

FELLOWSHIP FOR FULL-TIMERS

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE FOUR: HOW TO LABOR IN THE WORD — TAKING CARE OF OUR PERSON AND OUR WAY

OUR PERSON: BEING SIMPLE, CONSECRATED, AND SPIRITUAL

When we labor in the Word we must be *simple* in our person. The greatest difficult for every Bible student is to remain simple. No one likes to be common in their study of the Bible. We all prefer to be original and have our own complicated interpretation. This causes us to deviate from the simplicity we should have towards Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). As we study the Word we must be simple and pure in our person. Our attitude should be, “When I come to the Bible I only want to receive and enjoy Christ.” We study the Bible in order to be with the Lord, pursue the Lord, and enjoy the Lord. This simplicity will allow the Lord to speak to us through the Word. If our person is simple it will be easy to receive the Lord’s speaking. The more we experience the Lord’s speaking through our study of the Word, the more riches we will accumulate.

Our simplicity will bring in a personal consecration. We must be *consecrated* when we read the Word. To be consecrated means that we have the “guts” to read the Word as the Word. Most of us read the Bible selectively. If we like a verse, we keep it and treasure it. If we don’t like a verse, we ignore it or explain it away. If we come to the Bible with a proper consecration, then the Word can be unveiled to us much more than we realize. For example, here are some verses no one likes: “And all those who believed were together and had all things common; and they sold their properties and possessions and divided them to all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:44-45). When we read these verses we will quickly respond, “These verses are not realistic.” Why? Because they interfere with our privacy.

These verses can never be real to us because they are too demanding. They are against our culture and against our practice. So then we exercise our logic and say, “That doesn’t work,” or, “That doesn’t apply to us. It was a special situation.” We may win the argument with our logic, but in the process we lose the Lord. Then these verses are no longer ours and the Lord can no longer use them to speak to us. There are many verses like this in the Bible. For this reason, when we come to the Word we need to be consecrated people. That means we tell the Lord, “Lord, I love You. I want to take Your Word as Your Word. I consecrate myself to You so that You can speak to me. I want to open myself to You in Your Word so that You can touch me in any way You like.”

When we study the Word we also must be *spiritual*. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). We need to be spiritual in our person because the Word is Spirit. We must exercise our spirit so that we can contact and receive the Spirit in the Word. This is closely related to being consecrated, because it is only by being spiritual that we can fulfill what the Bible tells us. For example, here is another verse that we avoid: “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death” (1 John 3:14). To us this verse is almost inapplicable. When we consider all the brothers we have our preferences. When we read “love the brothers” we think about the price involved. Then we quickly move on so that it won’t affect our life. For this reason we need to be consecrated and take this verse from the Lord. Then at the same time we must be spiritual. When we begin to enjoy this verse in our spirit, the Word becomes operative. The Lord may lead us to another verse: “No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). Perhaps we will begin to enjoy the phrase, “God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.” As we exercise our spirit over this verse, the love for our brothers will be so normal. Then the reality of this verse will become a simple outflow.

We must be a spiritual person and touch the Word with our spirit. If we take care of being simple, consecrated, and spiritual in our person as we labor in the Word, then we will be enlightened and strengthened by the Lord's speaking to us.

OUR WAY: FACTS, INSPIRATION, TRUTH, AND LIGHT

When we labor in the Word we must also have the proper way. That means we must begin by learning what the *facts* are. In other words, what does the Bible really say? Every time we come to the Word we should have the perspective, "I don't know the Bible." One of our greatest difficulties is that we have an answer for everything. We know what every verse means, and if we don't we quickly use the footnotes. We should realize that even if our answers are excellent they can only help us at certain times. Every time we read the Bible we should always assume that we don't know what it says, and we don't have all the answers. As we labor in the Word we should put aside our typical understanding and consider the facts in a fresh light. This means we should also ask questions. Why does a certain verse say "Jesus Christ," and not "Christ Jesus"? Why does another verse speak of what "God" is doing, and not what "the Lord" is doing? When we consider and learn the facts of the Bible in this way we will be surprised at how many riches we will discover.

As we learn the facts of the Bible certain things will inspire us. We may be inspired by a certain word, or a particular phrase. If we are spiritual in our labor then the facts of the Word will bring us to *inspiration*. If we don't first learn the facts, and then let the facts inspire us, we are no different from a student at a theological school. As we study the facts in the Word we need to pay attention to the anointing and to the sense of the Lord's presence. Then we will be inspired, and these inspirations will cause the Word to become alive to us. Our study of the Word should inspire us and lead us to contact the Lord in prayer.

After facts and inspiration, we must also learn the *truth*. Without first knowing the facts of the Word and being inspired by them, the truth we learn will be merely doctrine to us. This requires our person to be spiritual. The truth can be defined as the accumulation of unveiled facts. When we have accumulated a large number of facts which the Lord has unveiled to us, and these facts have thus become life-giving inspirations, then we will be able to know the truth.

The fourth item we need as we labor in the Word is *light*. Light is simply the consummation of all the previous items. Light is the consummation of the facts, inspiration, and truth that we have enjoyed. Light is also the result of being a proper person as we study the Bible. Again, we need to be simple, consecrated, and spiritual. Every time we read the Bible we should find the anointing. We should feel peaceful, restful, and full of the Lord's presence during our labor in the Word. We must touch the Spirit of the Word with our spirit while we labor in facts, inspiration, and truth. All of this together will consummate in light.

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