

#1 Loving the Lord and Loving One Another—the Most Excellent Way for Us to Be Anything and Do Anything for the Organic Building Up of the Church as the Body of Christ

Bird's-eye view 12/12-18

I Paul commended the Thessalonians by telling them that “your faith grows exceedingly and the love of each one of you all to one another is increasing” (2 Thes. 1:3) Titus 3:15 All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith, Grace be with you all. A To believe in the Lord is to receive Him as life, and to love the Lord is to enjoy the very person whom we have received; faith is given to us by God so that by it we may receive Christ as our life; love issues out of such a wonderful faith and enables us to live out all the riches of the Triune God in Christ as our life. B To the apostle Paul the grace of the Lord “superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:14); through faith we receive the Lord, and through love we enjoy the Lord whom we have received. C In this wonderful faith and by this super-excellent love of the Triune God, we should love Him and all those who belong to Him; only in this way can we become, in the current of the church's degradation, the overcomers whom the Lord is calling and desiring to obtain in Revelation 2 and 3. II The Lord's recovery is a recovery of loving the Lord Jesus with the first love, the best love, and of loving one another for the building up of the organic Body of Christ, which is the building up of the New Jerusalem as the goal of God's eternal economy: A The Christ whom we love is the church-loving Christ; when we love Him, we will love the church as He does. Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. B The degradation of the church begins with our leaving the first love toward the Lord; to love the Lord with the first love, the best love, is to give the Lord the preeminence, the first place, in all things, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life. 2 Cor. 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; 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. C The very life that we received when we believed in the Lord Jesus is a

person, and the only way to apply and enjoy this person is by loving Him with the first love; since the Lord Jesus as our life is a person, we need a new contact with Him to enjoy His present presence at this very moment and day by day. 1 Tim. 1:14 And the grace of our Lord superabounded with faith and love in Christ Jesus. D We must be persons who are flooded with and carried away by the love of Christ; the divine love should be like the rushing tide of great waters toward us, impelling us to live to Him and love Him to the uttermost beyond our own control. E In order to love the Lord to the uttermost, we need to be those who desire and seek to dwell in the house of God all the days of our life to behold His beauty (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness) and to inquire of God in His temple; to inquire of God is to check with God about everything in our daily life. III Among the co-workers, the elders, the responsible ones, and everyone in the vital groups, love must prevail: A We have been regenerated to be God's species, God's kind, and God is love; since we become God in His life and nature but not in the Godhead, we also should be love; this means that we do not merely love others but that we are love itself. 1 John 4:8 He who does not love has not known God, because God is love. B We must keep ourselves in the love of God and be constrained by the love of Christ to lay down our lives on behalf of the brothers. C God first loved us in that He infused us with His love and generated within us the love with which we love Him and the brothers; to abide in God is to live a life in which we love others habitually with the love that is God Himself, that He may be expressed in us. 1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us. D We need to beware of ambition and pride. IV Love is the most excellent way for us to be anything or do anything for the building up of the church as the organic Body of Christ: 1 Cor. 12:31 But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And moreover I show to you a most excellent way. A The love described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 is the expression of the divine life; furthermore, the fact that love is the fruit of the Spirit indicates that the substance of love must be the Spirit; if we do not have love, our speaking is like that of sounding brass and a clanging cymbal, which give sounds without life. B Love is not jealous, is not provoked, does not take account of evil, covers all

things, endures all things, survives everything, and is the greatest. [1 Cor. 13:13](#) Now there abide faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love. **C** We should be like God in our love for others, loving people without any discrimination; the first one saved by Christ through His crucifixion was not a gentleman, but a criminal, a robber, sentenced to death; this is very meaningful. **E** The law of love must be substantiated by the law of the Spirit of life so that we may be able to bear one another's burdens; but if we are filled with pride, we will be unable to bear others' burdens because we deceive ourselves by thinking that we are something when we are nothing. **F** When the law of love is activated within us, we automatically and spontaneously will be shepherds who have the loving and forgiving heart of our Father God and the shepherding and seeking spirit of our Savior Christ. **G** when the law of love is activated within us, our labor in the Lord is a labor of love in which we "support the weak" and "sustain the weak"; the weak refers to those who are weak either in their spirit our soul or body, or are weak in faith. **H** The church life is a life of brotherly love, and the Body builds itself up in love. **I** "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"; we may listen to the messages of the ministry and become puffed up with mere knowledge (1 Cor. 8:1). **J** Our God-given, regenerated spirit is a spirit of love; we need a burning spirit of love to conquer the degradation of today's church. [2 Tim. 1:7](#) For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness. **V** John 21, a chapter on shepherding, is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John; after His resurrection the Lord shepherded Peter and commissioned him to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep; this is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, the church, which issues in the Body of Christ. [John 21:16](#) ... Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord... He said to him, Shepherd My sheep. **A** Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he tells the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they have now returned to the Shepherd and Oversee (Christ) of their souls. **B** He exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is

