

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 17

**The Function of the Sisters in the Church Life (1)
Preserving and Maintaining Life
and “Conceiving” and “Giving Birth”
to Everything in the Church Life**

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:1, 4; Luke 2:36-37; Col. 4:6

I. We need to see the importance of the sisters’ function in the church life:

- A. God uses physical things as shadows of spiritual things; a human family is a shadow, a picture, of the church life; in the church the brothers can be compared to the husband and father in a family, and the sisters can be compared to the wife and mother—Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15.
- B. In order to have a proper family life, the mother is more important than the father; the principle is the same regarding the church life; in this sense, we may say that the sisters are more important than the brothers in the church life—cf. John 12:1-3.
- C. In a family the responsibility is mainly on the side of the wife; in order to have a proper family life with a proper home life, the wife must bear the majority of the responsibility—Prov. 31:10-31.
- D. In order to have a proper church life, the sisters must bear a particular responsibility and carry out a particular function—John 12:1-3; Rom. 16:1-2, 6, 12-13.

II. The main function of the sisters both in the church and in the family is to preserve and maintain life—Rom. 16:1-2:

- A. In a family it is the wife, not primarily the husband, who maintains life; if a father is not at home, the children are not affected as much as when the mother is away from home—Prov. 31:10-31.
- B. The condition of a church depends on the sisters; when the sisters are healthy, living, and going on, the church is healthy, living, and going on—Phil. 4:2-3; 2:1-4, 12-16.

III. The sisters need to bear responsibility and “give birth” to everything in the church life—Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26-35:

- A. In a family the husband cannot conceive and give birth to anything; only the wife can bear a child; this is an illustration of the situation in the church life.
- B. No matter what the church endeavors to work out, if the sisters do not bear the responsibility, it is very difficult to bring forth anything; the brothers may initiate something and may make many decisions, but whether or not anything can be “conceived” and worked out depends more on the sisters:
 - 1. If the sisters are silent and dormant in relation to anything in the church life, that thing will not have a good outcome.
 - 2. All the things of life related to the local church must be “conceived” and brought forth by the sisters.
- C. How can the sisters conceive and give birth to something in the church life?
 - 1. First, the sisters need to love the Lord with the first love—Rev. 2:4; Mark 12:30:

- a. All the problems we have with the Lord are due to a lack of love toward Him; as long as we have the best love, the first love, toward the Lord, all the problems are gone—Eph. 6:24; 1 Cor. 16:22; Rev. 2:4.
 - b. The sisters especially need to have the best love toward the Lord—Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:3; 20:1-18.
2. Second, the sisters need to be broken—John 11:20-22, 24, 27-28, 32, 39; Phil. 4:2-3; Matt. 16:24-26; cf. *Hymns* #622, #279, #280, #415, #482:
 - a. Based on the pattern in family life, in order for the sisters to give birth to anything in the church life, the sisters need to sacrifice; this means that they need to be broken—cf. *Hymns* #377.
 - b. In the church life, first the sisters need the best love toward the Lord; then they need brokenness, which includes submission, sacrifice, suffering, giving up many things, never craving something for themselves, never vindicating themselves, and never saying anything for themselves; the sisters need to be ready to lose themselves for the church—Rev. 12:11b; cf. Phil. 2:1-11:
 - 1) The Bible tells us that the sisters are put in a position of submission, a position of sacrifice, and a position of humility—1 Cor. 11:3-16; Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1, 4.
 - 2) The real meaning of humility is to be broken; no one can be truly humble if he is not broken—1 Pet. 5:6; cf. Matt. 26:33-35, 69-75; John 21:15-17.
 - c. If the sisters quarrel among themselves, this is proof that they are not willing to be broken—Phil. 2:2-3.
 - d. Even if we have been treated wrongly, if we are willing to be wronged, this shows that we are broken; this means that we are under the working of the cross—Matt. 5:38-39; Luke 6:27-29; Rom. 12:19-21; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; Luke 9:23.
 - e. If the sisters are willing to be broken, this will be the greatest help to the birth of things in the church—cf. John 12:24.
 3. Third, the sisters need to pray for the church:
 - a. The sisters must be praying persons—Luke 2:36-37; Acts 12:12.
 - b. In order to give birth to the things in the church, the sisters need to pray for the whole church in a detailed way.
 4. Fourth, the sisters need to “season” the church life by adding “salt”:
 - a. The function of the sisters in the church can be compared to adding salt to food to season it and improve the flavor—cf. Col. 4:6:
 - 1) In the church life the brothers are sometimes rough and not careful in making decisions.
 - 2) Many times the sisters need to add something to make up the brothers’ lack; what the sisters add can be compared to salt added to improve the flavor of food.
 - 3) The sisters are needed to add salt to all that the brothers say and do in the church; if the sisters add the proper amount of salt, whatever the brothers say and do will be wonderful in the church.
 - b. In the church, people of many different dispositions are brought together by the Lord; with such a mixture of people coming together to practice the church life, a great deal of salt is needed—Mark 9:50.
 - c. The brothers do not have the position to provide the necessary salt; this portion belongs to the sisters.
 - d. Whether the church will be corrupted or purified, purged, and cleansed depends on the sisters—cf. Gen. 19:26; Matt. 5:13.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SISTERS' FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH LIFE

