aware. This means that we have the ability to see ourselves, and put ourselves aside. This is not easy. The self-life is with everyone. Very few people can get out of themselves. On one hand, the Lord actually desires us to have an identity. If the self were completely gone, people would all become like robots. In a sense, the self, meaning our identity, has value. God has made each of us a certain way. However, at the same time we must be self-aware. We must be very careful and realize that our self is the biggest frustration to the Lord. We should not overly love our soul life, appreciate our soul life, or worship our self-existence. To be a spiritual person is to be aware of our self. We must recognize our self, and then deny our self. The more spiritual we are, the greater will be our self-awareness. We must know how to say, "I recognize that this is my self, so I am very careful."

The third item, harmony, must be backed up by the fourth item, self-awareness. We can think that we are in harmony, yet still be very much in our self. Then when the environment changes we lose our harmony because our self-life has been touched. We must become aware of our self until we are very sensitive to recognize our self and put it aside. We should realize, "My self is always here. My self can take over at any time, and I will lose the reality of being spiritual."

CONCLUSION

We have covered four items with regard to being a spiritual person. What is it to be spiritual? First, we must have the Lord with His living presence. Second, we must have the Lord's living word with His enlightening. Third, we must be harmonious with the Lord and His arrangements. Fourth, we must be self-aware. As we are desiring and learning to be spiritual, we should pay our attention to these four items. We must have the living Christ, the living word, the harmony with the Lord and His arrangements, and a strong self-awareness.

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