manifested, they will receive the unfading crown of glory; Peter's word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body. [1 Pet. 5:2-4](#) Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly; ...becoming patterns of the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **C** The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ's heavenly ministry are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God. **VI** Psalms 22--24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion to His kingship in the coming age; in Psalm 22 we see Christ's death, His resurrection, and His many brothers produced in His resurrection to form His church; in Psalm 23 we see Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection; and in Psalm 24 we see Christ as the coming King in His kingdom: [Psa. 23:1](#) Jehovah is my Shepherd; I will lack nothing. **A** These three psalms show that between Christ's death and resurrection in the past and Christ's coming again as the King in His kingdom in the future is the enjoyment, experience, and expression of Christ as our pneumatic Shepherd in the present. **B** ...if we participate in His wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival, a new revival, in the Lord's recovery to bring Christ back. **VII** In taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life: [2 Cor. 7:3-4](#) I do not say this to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts for our dying together and our living together. Great is my boldness toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction. **A** In shepherding the saints, it is possible that we may kill others; the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern. **B** How fruitful we are, how much fruit we bear, does not depend on what we are able to do; it depends on whether we have an intimate concern. **C** A ministering life is a life that warms up others; if we would minister life to the saints, we must have a genuine concern for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate.

CP1 Dealing with ambition and pride so that we can have a pure heart to be useful in the Lord's hands for the long run.

III D1 Whether or not we will be useful in the Lord's hands for the long run and whether or not we will bring in the blessing for a lasting time does not depend on what we can do but on how pure our heart is; we need to have a pure heart, purified from any form of subtle ambition in intention, purpose, motive, and action in the Lord's recovery. **2** Pride means destruction, and to be proud is to be a top fool; humility saves us from all kinds of destruction and invites God's grace. **3** We should never hunt to be the first in any work for the Lord; rivalry in the Lord's work is not only a sign of ambition but also a sign of pride; referring to our capacity, success, perfection, and virtue is a careless form of pride. **4** Thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think is another form of pride; self-boasting, self-exaltation, self-glorification, self-will, self-justification, self-righteousness, and lusting after vainglory are all ugly and base expressions of pride. Ja.4:6 But He gives greater grace; therefore it says, "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." **5** Wanting to be great and not to be a servant and wanting to be the first and not to be a slave are also a sign of pride. **6** We should pray for one another, have an intimate concern for one another, cherish and nourish one another, and always cover one another, speak well of one another, and never expose one another's failures and defects; we need to forgive one another and seek to be forgiven by one another. **7** On the one hand, we should have a clear sight over the people for whom we care with much discernment, and on the other hand, we should be blind spiritually. **8** ...to revile is not only to rebuke someone but also to sharply wound him and stamp him with open rudeness or contempt arising from arrogance: **a** Revilers are ones who beat their fellow slaves, which means that they habitually mistreat fellow believers; revilers will not inherit the kingdom of God. **b** Those who take in reviling words bear the same responsibility as those who speak reviling words; in order for the church to maintain the oneness, the brothers and sisters must withstand reviling words.

First, we need to beware of ambition, and second, we need to beware of pride....Referring to your capacity, success, perfection, and virtue is a careless form of pride...Instead, always say to the Lord, "Lord, I

don't have any capacity, nor do I have any success in Your work. Furthermore, I don't have any perfection; all that I have is imperfection. Also, I don't have any virtue; all that I have is failure."