In the Bible the church is likened to a home. The church is the household, the family, of God, and this household is the house of God. The two terms household and house are both used in the New Testament in reference to the church. Ephesians 2:19 tells us that the church is the household of God, whereas 1 Timothy 3:15 says that the church is the house of the living God.

Many times God uses physical things as shadows of spiritual things. A human family is a shadow, a picture of the church life. The situation in a family is a shadow of the situation in God's household. In the church the brothers can be compared to the husband and father in a family, and the sisters can be compared to the wife and mother.

In a family the responsibility is mainly on the side of the wife. In order to have a proper family life with a proper home life, the wife must bear the majority of the responsibility. If parents want their children to behave properly and only the father takes the responsibility to instruct the children, the result will not be satisfactory. But if the mother bears the responsibility to instruct the children in how they should behave, even if the father is not adequate in doing his part, the result may still be good.

Based on my experience I have learned that in order to have a proper church life, the sisters must bear a particular responsibility and carry out a particular function. The brothers cannot replace the sisters' function. In a family the husband cannot conceive and give birth to anything. Only the wife can bear a child. This is an illustration of the situation in the church life. In order to have a proper family life, the mother is more important than the father. The principle is the same regarding the church life. In this sense, we may say that the sisters are more important than the brothers in the church life.

No matter what the church endeavors to work out, if the sisters do not bear the responsibility, it is very difficult to bring forth anything. The brothers may initiate something and may make many decisions, but whether or not anything can be "conceived" and worked out depends more on the sisters. If the sisters are silent and dormant in relation to anything in the church life, that thing will not have a good outcome. In the matter of gospel outreach, it seems that the responsibility should be mainly on the brothers' side, but if the sisters do not pick up this responsibility, it is difficult for the church to bring forth, or give birth to, the outreach of the gospel. In order to give birth to the outreach of the gospel, the sisters must bear the responsibility. Even with the ministry of the word, although it is the brothers who minister, if the sisters do not pick up the burden and bear the responsibility to pray for the ministry, it is very difficult to give a proper birth to the ministry. However, if the sisters bear the responsibility in the spirit to stand with the ministering one and pray against any kind of attack from the enemy, this will give a rich birth to the ministry. Therefore, all the things of life related to the local church must be "conceived" and brought forth by the sisters.

In the Gospels the gathering in a home in Bethany was a miniature of the church life (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). While the Lord Jesus was on earth, Bethany was His resting place (Matt. 21:17). In the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, one of the homes in Bethany, the responsibility was borne mainly by the sisters. In that home there were two sisters and one brother. This illustrates the principle that in order to have a strong church life, there should be more sisters than brothers.

Let me give a testimony based on our past history. In the beginning of the church life in China, the raising up of the local churches was very much helped by the sisters. In the churches there were always more sisters than brothers. Furthermore, in the early days the financial help to the churches came mainly from the sisters. In those days we were very poor because we took the narrow way. We gave up the denominational way related to finances, and we lived by faith, trusting in the Lord for everything. The churches had more sisters than brothers, and most of the brothers did not have high-paying jobs. Nevertheless, from 1926 through 1936, both in Shanghai and in northern China, the Lord supplied the church, the work, and the co-workers mainly through the sisters who were nurses. These sisters were excellent in their profession and most of them were single. They were very strong in life. This illustrates the important position that the sisters occupy in the church life.

The sisters need to continually receive a burden from the Lord, bear responsibility, and “give birth” to everything in the church life. No matter what the brothers decide regarding the church, if the sisters do not enter into and bear the responsibility for that thing, it will be impossible to give birth to it.

