

FELLOWSHIP FOR FULL-TIMERS

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE SEVEN: HOW TO SERVE THE LORD (2)

THREE “E’S,” THREE “P’S,” AND THREE “C’S”

If you want to serve the Lord full-time, you need to remember the following nine items in these three categories:

Person

1. Expectations
2. Exercise
3. Energized

Daily Life

4. Pursue
5. Perfected
6. Preach

Labor

7. Church
8. Co-workers
9. Companions

THE THREE “E’S” FOR YOUR PERSON — EXPECTATIONS, EXERCISE, AND ENERGIZED

In serving the Lord you must take care of your person. That means you must pay attention to three “e’s.” First, it is crucial that you have a lot of *expectations*. If you want to serve the Lord you need to be extremely clear about what your expectations are. For example, a married couple has expectations for their family life. They consider whether they should both work, what kind of jobs they should have, in what way they should raise their children, how to prepare for their children’s education, what kind of house they can afford, and many other such things. All of these matters are related to having expectations. In serving the Lord, what you should be the most afraid of is having no expectations. If you don’t have a view, if you don’t have a plan, and if you don’t have any consideration for what you expect to see, then it will be difficult for you to serve the Lord effectively.

Not only should you have expectations, but you must *exercise* yourself according to your expectations. You need to be focused on what you expect to happen. It is not enough just to have expectations. There must be something exercised within you to accomplish those expectations. You should not serve as if you are carrying out a duty. Your whole person must be involved in what you are doing. Many times we have genuine expectations, but they become our duty. “Oh, now it is time for me to visit the saints again.” “Oh, now it is time to preach the gospel again.” If this is your attitude you can never serve well.

At the beginning of every laboring year, which for us is usually September, you must consider your expectations. If there are no expectations, or if there is no plan to reach those expectations, then something is wrong. Without expectations you cannot be fruitful and you cannot serve as a healthy full-timer. Then once you do have expectations you must exercise your whole being according to your expectations. For example, an immigrant can come to this country and have the expectation of learning English. But if he never exercises to practice his English, then after many years he still won't know how. If he wants to speak English he has to exercise himself towards learning English. When he watches TV or listens to the radio it should be in English. Every time he sees an American he should practice his English. If he only hides himself among his own culture he will never learn. He needs to exercise according to his expectation. This is also true of serving the Lord full-time. Whatever expectations you have, you need to exercise or you will never reach them.

When you exercise in this way, you also have to be *energized*. You need to be fresh and strong in your person. If you try to carry out something but your person is not energized, then very little will be accomplished. You can have the best plan - “I'm going to preach the gospel every day to five people, I'm going to visit twelve people a week” - and you can write everything down, but if you are not energized to fulfill it then you won't have much impact. There will be nothing impressive or attractive about your labor.

Therefore in order to serve well you need to have expectations, you need to be exercised according to those expectations, and you need to be energized so that your exercise will have impact. These three “e’s” are all related to your person.

**THE THREE “P’S” FOR YOUR DAILY LIFE —
PURSUE, PERFECTED, AND PREACH**

In serving the Lord you also must learn the three “p’s,” which are related to your daily life. First, you must have the attitude, “I pursue.” As you begin to serve you need to consider, “What do I have in mind to pursue this year?” For instance, you may want to read the New Testament thirty times. You may want to memorize a certain number of verses, or an entire book of the Bible. You may want to read some spiritual books. You may want to practice living in the Lord’s presence. Or you may want to learn how to open your whole being to the Lord every morning. All of these examples are aspects of pursuing the Lord. Your pursuing can be related to any number of these things. It can be related to your spiritual healthiness, or your constitution with the word, or your equipping with the truth. But if you are not pursuing, then nothing else will work in your daily serving life. Regarding your person, you must first have expectations. Regarding your daily living, you must first pursue.

Secondly, you must desire to be *perfected*. You should not only pursue outwardly, but you need to be perfected in your being. You need to realize that whatever happens to you while you are serving is part of the process of being perfected. If you desire to be perfected, then when you experience difficult things you will not react according to right or wrong. You also won’t consider, “Did I make it or not?” You will simply take everything from the Lord as His means of perfecting you.

You should realize, “If I preach the gospel and someone gets saved, that’s for my perfecting. If I preach the gospel and people reject me, that’s also for my perfecting. If I have a good plan and the elders accept it, that’s for my perfecting. If I spend hours planning everything, and the elders don’t like it, that’s also for my perfecting.” If you don’t realize that everything is for your perfecting then your growth will be very limited.

You need to desire to be perfected. Without this desire you can never be healthy as a full-timer. You can pursue a lot of things, and you may even become rich in your knowledge, but still you will not be healthy. For example, you may know how to talk about many Bible verses. You may know how to quote from different books by spiritual men. However, if you know these things but are not perfected, then something will still be wrong. The apostle Paul talked about this: “...lest perhaps having preached to others, I myself may become disapproved” (1 Cor. 9:27b). You may know a lot, but if you have not been through the healthy process of perfecting it is possible for you to be disapproved. It is not enough to pursue. As you pursue, you should tell the Lord, “Lord, perfect me though all my environments, all my situations, and everything that I go through. I want to be living in Your presence in my daily life, waiting on You and looking unto You for the healthy perfecting of my person.”

The third item for your daily life is that you must learn to *preach* the gospel. You need to practice preaching both in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2). That means preaching the gospel when people welcome you and when people reject you, when people get saved easily and when people get saved only with difficulty. It makes no difference what “season” it is, you must become a person that preaches. Every day you should try to talk to someone until preaching becomes part of your life. Every day you should let a few more people know about the Lord, about His love, about His redemption, and about His salvation. You must become a “preaching person.” This is not the same as becoming a “preacher,” which can be very low.

