

FELLOWSHIP FOR FULL-TIMERS

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE EIGHT: PRINCIPLES IN SERVING THE LORD FULL-TIME (1)

We are serving the Lord full-time for three reasons:

1. To grow in *life*
2. To be equipped in truth
3. To develop our operation

We need to be full-time so that we can give ourselves in a sober and dedicated way to these three crucial things. For us to become a real blessing to the church, we must focus on life, truth, and operation.

First, we need to grow. We are full-time so that we have more opportunity to grow in life. We should tell ourselves, “I am a full-timer so that I may gain life, grow in life, know life, and know the things of life.” This becomes the most crucial thing in the Lord’s work. This should be our proper focus.

Second, we are full-time so that we can have more time to equip ourselves in truth. Every time we read the Bible, or a portion of the Bible, the truth is more advanced. We will see something that we never saw before. We must give ourselves to the Word, and use all our time to labor in the Word. Even it is good to read and re-read the Bible before we read the footnotes. The Bible itself is very much alive. Then after we know the Bible so well, the footnotes will become very eye-opening.

Our growth in life and being equipped with truth has so much to do with our time. For example, the Bible needs to be read again and again. This cannot be cheap. We have to know the Bible, and we have to invest ourselves into it. Whether we like it or don't like it, the truth must occupy us. When we are able to spend so much time in the truth, we lay a ground for the Lord to give us revelations. But it all requires time. We should not be someone who talks about so many spiritual things, yet never invests our time into it. When that is the case, our talk is just shallow. We just speak terminology, without anything profound or solid. That is why we must labor in the truth.

Third, we should develop our operation. We are full-time so that we can become operative. When we begin to serve full-time, we should be very careful to train ourselves and discipline ourselves in the matter of operation. To get people saved, to bring someone into the church life, to help someone love the Lord, and to help someone pursue the Lord in the church life - all of these are operations.

We should not concentrate so much on how to give a message, or how to minister. To minister is crucial, but it is a fast learning. The first thing we can learn is how to give a message, and this has the lowest value in our serving life. There are different "levels of honor" for different operations. We can call these levels "basic," "common," "with honor," and "with high honor." A basic operation is preaching. A common operation is getting people saved. An honorable operation is bringing someone to love the Lord in the church life. And the operation with the highest honor is reproducing ourselves, so that someone with us becomes not only a Jesus-lover, but also a Jesus-pursuer.

As we learn to be operative, we should not only pay our attention to ministering and preaching. We should realize that these are the very basic things. But the problem is that most people love the basic things. In fact, many brothers take conferences and messages as "*the* thing." No, these are necessary operations, but they are very basic. We should not focus on these things. Speaking itself is valuable, because if the Lord wants to do

something He does it through speaking. However, our speaking will never be real unless we learn the high things. Two brothers may give the same message, with the same content. But one brother will have impact with the saints, and the other will not. This is based on whether the speaking brother has practiced the high things in his operation.

What are the common things? Saving people should be learned by all the brothers, whether they are full-time or not. But for some reason this is not a burden among the full-timers. We have to check with ourselves, “Am I getting someone saved?” It is absolutely unacceptable and abnormal for any of us to have been a full-timer for several years without getting someone saved directly. If this is our case, we have to be very much before the Lord to deal with it. We must ask the Lord why.

The higher operation is to bring someone into the church life. As a full-timer, if every year we can bring one into the church life, it is worth our time. It means our life has not been in vain. We should each be able to say, “Out of my labor, this one brother is in the church life.” At the end of a year, we should never accept that there is not even one in the church life because of us. If we accept such a situation for only one or two years, we are finished. If in a few years we are not fruitful, and our conscience doesn’t bother us, and we don’t realize how drastic it is, then we will become a low person. There will be very little honor found with our operation.

The operation with the highest honor is to say, “I am able to produce someone who pursues after Christ.” That is a high thing. If we can say, “Out of my labor, so many today are pursuing Christ in the church life!” then even if the congregation is small, the value is very high. For a church to be small is no shame, but when the church has no quality it is really a shame. As a full-timer, we must focus on the high and proper things.

Then what will be the most frustrating things in our full-time life? What will bother us the most?

1. Time
2. Disposition
3. The work

Nothing hurts our full-time life more than the way we mismanage our time. Being full-time is a matter of time. For us to say, “I am a full-timer,” means that all of our time is used for the right things. We must focus on the right things. If we want to be full-time, we have to be very careful about how we use our time. We should not let our time be wasted. We should use our time properly to meet all of our needs.

The next frustration is our disposition. No one knows how to handle this. This is our greatest limitation. Our disposition decides our effectiveness more than our desire or our faithfulness. In fact, if our disposition is very limited, we should consider getting a job. But a job won't necessarily help our disposition either. Many brothers have worked for years, and it did not affect their disposition. As full-timers, our disposition is something we should be very aware of. Our effectiveness our whole life-long is related to how we deal with our disposition today.

Then the last frustration is the work. We must be extremely careful, and even afraid of, the work. Don't love the work, because the work cheats you. If we cannot overcome the matter of the work, we may risk becoming an institution. May the Lord have mercy on us that we would know how to properly deal with these frustrations.

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