THE SISTERS NEEDING TO LOVE THE LORD WITH THE FIRST LOVE

How can the sisters conceive and give birth to something in the church life? First, the sisters need to love the Lord more than anything else. The Lord is more lovable than the world, our self, our family, our future, and anything that we possess ([Matt.]10:37). He is more lovable than all things. According to Revelation 2:4, the degradation of the church was due to its leaving of the first love toward the Lord. The word first in Greek can also be translated “best.” We need to have the first love, the best love, toward the Lord. The sisters need to pray, “Lord, grant me to love You with the first love, the best love.”

When the Lord Jesus met Peter after His resurrection, He did not rebuke him. However, the Lord asked Peter three times if he loved Him (John 21:15-17) because Peter had denied the Lord three times (13:38; 18:12-27). All the problems we have with the Lord are due to a lack of love toward Him. As long as we have the best love, the first love, toward the Lord, all the problems are gone. The sisters especially need to have the best love toward the Lord.

THE SISTERS NEEDING TO BE BROKEN

Second, based on the pattern in the family life, in order for the sisters to give birth to anything in the church life, the sisters need to sacrifice. This means that they need to be broken. The matter of being broken includes being submissive, suffering, and giving up many things. In the church life, first the sisters need the best love toward the Lord. Then they need brokenness, which includes submission, sacrifice, suffering, giving up many things, never craving something for themselves, never vindicating themselves, and never saying anything for themselves. The sisters need to be willing to lose themselves for the church. If the sisters are not ready to sacrifice, to suffer loss, to submit, and to be broken, they can never conceive anything in the church.

The Bible tells us that the sisters are put in a position of submission, a position of sacrifice, and a position of humility (1 Cor. 11:3-16; Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1, 4). The real meaning of humility is to be broken. No one can be truly humble if he is not broken. In order for the sisters to conceive and give birth to something in the church, they must be willing by the Lord’s love to be broken. In their home with their husband and even with their children, the sisters need to be broken. Our spouse and our children are a test to our brokenness.

If the sisters quarrel among themselves, this is proof that they are not willing to be broken. Even if we have been treated wrongly, if we are willing to be wronged, this shows that we are broken. This means that we are under the working of the cross. If a sister is wronged by another sister and does not murmur or complain, this is a sign that she is willing to be broken. The brothers and the sisters all need to be willing to be broken. If we are such persons, it will be impossible for us to be offended. If the sisters become offended in anything, that will damage their function to conceive and give birth to something in the church life. The sisters should never excuse themselves. They should not blame or criticize the responsible brothers for their decisions. It may be true that the responsible brothers made a wrong decision, but if the sisters are willing to be broken, they will not say a word. Instead, they will bear the burden, go to the Lord, and pray, calling on the highest authority. They should let the Lord hear their voice concerning the situation, but no one else should hear anything from the sisters' mouth. If the sisters are willing to be broken, this will be the greatest help to the birth of things in the church. If the sisters are unwilling to be broken, nothing will be conceived and brought forth in the church. We have spoken much about life in the spirit, but the matter of brokenness is life in practicality, life in reality. If the sisters are willing to be broken, their spirit will be very strong, living, and rich.

THE SISTERS NEEDING TO PRAY FOR THE CHURCH

Third, the sisters must be praying persons (Luke 2:36-37; Acts 12:12). They need to pray for all the matters related to the church. Sister Ruth Lee was the oldest among the co-workers in mainland China. In the early days she prayed in all the church meetings. Apparently, the meetings were under the direction of the brothers, but actually the meetings were carried on through her prayers. She told us that several times while the ministering brothers were speaking, at a certain point she realized that there was a crisis in the message. She realized that it was difficult for the speaking brothers to get through. Right away she prayed, "Lord, help the brothers to pass through this crisis." She testified that many times after only a minute the Lord answered her prayer. She told us that sometimes in the meetings, the brothers who did not live in the spirit had the desire to speak something. Immediately, she prayed, asking the Lord to exercise His authority over the meeting and especially over the troubling brothers. She testified that many times the Lord quickly answered her prayer. Many of the sisters in Shanghai learned from her. She helped many sisters to practice the same kind of prayer.