To be a preaching person simply means that you speak to people about what the Lord has unveiled to you. In your daily life of serving the Lord you must pursue, be perfected, and preach the gospel.

THE THREE “C’S” FOR YOUR LABOR — CHURCH, CO-WORKERS, AND COMPANIONS

As you serve the Lord full-time you need to have three “c’s” regarding all your labor. First, you must see the *church*. A person who does not see the church is a person who cannot serve. When you serve the Lord it is possible to become so focused on your own labor that you forget about the church life. You must realize that the church life is something complete, made up of many different parts. You may feel very good about your campus labor, or your labor in your neighborhood, but forget that it is part of the church life. In all your labor you must see the church. The college work is part of the church life. The children’s work is part of the church life. The high school work is part of the church life. A neighborhood meeting is part of the church life. The Lord’s Table meeting is part of the church life. Unless all of these things are working together, they each can become very small. This doesn’t mean you should look down on your labor. It means that you should realize the Lord is doing many things. Everything the Lord is doing is for the church. Whatever you do in your labor is part of an overall operation. If this overall operation is not healthy, then your labor will not be effective. Whatever you do still has to be part of the church life. If you don’t see this you can never serve the Lord properly.

The church is like a precious diamond. Our problem is that we keep magnifying a small facet of that diamond. A diamond can have many facets. But we look at one facet and say, “The facet is shining!” We forget about the diamond. We boast about our little work, but we don’t see the church life. Our work may be successful, yet the church doesn’t grow. We may get people saved through our labor, but the church cannot keep them. If this is the case, then something is short.

If you are serving the Lord, you need to have the church in view. If the church cannot keep the fruit of your labor, you need to consider how to help the church. If you don't have the church in view then eventually nothing works well. The church life should have many facets, but you should not aim at one facet and forget the big picture. You have to realize, "If I do something, whatever I do is related to the church. When the church is healthy, then my labor can be healthy. When the church is prevailing, then my labor can be prevailing. But if the church is not healthy or prevailing, nothing I do will be effective."

For example, if you serve with high schoolers, you need to consider your labor in view of the church. How can the high schoolers affect the church? How can the church affect the high schoolers? How can other saints be involved in the labor? If the church is not involved with the high schoolers, then the high schoolers will not be blessed. If the high schoolers cannot be in the church life, then the high schoolers will go nowhere. But if the church becomes a blessing to the high schoolers, then the high schoolers will become a blessing to the church. If you are considering such things then you know your labor is healthy. You are laboring with the high schoolers, but your view is for the church.

When you serve the Lord, it is very easy for you to be occupied with one project or one program. It is very hard for you to have the church in view. Yet you must learn, "The blessing the Lord gives to my labor will not go beyond the blessing He gives to the church. My work will not be more prevailing than the work the Lord has done in the church. Unless the church is healthy, I cannot do that much." If you fail to see this then your labor and your serving will be very limited, and you will become frustrated. For example, it is necessary and healthy to preach the gospel, but you must have the church in view. Then as you preach the gospel you will consider, "I must still help the church become strong and joyful in the Lord's presence. I must still help the church become full of love and care for one another. Otherwise I cannot be fruitful in my labor. My fruit cannot remain unless the church is healthy."

Wherever you are serving, whether it is with children, or high schoolers, or college students, or a neighborhood, or with a certain category of saints, it makes no difference. Whatever you do is only part of the whole church, and it is for the whole church. Furthermore, whatever the whole church does is for your labor. If so many full-timers see the church this way, and labor with it in view, then the church will be like a diamond with many shining facets. The whole diamond will be beautiful.

The second “c” is that when you labor you must have *co-workers*. If you are apart from the co-workers you can never do things healthily. Unfortunately it is possible to be so burdened for your work, and be right in the midst of many co-workers, and still feel extremely lonely. It often seems that you have no one you can open up to for fellowship. When you look at the work committed to your hands, you don’t know where you should go to discuss your frustrations. You don’t know who can stand with you and help you. For some reason you have missed the fact that you must have co-workers. You should always remember, “I am in the midst of a work with many co-workers, and we labor together.” When you see that the Lord has provided you with co-workers then you will be able to draw strength from them, even from those who are not in your locality. You should always have the realization, “I labor with my co-workers. I can go to them for fellowship. They are my strength and supply.”

In your labor you must also have *companions*. This is the third “c.” That means you never do anything by yourself. Actually, companions should be the very first thing you consider in your serving life. In your person you begin with expectations, but in your practical serving you must begin with companions. What is the difference between co-workers and companions? Co-workers are those who share the same burden and commitment as you do. Companions are those who are with you for the sustaining of your spiritual life. You need both co-workers and spiritual companions for your labor to be effective.

CONCLUSION

Can you remember these nine items? The secret of serving the Lord full-time is to serve according to these three “e’s,” three “p’s,” and three “c’s.” You should spend time to consider each one of these words. Not one of them is a light matter. Very few people have these nine items in their serving life. Some people are good with only one of the nine items. For example, a person may be good at pursuing. They read the New Testament all the time, and are constantly in the riches of the truth. But that is only one ninth of a healthy serving life. You need every one of these items together. Concerning your person you must have expectations, you must exercise accordingly, and you must be energized. Concerning your daily life you must pursue, you must desire to be perfected, and you must learn to preach. Concerning your labor you must see the church, and you must realize your need for both co-workers and companions. Take the time to consider each one of these items and apply them to your serving life.

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