

RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION FOR THE CHURCH LIFE

Lesson Twenty-five

Serving in Coordination and in a Blended Way to Minister Life

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:28; 1 Thes. 2:7, 11; 2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:24;
10:17; Acts 1:14

I. Church service is mainly for ministering life to others; the best opportunity for us to minister life to others is in the service groups, to help the saints not primarily to carry out the service; rather, they should fellowship with them and minister life to them so that they may grow—Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:28:

- A. We need a life and work that flows out from the love of the Lord, in order to maintain our victory; if we do not have a revived living or a labor in shepherding, we will not be overcoming for long; there will be no way for us to maintain our victory; what maintains us in the victory is a life and work of love toward the Lord—1 John 5:16a; John 21:15-17:
 - 1. Every day we need renewal, and this renewal has to be refreshed day by day; every morning we should allow the Lord Jesus, our Sun, to rise up in us so that we can be renewed—Lev. 6:12-13; Mal. 4:2; Psa. 119:147-148; Prov. 4:18.
 - 2. After we have a thorough dealing with the Lord and pick up a burden, we must learn to be interested in people and involved with people; pick up a burden for specific persons.
 - 3. In our care for the young saints, we should consider ourselves as a small nursing mother and an exhorting, consoling father—1 Thes. 2:7, 11.
- B. The apostle Paul was a person who always spent and was spent; because his disposition was fully dealt with by the Lord, it was soft, bendable, flexible, and applicable to any situation; he was on earth for nothing else but to gain people—2 Cor. 12:15:
 - 1. On the one hand, we need to be strong, but on the other hand, we should not be hard; we need to be soft, flexible, and applicable, good for any situation we are placed in, able to fit into every bend and corner.
 - 2. To care for little children requires much flexibility; therefore, we first need a thorough dealing with the Lord, and then we need to become available, flexible, and fully dealt with in our disposition.

II. In our service to God, we must be brought by God to the point where we have the consciousness of the Body and do not serve individually but in coordination with the brothers and sisters—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 5:12; 15:25:

- A. We must realize that there are two kinds of coordination: one kind is the coordination involved in outward arrangements and the other kind of coordination is a coordination that grows out of the life within and is spiritual:
 - 1. Coordination requires that our natural being, the world, our disposition, and our flesh all be dealt with so that the Lord can grow out of us; when He grows out of you and me, we are spontaneously in coordination.
 - 2. Many have had the experience that as soon as they were put in the coordination their condition was exposed; once they began to serve their self immediately became manifest, particularly in their opinions.
 - 3. The most important thing in the church service is not that we perform our tasks successfully; rather, the important matter in our serving together in coordination is how much our flesh, our disposition, and our individualism are being dealt with.

- B. The greatest indication that we see the Body is that we cannot be independent; we feel that we need the Body, that we need the brothers and sisters—cf. 1 Cor. 1:1:
1. Coordination means that we cannot do anything without one another; there is a sense that we need others and that others need us; those who work with young people should be like this.
 2. Those who truly coordinate in spirit should have a strong feeling that they cannot do anything without the help and coordination of others and have the spirit of a learner and the spirit of needing help.
 3. To feel that we do not need one another and that we do not need to fellowship is the greatest form of pride; it is the most offensive thing to the Lord and to the Body.
 4. If we lack coordination with others, we will always criticize what they do; because we lack coordination in our service and do not rely and mutually depend on one another, we often step on others.

III. We must learn to serve in a blended way; without the blending, the Lord has no way to go on with us; blending is the Body, blending is the oneness, and blending is the one accord—1 Cor. 12:24; 10:17:

- A. God has blended the Body together; the word blended means adjusted, harmonized, tempered, and mingled; God has blended the Body, adjusted the Body, harmonized the Body, tempered the Body, and mingled the Body; the Greek word for blended implies the losing of distinctions—12:24:
1. In order to be harmonized, blended, adjusted, mingled, and tempered in the Body life, we have to go through the cross and be by the Spirit, dispensing Christ to others for the sake of the Body of Christ.
 2. If we would practice the blending, we should not forget the matter of fellowship; fellowship is the basis for blending; by practicing fellowship we will lay the foundation for the blending.
 3. Fellowship tempers us; fellowship adjusts us; fellowship harmonizes us; and fellowship mingles us; we should not do anything without fellowshiping with the other saints who are coordinating with us.
 4. Fellowship requires us to stop when we are about to do something; in our coordination in the church life, in the Lord's work, we all have to learn not to do anything without fellowship.
- B. When we blend together, we have the cross and the Spirit; without the cross and the Spirit, all that we have is the flesh with division; blending requires us to be crossed out; blending requires us to be by the Spirit to dispense Christ and to do everything for the sake of His Body.
- C. The way to be blended is by much and thorough prayer, as fine flour of the wheat, with all the members of our group, with the Spirit as the oil, through the death of Christ as the salt, and in the resurrection of Christ as the frankincense—John 12:24; 1 Cor. 10:17.

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Special Fellowship (3)

One Vital Factor, Two Lines, Three Principles, and the Four Functions of the Children's Work in the Lord's Recovery

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 1:5; John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1-2; Gal. 6:7-8; Matt. 13:37-38; Prov. 22:6; Rom. 9:21, 23; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Eph. 1:7; Gal. 3:19, 23-24; 2 Tim. 2:21; Acts 16:31

I. The one vital factor—the person, living and responsibility of the parents:

- A. God pays more attention to what we are than to what we do or to what we can do; He cares for the kind of person we are and for the kind of life we live—1 Thes. 1:5.
- B. We need to see that we are God-men, born of God and belonging to God's species; this is the beginning of the God-man living—John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1-2.
- C. God's ordained principle is that a father must live a life that is a pattern, an example to his children; nevertheless, we must realize that the way our children turn out ultimately depends on the Lord's mercy—Rom. 9:10-13; Eph. 6:4.

II. The two lines—having the increase of the church also through the children and building up the children in their humanity to be proper human beings—Matt. 13:37-38; 1 Pet. 1:1 (note 4); Prov. 22:6; Rom. 9:21, 23:

- A. Many years ago, we did not realize that the children are a big gospel work; we only cared to preach the gospel, while neglecting the fact that the children also are the fruit of the gospel—Acts 2:38-39; Matt. 28:19-20:
 - 1. We may be doing our best to preach the gospel, but if we pay proper attention to the children's work, in time many more brothers and sisters will be properly brought up in the church.
 - 2. Suppose these children begin to be cultivated in the children's meeting at the age of six and are saved, and they continue to be cultivated through three years of junior high school, three years of high school, and four years of college; in all, they will receive a total of sixteen years of spiritual education and cultivation.
 - 3. We should not do a work merely among the children in the church; our work must include the children outside the church; this is the children's gospel work—cf. Rom. 9:24.
 - 4. If we continue the children's work, we will be unable to estimate the long-term results; if we labor on the children, our numbers will continually grow—Acts 2:47.
 - 5. We must realize that the children's work is a crucial burden; every locality must be aggressive in the children's work, because there is a greater future in the children's work than in the campus work.
- B. Today, many young people have been damaged with respect to their character; it is because of this that we have a children's work for the children; we need to build up their character—1 Tim. 3:7; Acts 6:3; Prov. 28:20a:
 - 1. Character has very much to do with the Lord's service; consider those persons in the Bible whom God used; they were used by God because they possessed a character that was fit for His use—Rom. 12:1; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 2:21; 4:11.

2. To build up a proper humanity is the way to prepare the children to be the best material to receive God's grace—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18:

III. The three principles of the children's work—it is a work that is “before Christ” (B.C.), it is carried out in the principle of the law, and it is a work of preparation—1 Pet. 1:18-19; Eph. 1:7; Gal. 3:19, 23-24; 2 Tim. 2:21:

- A. We need to see the children's need of redemption:
 1. A great part of God's economy is His redemption; redemption indicates that something is wrong, requiring a rescue and a remedy—Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14:
 - a. Redemption is needed because after God created man for the fulfillment of His economy, the subtle one, Satan, came in to seduce man from the line of God's economy to sin—1 Pet. 1:18-19.
 - b. Man fell into sin, and sin as the sinful nature of Satan was injected by Satan into man's nature; as a result, the God-created man became sin, poisoned by Satan—Rom. 7:8, 11, 17, 20.
- B. Due to man's fall and his not knowing himself, God was forced to insert, to add, the law; it was added later in order to expose man's real condition and true nature and thus show man the true picture of himself—Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19:
 1. As the testimony of God, the law is a portrait or photograph of God, thus, the first function of the law is to reveal God; in decreeing the law, God's intention was to reveal to His chosen and redeemed people what kind of God He is—Exo. 19:3-6.
 2. The second function of God's law is to cause His people to realize that they are fallen and far away from God; as a sinful and corrupt people, it is not possible for them to please God—Rom. 7:7-8, 11; Gal. 3:19.
 3. A third function of the law is the function of subduing us; when we are exposed and subdued, we shall become humble before God; if we did not have the law, we would never realize how sinful we are, and we would never be subdued—Rom. 3:19; cf. Matt. 19:16-26.
 4. The law of God has a positive function in God's hand; the law has become the custodian and child-conductor of God's chosen people to bring them to Christ—grace—Gal. 3:23-24.
- C. When God bestows grace on the church, He needs vessels; there is the need for more Timothys to be raised up—2 Kings 4:1-6; 2 Tim. 2:2, 3:17:
 1. These four items together would make Timothy a vessel unto honor according to a certain standard—2 Tim. 2:21:
 - a. The word *honor* is related to our nature.
 - b. The word *sanctified* indicates our position.
 - c. The word *useful* implies the matter of our function.
 - d. The word *prepared* reveals the matter of our training.
 2. It is true that we can save men from the world, but there is a greater need for raising up people from among Christian families—2 Tim. 3:15a.
 3. We have to expect the second generation, men like Timothy, to come from our own families—1:5.

IV. The four functions of the children's work—Acts 16:31:

- A. At the beginning, children's meeting was mainly to care for the saints who brought their children to the meeting; it was simply a child-care service; gradually, the matter of preparing teachers came in, and we compiled material:
 - 1. From our experience we feel that the children's work is very important; the children's work should not simply be babysitting in order for the saints to come to the meetings.
 - 2. However, the children's work has another function, that is, to cultivate and nurture our next generation; this is worthy of our careful consideration and examination.
- B. The children's work has an additional function, which is to gain the families of the children—Acts 16:31; cf. Exo. 12:3-4; Gen. 7:1:
 - 1. Children like to make friends; it is particularly easy for children between the ages of six and twelve to make friends, and they listen to their friends:
 - 2. Our purpose, however, is not focused only on the children, but even more, through the children, we want to reach their parents and siblings.
- C. From this we can see the importance of the children's work; the children's work is greatly related to the growth of the church.

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Message Three

Being Patterns for Fostering the Children and Young People

Scripture Reading: 1 Thes. 1:5-8; 2:1-20; 2 Thes. 3:7, 9; 1 Pet. 5:2-4

I. For new believers to live a holy life for the church life, there is the need of the aspect of fostering—1 Thes. 2:7-12; Eph. 5:29, footnote 1:

- A. Paul likens the apostles both to a nursing mother and to an exhorting father; they regarded the believers as children under their fostering care; just as parents care for their children, fostering their growth, so the apostles cared for the new believers—1 Thes. 2:6b-7, 11.
- B. First Thessalonians is a word to beginners, to new believers; those who are working with young people or with new believers can receive from this book both a direction and an outline to follow—1:3 and footnote 2.

II. Paul fostered the young believers mainly by presenting them a pattern of life, a pattern of a proper living; this pattern was actually Paul himself—v. 5; 2:10; 2 Thes. 3:7-9:

- A. The apostles not only preached the gospel but also lived it; their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of faith—1 Thes. 1:5.
- B. The apostle Paul stressed repeatedly the apostles' entrance toward the believers; this shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts—vv. 5, 9; 2:1:
 - 1. The apostles were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God—v. 2.
 - 2. The apostles were free from deception, uncleanness, and guile—v. 3.
 - 3. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel; hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men but of God to please Him—v. 4; Psa. 139:23-24.
 - 4. The apostles were never found with flattering speech nor with a pretext for covetousness—1 Thes. 2:5.
 - 5. The apostles did not seek glory from men—v. 6a:
 - a. To seek glory from men is a real temptation to every Christian worker; many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter—1 Sam. 15:12.
 - b. Lucifer became God's adversary, Satan, because of glory-seeking; anyone who seeks glory from men is a follower of Satan—Ezek. 28:13-17; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 4:8-10.
 - c. How much we will be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depends on whether we seek glory from men—John 7:17-18; 5:39-44; 12:43; 2 Cor. 4:5.
 - 6. The apostles did not stand on their own authority or dignity as apostles of Christ—1 Thes. 2:6b.
 - 7. The apostles cherished the believers and yearned over them as a nursing mother would cherish and yearn over her own children—vv. 7-8, cf. v. 17; Gal. 4:19; Isa. 49:14-15; 66:12-13.