After I arrived in Shanghai in 1933, I was very impressed with the fact that in the meetings I rarely heard the sisters say anything. They did not speak, but they prayed very much. When the opportunity came for the saints to pray in the meetings, the sisters' prayers were weighty and living. In order to give birth to the things in the church, the sisters need to pray for the whole church in a detailed way. The church carries out a work among the children, the junior high and high school students, and the college students. It also conducts a new believers' meeting. In addition, there is a general church meeting on the Lord's Day morning, and there are also meetings in the evening during the week. The sisters need to bear the burden and pray much for all these matters. The brothers have their responsibility and their portion. The sisters' portion is to pray.

THE SISTERS NEEDING TO "SEASON" THE CHURCH LIFE BY ADDING "SALT"

Fourth, the function of the sisters in the church can be compared to adding salt to food to season it and improve the flavor (cf. Col. 4:6). Let us illustrate this function in the following way. In a family the father may instruct the children concerning their behavior. However, the father maybe rough and not careful in giving the children instruction. Thus, after the father's instruction, the mother may need to come in to make up the lack. She may realize that her husband was not

careful, but she should not speak to the children about their father's shortage. If she does, she will damage the situation. If she is wise, she will confirm what the father said, but she will add something to make up the father's lack. This kind of instruction will be effective. If only the mother instructs the children in their behavior, her instruction will not work out as well as when the father and she both give the instruction.

In- the church life the brothers are sometimes rough and not careful in making decisions. Many times the sisters need to add something to make up the brothers' lack. What the sisters add can be compared to salt added to improve the flavor of food. After the salt has been added, the flavor is right. The sisters are needed to add salt to all that the brothers say and do in the church. If the sisters add the proper amount of salt, whatever the brothers say and do will be wonderful in the church; otherwise, it will be poor, without the proper flavor.

If the sisters learn the lesson of adding salt to everything in the church life, even if something negative happens to one of the brothers, that thing will turn out to be a great blessing not only to him but also to the whole church. Whether it becomes a blessing or not depends on what kind of salt and how much salt the sisters add. If there is a problem between two brothers in the church, and one of the brothers comes to an older sister to tell her how poor the other brother is, that is the time for the sister to add some salt to the situation. If the sister has learned the spiritual lessons, she will help the brother to know the flesh and the self and to apply the cross. This does not mean that the sister will teach the brother or give him a message. It means that the sister knows how to add salt to the situation in order to help the two brothers be one. This will give birth to some edifying factors in the church and cause the church to be built up.

In the church, people of many different dispositions are brought together by the Lord. With such a mixture of people coming together to practice the church life, a great deal of salt is needed. The brothers do not have the position to provide the necessary salt. This portion belongs to the sisters. Whether the church will be corrupted or purified, purged, and cleansed depends on the sisters.

The above four things—loving the Lord with the first love, being broken, bearing the burden to pray, and learning how to add salt—are the main factors that help the sisters to give birth to many things in the church life. I hope that the Holy Spirit will speak to the sisters concerning these matters. (*CWWL*, 1968, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles," ch. 15, pp. 89-95)

Study Questions:

1. What is the main function of the sisters both in the family and in the church life?
2. What does it mean for the sisters to "conceive" and "give birth" to everything in the church life?
3. What are the four means for the sisters to give birth to things in the church life?

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1968, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles," ch. 15.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1975-1976, vol. 3, "Practical Points for the Sisters concerning the Building Up of the Church."

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 18

The Function of the Sisters in the Church Life (2) Being Submissive, Praying, and Caring for the Affairs of the Church

Scripture Reading: Eph. 5:21-22; 1 Cor. 11:3; Acts 12:12; Rom. 16:1-2; John 12:2a

