

BLENDING IN THE VITAL GROUPS—THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Message 5

The Practicality of Blending in the Vital Groups—The Twos and Threes

I. Loving the Lord

John 21:15

Then when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs.

We can be joined to the brothers and sisters only when we hold the Head. The members of the Body are fitted together and able to live the Body life through holding the Head. Our relationship to the Head determines our relationship to the other members... Apart from Christ, we have no means of fellowship. When we do not hold the Head, our fellowship becomes invalid. The basis of our fellowship is our mutual holding of the Head. When we all hold the Head, we will hold to one another, and our relationship with the Body will be proper... The mutual relationship of the members passes through the Head first.

The Mystery of Christ, chapter 6, pp. 33-34

II. Blending in the Twos and Threes – The Building Blocks of a Vital Group

Matthew 18:15-22

15 Moreover if your brother sins against you, go, reprove him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he does not hear *you*, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you just like the Gentile and the tax collector.

18 Truly I say to you, Whatever you bind on the earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on the earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

20 For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

21 Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?

22 Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy times seven.

A. Gathering Group

Matthew 18:20

For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

B. Living Group

Matthew 18:20

For where there are two or three gathered into My name, there am I in their midst.

Colossians 2:19b

...holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

C. Spiritual Group

Acts 13:52

And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

D. Loving Group

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, have fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins.

The first lesson we must learn as members of the vital groups is not to uncover people's weaknesses... In the vital groups, we have to avoid this kind of uncovering talk. Our uncovering talk is a defect that will kill our vital groups. We must learn to cover others. When we become aware of someone sinning or of someone sinning against us, we should not talk to others but to the person directly. Our natural man always likes to tell others about a person's sins or mistakes. This is wrong.

The Vital Groups, Chapter 1, pp. 6-7

E. Related, Open, and Coordinated Group

Matthew 18:16a

But if he does not hear *you*, take with you one or two more...

F. Forgiving Group

Matthew 18:35

So also will My heavenly Father do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts.

Colossians 3:13

Bearing one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone; even as the Lord forgave you, so also *should you forgive*.

G. Harmonious Group

Matthew 18:19b

...if two of you are in harmony on earth...

H. Praying Group

Matthew 18:19c

...concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

I. Shepherding Group

Matthew 18:11-12, 16a

11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which is lost.

12 What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and seek the one that has gone astray?

16a But if he does not hear *you*, take with you one or two more...

J. Gaining Group

Matthew 18:15b

If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

III. Obstacles to the Blending of the Twos and Threes

A. Soul-life

1. Pride

1 Corinthians 12:21

And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

2. Loose Talk

Proverbs 11:13

He who goes about as a gossip reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.

1 Timothy 5:13

And at the same time they also learn to be idle, going around from house to house; and *they are* not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

B. Privacy

Haggai 1:4

Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled-up houses, while this house lies waste?

C. Busyness

Luke 14:18-20

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a piece of land, and I need to go out and see it. I ask you, have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to prove them. I ask you, have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and because of this I cannot come.

1. Possessions – “piece of land”

2. Job – “five yoke of oxen”

3. Family – “wife”

D. Meal Concept

Proverbs 15:17

Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is Than a fattened ox and hatred with it.

We should encourage the brothers and sisters to come together to eat more often. They should open their homes and invite three to five brothers and sisters over for meals and fellowship. But they should not prepare anything special... Dr. Stearns in Chefoo once said that it is an easy thing to invite people over for a meal. All one has to do is to add a pair of chopsticks. There is no reason we cannot do it more often.

Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Chapter 31, pp. 346-347

E. Length of Time

F. Distance

Acts 2:46

And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of *their* food with exultation and simplicity of heart,

IV. Our Response

A. Repent

1. Make a turn in our life-pursuit

Matthew 3:2

And saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.

In John the Baptist's preaching, repentance, as the opening of God's New Testament economy, involved making a turn for the kingdom of the heavens. This indicates that God's New Testament economy is focused on His kingdom. For this we should repent, change our mind, make a turn in our life-pursuit. The goal of our pursuing has been other things; now our pursuing must turn toward God and His kingdom....

Recovery Version, footnote 2²

2. Now is the time

Now is the time for us to take the way of fully functioning in the Body service...We must reach the stage in which the whole Body is coordinating together in the service and the stage in which everything is for the gospel. When the whole church is serving, the Lord's coming will be at hand.