8. The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls—1 Thes. 2:8; 2 Cor. 12:15.
9. The apostles considered themselves as fathers in exhorting the believers to walk in a manner worthy of God, to have a walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God and usher them into the glory of God—1 Thes. 2:11-12.

III. To do the work of fostering, to shepherd people, to cherish and nourish them, is to give them a proper pattern; Paul fed his spiritual children with his own living of Christ—vv. 1-12; cf. 2 Cor. 1:23—2:14; 1 Cor. 9:22; Acts 20:28:

- A. Parents are patterns, models, for their children; whatever the parents are, the children will be also; imitating is related to growing; children grow by imitating their parents—2 Thes. 3:9; Heb. 13:7.
- B. To give the new believers and young ones a lot of teaching is not the proper way to take care of them; the proper way to foster them is to show them a pattern; by showing them a pattern you water them, supply them, nourish them, and cherish them—2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 8:1b; 1 Thes. 2:8.
- C. The source, the origin, of the apostles' preaching was God and not themselves; whenever we preach or teach, we must impress others with the fact that what we are saying is not the word of man, but is truly the word of God—v. 13; Heb. 4:12.
- D. The church in Thessalonica imitated the churches in Judea—1 Thes. 2:14:
 1. Reports concerning the churches in Judea reached the believers in Thessalonica; they must have heard about the churches and the saints and these reports fostered the growth of the Thessalonian believers—v. 14.
 2. Nothing can foster a church or a saint as much as a true story about other saints or churches—Acts 27:21, footnote 2; Rom. 16:4, 13.
- E. The inoculating word was also part of Paul's fostering of the saints; even inoculation is included in fostering; Paul inoculated the believers against the eventual coming of the Judaizers—1 Thes. 2:15.
- F. Paul likened their departure from them to a bereavement, a loss they suffered from being separated from them and that caused them to miss them; this word implies that the apostles considered the new converts precious and dear to them—vv. 15-17.

IV. Those who work with the Lord in fostering the believers to walk worthily of God will receive a reward; this reward will be the believers we have fostered becoming our crown, glory, and joy—1 Thes. 2:19-20; 1 Peter 5:3-4:

- A. Because the apostles rendered such a care to the new believers, the apostles will eventually receive a reward from the Lord—1 Thes. 2:19-20.
- B. First Thessalonians 2:20 indicates that since the apostles were the believers' nursing mother and exhorting father, the believers, as their children, were their glory and joy; apart from them, the apostles had no hope, glory, or crown of boasting—vv. 19-20.
- C. "When the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will also receive the unfading crown of glory"—1 Pet. 5:4; Matt. 24:45-47.

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Lord's Day, January 26, 2014

The Guiding Principles for the Children's Work in the Lord's Recovery

Scripture Reading: Heb. 11:7; Psa. 127:3; 2 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 4:7-16; John 15:2a, 6; Rom. 16:1, 12, 13;
Tim. 4:12; Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:14-22

I. THE GOAL OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK—We must concentrate the efforts of our work to target the children and young people among us so that they can become the “seeds of the gospel”—Matt. 13:3; cf. Dan. 1:3-4:

- A. Our work must lead them to have a definite experience of salvation.
- B. Our work must prepare them to invite their friends and become gospel seeds in their schools when they go into Junior High School.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK—Build the children in their humanity to be proper human beings—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18:

- A. Today, many young people have been damaged with respect to their character; it is because of this that we have a children's work for the children; we need to build up their character—Heb. 10:39; 1 Tim. 3:7; Acts 6:3; Prov. 28:20a.
- B. To build up a proper humanity is the way to prepare the children to be the best material to receive God's grace—Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Tim. 2:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:5; Matt. 16:18:
 - 1. It is best to help the children grow up in their humanity by helping them know what a proper human being is; how to honor their parents, and how to be a proper child—Eph. 6:1; Col. 1:10; Prov. 22:6.
 - 2. In caring for their children, Christian parents need to preach the law to them; we should not first preach grace to the children; we must build them up with proper ethics and morality—2 Tim. 3:15; Rom. 13:1; Gal. 3:24.
 - 3. Because children are too young to behave according to Christ, they must be taught to behave according to culture; children are preserved by culture while they are growing up—Rom. 13:1; Gal. 3:23.

III. THE SCOPE OF THE CHILDREN'S WORK:

- A. **The Homes**—We need to open up our home, we do not need to meet with others first; we can initiate our home meeting by meeting with our family members—Acts 5:42; 2:46; 12:12:
 - 1. We who have wives and children all can have a home meeting; we just meet with our folks, with our wife, and with our little children—Acts 12:12.
 - 2. The meetings in the believers' homes can be a fruitful testimony to the neighbors around, and they provide an opportunity for witness and gospel preaching—John 19:35; 3 John 12:
 - 3. This influence is most helpful for the families of the Christians; from early days the children will be surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere, and will have constant opportunity to see the reality of eternal things—John 14:17.
- B. **The Neighborhoods**—Another way of gospel preaching is to preach the gospel to the children; this requires the sisters to pick up the burden:

1. In our neighborhood there must be a children's meeting that should not be considered as the children's meeting of the church; this is a children's meeting work in the saints' neighborhood.
 2. After the children get home from school, the saints may open their home and prepare some snacks to welcome them; then they can sing with the children, tell them stories, and lead them to know God—cf. 2 Kings 4:3.
 3. Gaining people in this way is very safe, because they are taught by us and receive the gospel from us from their youth; thus, they should be very solid—1 Tim. 4:12; cf. Luke 18:21.
- C. **The Children's Meeting**—We expect the children's work among us to be very prevailing; therefore, we need to have a proper realization and preparation for this work—Gen. 1:28; Psa. 127:3:
1. When we speak of the children's work, we are referring to children who have not graduated from elementary school but are more than five years old; these are the target of our children's work.
 2. In Christianity, doing the children's work is considered to be like operating a school; hence, it is called Sunday school:
 - a. In the Sunday school classes they may use textbooks; we do not agree with this method; we feel that our children's meeting should not have the flavor of a Sunday school—Rev. 18:4; Heb. 13:13.
 - b. From our experience we feel that if we regard the children's work as a school and teach our children from textbooks, it will be of more harm than benefit to them.
 3. The saints can open their homes for children's meetings; we need many brothers and sisters to open their homes; how beautiful this service will be and how much the Lord's work will be propagated—Acts 2:46; 6:7a.

IV. MOBILIZING THE WHOLE CHURCH TO CARE FOR THE CHILDREN—When the entire church is mobilized, all the brothers and sisters will have an opportunity to serve; some can open their homes, others can bring the children to the meetings, and still others can teach the children; when all the saints endeavor in one accord for the Lord's heart's desire, the profit will be immeasurable—Judg. 5:15-16; Dan. 11:32; 1 Cor. 12:14-22; Eph. 4:7-16:

- A. The responsible brothers and the co-workers in every place must see the importance of the children's work in God's family; this should be a great matter to us—Heb. 11:7; Psa. 127:3; Gen. 33:5b; Dan. 1:3-4; Matt. 24:45; 25:16; Rom. 9:23; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Acts 16:31-32; Eph. 4:12-16; 1 Tim. 4:12.
- B. In carrying out this work, first, a number of sisters should rise up to lead the children's work; the elders should also appoint some sisters to take up this responsibility—Rom. 16:1, 6, 12-13; Mark 15:41:
- C. We also need the help of the young people in the children's work; this matter must be developed—1 Tim. 4:12:
 1. There are quite a large number of children in every locality; as soon as we begin the children's work, the young people will begin to function; they can all take part in serving the children.
 2. The young people need to give themselves to this work, and this will give everyone an opportunity to practice speaking.