I. The function of being submissive—Eph. 5:21-22; 1 Cor. 11:3:

- A. The first function of the sisters is to be submissive; this does not involve the doing of any kind of work, but it is a real function; being submissive is much greater than any kind of doing:
 1. If the sisters are submissive, they are doing the greatest thing in the world; this is the greatest function on the side of the sisters—1 Cor. 11:3; cf. Gen. 3:15.
 2. In the entire world today, in every country, in all the schools, and in all the homes, what we see is not order and submission but rebellion upon rebellion; the entire world is rebellious toward God; the world is like a stormy ocean full of the winds of rebellion—Psa. 2:1-3.
 3. In the church the situation should not be like this; the church is God's chosen vessel to bear a testimony to the universe that is absolutely different from the world; in the local churches as the local expressions of the Body of Christ, there should be genuine submission—Eph. 5:21-22; 1 Pet. 5:5:
 - a. In Christ the brothers and sisters are the same; in Christ there is no difference between males and females—Gal. 3:28.
 - b. However, in the church life there is a difference between the brothers and sisters because the church life is a spectacle to be seen by men—1 Cor. 4:9.
 - c. In the eyes of the Lord, the universe today is like a theater, and the church is a spectacle in this universal theater to exhibit something, to show something, to the whole creation.
 - d. In this spectacle the sisters have been put in the position of being submissive, and the brothers have been put in the position of being the head.
 - e. The function of the church is to exhibit, to display, the matter of submission to the universe—1 Cor. 11:10; cf. Eph. 3:9-10.
- B. To be submissive requires the supply of life, the enjoyment of grace, the working of the cross, and the denial of the self—Eph. 5:18-21; Col. 3:16-18; Matt. 16:24.
- C. We should consecrate ourselves to the Lord not to do a work for the Lord but simply to be submissive.
- D. If the sisters in a local church are submissive, the church will be strong, living, rich, and prevailing; it is much more prevailing for the sisters to be submissive than for them to do any kind of work; this is the first lesson the sisters need to learn.

II. The function of prayer—Acts 12:12:

- A. The local church very much needs the functioning of the sisters in prayer:
 1. History and our experience tell us clearly that the praying function is not mainly on the brothers' side but on the sisters' side—Acts 12:12.

2. The brothers should be on the front lines battling the enemy, and the sisters need to be behind the scenes to control the situation by praying, by calling on the Lord as the highest authority to come into the situation—cf. 4:23-31.
 3. Some of the members of the church need to constantly bear the responsibility of praying for the church, which includes praying for the elders and the responsible brothers—Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:15-18; 3:14-21; Col. 1:3; 4:2-4, 12; 1 Thes. 1:2; Isa. 62:1-7.
- B. When the sisters learn the lesson of being submissive, it will be easy for them to take care of their second function—the function of prayer:
1. The praying function of the sisters is based on and comes out of the real submission; the praying life comes from the submissive life—1 Cor. 11:5a.
 2. If the sisters are submissive, the Holy Spirit will burden them to pray for everything related to the church; whatever they realize, know, and understand related to the brothers and sisters, to the families, and to the spiritual situation of the church, they will turn into prayer:
 - a. If the sisters criticize only a little, this criticizing spirit will kill their prayer life.
 - b. The sisters must realize that the position the Lord has given them is to be submissive; if the sisters will fulfill this responsibility, they will have the life to continually pray for the church; the spiritual eyes in their spirit will be very keen to enter into the hearts of the saints and know their situation—cf. S.S. 7:4, note 1.
 - c. Although the sisters will know the situation of the saints, including the elders, they should never say a word; rather, they should bring all the matters to the Lord and call on the Head as the highest authority.

III. The function of caring for the affairs of the church—Rom. 16:1-2; cf. John 12:2a:

- A. If the sisters are submissive and carry out their function of prayer, it will be easy for them to realize what affairs of the church they need to take care of.
- B. Nearly everything related to the church needs to be taken care of by the sisters—cf. John 12:2a:
 1. In a family the wife and mother takes care of nearly everything; it is the same with the church.
 2. All the affairs of the church need to be taken care of by the sisters; the brothers are only the head, whereas the sisters can be likened to the body, which has many members and many functions.
 3. The sisters need to take care of the brothers, the sisters, the children, the elderly saints, and the young people—Rom. 16:1-2, 13:
 - a. If the elders are inadequate in fulfilling their function, the reason is not that something is wrong with them; rather, something is wrong with the sisters, because they did not take care of the elders well.
 - b. If the sisters care for the elders properly, the elders will fulfill their function.
 4. The sisters' care will issue in the genuine building up of the church.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE FUNCTION OF THE SISTERS IN THE CHURCH

The Function of Being Submissive

In considering how the sisters should function in the church, the first lesson the sisters need to learn is to be submissive. In fact, the greatest lesson for Christians to learn is to be submissive (Eph. 5:21-22). Being submissive requires the abundance of life, for submission is the expression of life. There is a difference between submitting and being submissive. The sisters need to learn the lesson not only of submitting but also of being submissive. If the sisters can learn this lesson, the church will be strong and will be enriched. To be submissive, the sisters need to realize what their position and standing are.