Application to young people, college students, new ones

You must learn to be aware of ambition and pride from the time you are young. To be aware means to be awake and requires that you be watchful at all times. Therefore, I encourage you to write down in your notebook the sins, faults, and shortcomings that you habitually do that are enlightened in your fellowship with the Lord and with the brothers and sisters, and to read them over and pray over them. Bad behaviors that come from your personality, stubbornness, individualism, etc., are often things you are not aware of yourself. It may be obvious to others, but you yourself are not aware of it. Therefore, it is necessary to write down the enlightened sins, faults, and shortcomings, read them over, confess our sins, faults, and shortcomings in fellowship with the Lord, and apply the blood of Jesus, His Son, to deepen the fellowship. In particular, please do not follow worldly definitions or your own interpretation of ambition and pride, but let your ambition and pride be enlightened by the Word of God and in the light of the Holy Spirit, and confess your sins. 1 John 1:8 If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **Testimony** Around my senior year of college, I began to realize that I was committing similar sins over and over again. I found myself habitually committing those sins and not paying much attention. For example, regarding the pride, I naively interpreted to myself that this level of pride was not a big deal and that I did not need to confess it. I prayed earnestly, "Oh Lord Jesus, when my sins, faults, and shortcomings were enlightened, I paid little attention to these things. Forgive my sins of dishonesty." By praying in this way, I received mercy and grace and gradually became more awake. **Prayer** Oh Lord Jesus, I am often not even aware of my own sins, faults and shortcomings. Please enlighten me thoroughly. In particular, may I clearly understand that ambition and pride are serious offenses to God's economy, and may I deal with them thoroughly. Otherwise, I cannot be useful in Your hands in the long run.

CP2 Warm up and build people with the intimate concern touched not by natural love, but by God's love.

VII In taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life. **A** In shepherding the saints, it is possible

that we may kill others; the reason for this killing, this fruitlessness, is the lack of intimate concern: **1** The milk of the word of God, the life supply of Christ, should be used to nourish the new believers in Christ, not to "boil" them. **2** If we have the ability to carry on a work but lack an intimate concern, our work will be fruitless; our heart must be enlarged to embrace all believers regardless of their condition. **C** A ministering life is a life that warms up others; if we would minister life to the saints, we must have a genuine concern for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate.

2 Cor. 7:3-4 I do not say this to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts for our dying together and our living together. Great is my boldness toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction.

If we have ability to carry on a work but lack an intimate concern, our work will be fruitless... How fruitful we are, how much fruit we bear, does not depend on what we are able to do. It depends on whether or not we have an intimate concern.

Paul was very human and emotional in his ministering of life. Paul was so emotional because his concern was so deep and intimate. Without this kind of concern, we could never be abundantly rejoicing in the way Paul was. Instead, we may be as cold as a freezer, altogether lacking in concern for the saints. Instead of warming up others, we make them even colder. Nothing can grow when it is in such a frozen condition. We need the weather of spring to come to thaw us out and warm up our life. Once again there is a need for a ministering life. Do you know what a ministering life is? It is a life that warms up others. Learn to warm others. This is to have an intimate concern for them. If we do not have this kind of concern for others, we shall not be fruitful. If I would minister life to the saints, I must have a genuine concern for them, a concern that is emotional, deep, and intimate. I must be so concerned that, at times, I may appear to others to be foolish or beside myself. Only the ministering life enables us to bear fruit. Fruitbearing is the issue of a ministering life.

Application to business persons/ graduate students

Please note that the love you are talking about here is not natural love. Natural love does not perfect a person and does not lead to building. God's love is true love, perfecting and building people. In natural love, there is the idea of "I feel pity for you, so I'll do it for you". This kind of love is the kind of love that ruins people. If you do things for them instead, they will never be able to do things themselves. There is no perfection there, so there is no building. In raising children, in training young people and new ones in the service of the church, in training juniors and subordinates in the company, you help, perfect, and build so that people can do it on their own, in love. Such work is not easy. This requires **1** labor of love, **2** intimate concern, **3** and long-term patience. However, because of this work of love, many will be the remaining fruits, and many serving ones will be produced, leading to building.

Testimony I testify that when I tried to help the brothers and sisters, it did not work as well as I thought it would, so I got fed up and thought about quitting, but I was touched by the Lord's love, repented, and was able to continue my shepherding. My sister fellowshipped with me to help a brother by hiring him to work for the company I work for. I disagreed with that, but in fellowship with the Lord, I was touched by His love and prayed as follows, "I myself am what I am today because of the Lord's mercy, so I, who have the right to hire, must love the brother with God's love." I tried to care for the brother's suffering with compassion and love. In order to hire him, we needed to change the hiring requirements, so we discussed this with our supervisor at the U.S. headquarters and modified it. Although he had a hard time getting hired, his subsequent performance at the company was not very good. I was very disappointed in this situation. This was repeated many times about him. But recently, about 18 years later, to my surprise, the brother repented before the Lord and began to grow. Hallelujah!

Prayer Oh Lord Jesus, in taking care of the churches and in shepherding the saints, what is needed is the intimate concern of a ministering life. If I lack an intimate concern, people will be lost and it will be fruitless. Enlarge my heart to embrace the brothers and sisters regardless of their condition. Fill me with God's love, not natural love, so that I can have an emotional, deep, and intimate concern for others and warm up them.