The Flow of the Spirit, Watchman Nee, last paragraph

B. Consecrate

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you have been bought with a price. So then glorify God in your body.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died;

15 And He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

Romans 12:1

I exhort you therefore, brothers, through the compassions of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing to God, *which is* your reasonable service.

1. Consecration to be a full-timer

For one to present his body to God is to go full-time. If you do not go full-time, how could your body be free to be presented to God as a living sacrifice?... To present your body to God means you give yourself to God. This is to be full-time. We Christians should all be full-timers. We have to give ourselves to Him. We do not give ourselves to anything else, only to our saving God.

Elder's Training, Book 8, p. 105

I hope we all can realize the proper denotation of the spiritual term "full-time." To be full-time does not mean that you need to give up your job. To be a full-timer means that whatever you do, you do to the Lord; whatever you are, you are to the Lord; and whatever you have, you have to the Lord. If you remain in a job, you remain there to the Lord. If you leave your job, you leave it to the Lord. As long as you are to the Lord you are a full-timer. Whatever you have to do practically all depends upon the One to whom you live. He leads you. Then you know whether you have to remain in a job or leave a job or whether you need to get married or remain single. It does not mean that if you remain single, you are full-time and that if you get married, you are not full-time. To be full-time simply means to live to the Lord.

Elder's Training, Book 8, p. 121

2. Consecration and coordination

Handing ourselves over should result in a fundamental change in our being. We are no longer individual Christians. Instead, we serve the Lord in coordination with all the brothers and sisters. Not only has our past been consecrated and dealt with, even our future has been consecrated and dealt with. This is all for the sake of breaking open a way for the gospel to spread through us. In the past we preached the gospel when we felt like it, but we turned away from the brothers when we grew cold and disinterested. Whether we were working or not, we were doing everything as individuals. But now that we have handed ourselves over, we can no longer act individualistically; we must serve in coordination.

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Vol. 61, p. 115

Romans 12 is the clearest, most absolute, accurate, and definite passage in the entire Bible on consecration, and it speaks of coordination at the end of the chapter. If a man is not willing to consecrate himself, how can he be coordinated with others? We should not think that we are consecrating when we offer up a little money and material goods. Consecration means offering up our entire person. Only this will bring us into coordination with the brothers and sisters. If we hold back anything for ourselves, we are merely practicing a kind of individualism. If we are so individualistic, how can we coordinate with others?

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Vol. 61, p. 155

3. Being delivered from mammon to serve the Lord

Acts 2:44-45

44 And all those who believed were together and had all things common;

45 And they sold their properties and possessions and divided them to all, as anyone had need.

Selling one's all to follow the Lord is an ordained way that God has revealed in His Word.

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Vol. 61, p.110

The forsaking of everything is not a deep lesson; it is a make-up lesson. As soon as a man is saved, he should offer up himself (Rom. 6:6, 12-14).

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Vol. 61, p. 128

4. The Body testimony being God's final recovery

We believe that God is recovering the most difficult thing today. What worries us the most today is the fulfillment of Ephesians 4. It seems as though we do not have to worry about the fulfillment of John 3:16. We are not afraid that it will not be fulfilled, and we are not worried. Suppose someone says that he has believed and asks what he should do if he still has not received eternal life. He has believed, yet he has not seen any result. What should he do? We are not worried about this. I have read the New Testament more than two hundred times. I am not worried about any other passage. I have even read Revelation a few hundred times. I am not worried about that book either. However, I am worried about Ephesians 4. I am concerned about how this passage of the Scriptures will be fulfilled....

Yet, brothers and sisters, we believe that there will be a day when God's recovery will reach the fulfillment of Ephesians 4. God is doing a recovery work everywhere. The ultimate work among all these works may very well be the recovery of the Body testimony. God's leading today is to bring us back to the beginning and to recover us to the condition at the beginning.

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Vol. 57, pp. 220-221

You must realize that there is a great lack, a shortage, that is, the reality of the Body of Christ. It is for this reason that there is a need for the blending....My burden today is to help you reach the peak of the vital groups, that is, the overcomers' Zion. Although we may have a good church life, among us there is almost no realization, no practicality, no actuality, and no reality of the Body life. This is the need in the recovery today.

Practical Points Concerning Blending, pp. 16-17