The first function of the sisters is to be submissive. This does not involve the doing of any kind of work, but it is a real function. Being submissive is much greater than any kind of doing. If the sisters are submissive, they are doing the greatest thing in the world. This is the greatest function on the side of the sisters.

First Corinthians 11:3 says, "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ." In this verse we can see the divine order. However, in the entire world today, in every country, in all the schools, and in all the homes, what we see is not order and submission but rebellion upon rebellion. The entire world is rebellious toward God. The world is like a stormy ocean full of the winds of rebellion. In the church the situation should not be like this. The church is God's chosen vessel to bear a testimony to the universe that is absolutely different from the world. The church is sanctified, separated from the course of the world and from the current of the age. As the church we are not in the flow of the world but in the flow of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1). In the local churches as the local expressions of the Body of Christ, there should be genuine submission.

As I pointed out earlier, in Christ the brothers and the sisters are the same. In Christ there is no difference between males and females. However in the church life there is a difference between the brothers and the sisters because the church life is a spectacle to be seen by men. The Greek word for *spectacle* is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:9, which says, "God has set forth us the apostles last of all as doomed to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." Here Paul used a metaphor, referring to the fights between criminals and wild beasts in the Roman amphitheater. In the eyes of the Lord, the universe today is like a theater, and the church is a spectacle in this universal theater to exhibit something, to show something, to the whole creation. In this spectacle the sisters have been put in the position of being submissive, and the brothers have been put in the position of being the head. The function of the church is to exhibit, to display, the matter of submission to the universe.

To be the head in a proper way and to be submissive to the head both require the riches of life. It is not easy for the brothers to function as the head, and it is also difficult for the sisters to be submissive to the brothers. The sisters need to be submissive not only outwardly but also from within their spirit, without any complaining or murmuring. If the church is to have a proper testimony in the universe, there should be no murmuring or complaining from the sisters. The sisters need to learn the lesson of being submissive. They need to have the attitude that, as sisters, they do not know what is wrong or what is right; they only know one thing—that their position in the church is to be submissive. To decide what is right and what is wrong is not their responsibility or their position. The sisters are only in the position of being submissive.

To be submissive requires the supply of life, the enjoyment of grace, the working of the cross, and the denial of the self. We should never try to be submissive by our self. We should consecrate ourselves to the Lord not to do a work for the Lord but simply to be submissive. If the sisters take care of this one matter of being submissive, the church will be strengthened, enriched, and renewed. If the sisters in a local church are submissive, the church will be strong, living, rich, and prevailing. It is much more prevailing for the sisters to be submissive than for them to do any kind of work. This is the first lesson the sisters need to learn. This does not mean that there is no need for the sisters to fellowship with the church, but the sisters must know that their position and standing are to be submissive.

The Function of Prayer

When the sisters learn the lesson of being submissive, it will be easy for them to take care of their second function—the function of prayer. The local church very much needs the functioning of the sisters in prayer. The function of prayer is not mainly on the side of the brothers but on the side of the sisters. Some of the members of the church need to constantly bear the responsibility of praying for the church, which includes praying for the elders and the responsible brothers.

If the sisters are not submissive, they can never pray for the elders. Instead of praying, the sisters will criticize the elders. If the sisters learn the lesson of being submissive, they will immediately have the life to pray for the elders. They will never say a word about whether the elders are right or wrong. The praying life comes from the submissive life. If we do not have the life of submission, it will be very difficult for us to have the life of prayer. There is a need for constant prayer not only for the elders but also for all the saints. If the sisters learn the lesson of being submissive, they will have the life to pray for the church. If they murmur and criticize only a little, their prayer life will be cut off.

If the sisters are submissive, the Holy Spirit will burden them to pray for everything related to the church. They will never criticize anyone in the church but will always pray for them. They will always be burdened to pray for all the matters and all the persons related to the church life. Whatever they realize, know, and understand related to the brothers and sisters, to the families, and to the spiritual situation of the church, they will turn into prayer. They will never complain, murmur, or criticize; rather, they will be submissive and always burdened to pray. The praying function of the sisters is based on and comes out of the real submission. This is what the church needs from the sisters.

History and our experience tell us clearly that the praying function is not mainly on the brothers' side but on the sisters' side. In the prayer meeting in the sister's home in Acts 12, I believe that most of those who were praying were sisters. The brothers should be on the front lines battling the enemy, and the sisters need to be behind the scenes to control the situation by praying, by calling on the Lord as the highest authority to come into the situation. In carrying out the function of prayer, the sisters should not say a word to human beings but should speak to the highest authority. If the sisters criticize only a little, this criticizing spirit will kill their prayer life.

In order to function in prayer, the sisters first need to be submissive. They need to take the position and standing of being submissive. This is absolutely different from the age of the world, from the course of the world, and from the flow, the tide, of the present century. The sisters must realize that the position the Lord has given them is to be submissive. I say again that if the sisters will fulfill this responsibility, they will have the life to continually pray for the church. The spiritual eyes in their spirit will be very keen to enter into the hearts of the saints and know their situation. Although the sisters will know the situation of the saints, including the elders, they should never say a word. Rather, they should bring all the matters to the Lord and call on the

Head as the highest authority. The church will receive the greatest benefit from the sisters' function.

The Function of Caring for the Affairs of the Church

If the sisters are submissive and carry out their function of prayer, it will be easy for them to realize what affairs of the church they need to take care of. Nearly everything related to the church needs to be taken care of by the sisters. The sisters need to take care of the brothers, the sisters, the children, the elderly saints, and the young people. In a family the wife and mother takes care of nearly everything. It is the same with the church. All the affairs of the church need to be taken care of by the sisters. The brothers are only the head, whereas the sisters can be likened to the body, which has many members and many functions. If the elders are inadequate in fulfilling their function, the reason is not that something is wrong with them; rather, something is wrong with the sisters, because they did not take care of the elders well. If the sisters care for the elders properly, the elders will fulfill their function. The sisters should not complain that the work among the young people is poor. The sisters need to realize that it is poor because they did not take care of the young people well. If the sisters exercise the proper care, the work among the young people will be uplifted.

In the church there may be a number of brothers and sisters who are students. In general, students are unmarried. Some of the young married sisters who are older than the students should take care of these unmarried ones. Some of the students may be spiritually weak. The young married sisters need to bring these weaker students to their home to care for them. Some of the older sisters who are mothers need to care for the single ones who are far away from their own families. They need to do something to meet their practical need. This will be a real exhibition of love and a real ministry of life to these students.

Some of the sisters also need to look after the teenagers. As a rule, teenagers like to listen to other saints but not to their parents. The sisters should take advantage of this to care for the teenagers. The teenage boys, for the most part, will not listen to their parents, but if the sisters take care of them, they will listen to whatever the sisters say to them. The teenagers in the church are the young members of the Body. Since the sisters are so much for the Body, praying constantly for the Body, they need to care for these young members. This will be a great help to the whole church, including the families.

First, the sisters need to be submissive; second, they need to fulfill their praying function. If the sisters have such a life with such a spirit, they will be able to help the teenagers. In contrast, if the sisters are constantly criticizing the elders yet still try to care for the young people, they will damage and poison the young saints. They will never minister life to them. If the church as a whole is weak and the elders are inadequate, the sisters must still keep their position of submission and fulfill their praying function. Then when the sisters take care of the teenagers, the sisters will not need to say anything. The sisters' conduct in the presence of the teenagers will minister life to them. They will be helped by the sisters' life and spiritual behavior. This will help the church very much.

The sisters also need to care for the children, and not only on the Lord's Day in the children's meeting. Some of the sisters need to be burdened to care for the children by realizing that the parents and the children in some of the families need the sisters' help. If the sisters receive this as a burden, they will know what they should do and render the proper help.

If the sisters take care of the elders, the young people, and the children, what a help they will render to the church! The sisters' care will issue in the genuine building up of the church. Moreover, the sisters will be strong in spirit, rich in life, and bold in what the Lord has done

through them. Then it will be easy for the sisters to function in the general meetings of the church, even though many brothers may be present. The sisters need to increase their functioning in the church meetings, but this depends on their being submissive, fulfilling their praying function, and taking care of the things that they need to take care of in the church. (*CWWL*, 1968, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles," ch. 14, "The Standing, Position, and Function of the Sisters in the Church," pp. 83-88)

Study Questions:

1. Why is being submissive the greatest function on the side of the sisters and greater than any kind of doing?
2. What is the relationship between the function of being submissive and the function of praying for the church?
3. What does it mean to say that the brothers are like the head but the sisters are like the body with many members and many functions?

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee*, 1968, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles," ch. 14.