

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 1

The Importance of the Sisters in the Church Life

Scripture Reading: Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13; 11:2-16; Matt. 1:16, 18; John 12:3; 20:1, 11-18;
Luke 8:2-3; Acts 12:12

I. In Christ, who is the Head of the Body, there is no difference between male and female, but in the Body there is a difference between male and female, that is, between the brothers and the sisters—Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13; 11:2-16:

- A. First Corinthians 11 speaks definitely concerning the difference between man and woman, especially in the matter of headship—11:2-16.
- B. This indicates that in the church the difference between the brothers and the sisters still exists; in Christ this difference does not exist, but in the church, in the Body, the difference between male and female remains.
- C. We should not think that because the difference between male and female still exists in the Body, the standing of the sisters is not important; if this is our thought we are wrong.

II. If we read the entire New Testament, we will realize that in the church life, from a certain perspective, the standing and function of the sisters are more important than those of the brothers:

- A. The three main steps taken by the Lord Jesus were His incarnation, His crucifixion, and His resurrection; related to each of these three steps, a sister was involved:
 - 1. The Lord was incarnated through Mary His mother—Matt. 1:16, 18.
 - 2. Just before His crucifixion Mary, the sister of Martha, anointed the Lord's feet for His burial—John 12:3.
 - 3. After His resurrection the first one who saw the Lord Jesus was Mary the Magdalene—20:1, 11-18.
 - 4. The sisters need to realize that they are the ones to bring the Lord's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection to people.
- B. According to Luke 8:2-3, while the Lord Jesus was on earth, it was not a group of brothers who ministered material things to the Lord and His disciples, but a group of sisters.
- C. In Acts 12:12, after Peter was released from prison, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, where a number of saints were praying; the prayer meeting held in the sister's home ministered much life to the church in that kind of situation.
- D. In Romans 16 Paul mentions the names of a number of sisters in his greetings to the saints—Rom. 16:1-3, 6, 12-13.
- E. If we read all the New Testament Epistles until the end of the book of Revelation, we will realize that the standing and function of the sisters can be more important than those of the brothers:
 - 1. We can liken the brothers to the bones of the physical body, and the sisters, to the blood.

2. To have a strong physical body, we need the bones as a frame, and we need the blood to support the life of the body; to our body the blood is more important than the bones.
- F. If the Body is to be strong, healthy, and sound, the sisters must be right:
1. Just as it is serious when there is a problem with our blood, whenever there is something wrong among the sisters, there is a serious disease in the Body.
 2. Thus, whether a local church is strong or weak, healthy or sick, depends mainly on the sisters:
 - a. Regardless of how fine the brothers are, if the sisters are a problem, the church will be troubled; on the other hand, if there are no problems among the sisters, there will be no problems in the church; the sisters are the factors of calm and peace, and they can also be factors of trouble and turmoil—Rom. 16:1-2; Phil. 4:2-3.
 - b. Whether or not the church goes on depends more on the sisters than on the brothers; as long as the sisters are in a healthy spiritual condition, the church will go on very well.
 3. This is why we have the burden to point out that the sisters' standing and function in the church are of tremendous importance.
- G. The Lord is the source of all things, including us human beings, but in a practical, human way mothers are the source of mankind; without mothers, mankind would not be able to continue (1 Cor. 11:12); in the same way, the sisters are the root, the source, of the church:
1. Just as without mothers, mankind would be terminated, the continuation of the church, the corporate new man in God's eternal purpose (Eph. 2:15-16), depends very much on the sisters:
 - a. Human society and families depend more on the mother than on the father; in one sense, we need a good mother more than we need a good father.
 - b. A good father can do much good for his children, but what he does is not so practical and subjective.
 - c. The real, secret, practical, and subjective help comes not from the father's side but from the mother's; if some children lose their father yet still have a good mother, they will still be able to be good children, but if they lose their mother, they lose their source of proper help.
 2. Although the man occupies the higher position, in a secret, actual, practical, and subjective way the real situation of the family depends more on the female side; in the church it is the same.
 3. The sisters are a crucial factor in the church life—Rom. 16:1-4, 6, 12-13.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE STANDING, POSITION, AND FUNCTION OF THE SISTERS IN THE CHURCH

Galatians 3:28 says, "There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there cannot be slave nor free man, there cannot be male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In this verse we can identify three contrasting pairs: Jew and Greek, slave and free man, and male and female. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 there are two contrasting pairs: Jews and Greeks and slaves and free. Galatians 3:28 says that in Christ there cannot be Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male and female, whereas 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that in the church, in the Body, there is no distinction between Jews and Greeks and between slaves and free. This verse does not mention males and females. Based on these two verses we can see that in Christ, who is the Head of the Body, there is no difference between male and female, but in the Body there is a difference between male and female, that is, between the brothers and the sisters. First Corinthians 11 speaks definitely concerning the difference between man and woman, especially in the matter of headship (vv. 2-16). This indicates that in the church the difference between the brothers and the sisters still exists. In Christ this difference does not exist, but in the church, in the Body, the difference between male and female remains.

THE STANDING OF THE SISTERS IN THE CHURCH

My reason for pointing this out is to say that the sisters have an important standing in the church. We should not think that because the difference between male and female still exists in the Body, the standing of the sisters is not important. If this is our thought we are wrong. If we read the entire New Testament, we will realize that in the church life, from a certain perspective the standing and function of the sisters are more important than those of the brothers.

The three main steps taken by the Lord Jesus were His incarnation, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. Related to each of these three steps, a sister was involved, and all three sisters were named Mary. The Lord was incarnated through Mary His mother (Matt. 1:16, 18). Just before His crucifixion Mary, the sister of Martha, anointed the Lord's feet for His burial (John 12:3). After His resurrection the first one who saw the Lord Jesus was Mary the Magdalene (20:1, 11-18). Therefore, three sisters were very involved with the three major steps of the Lord.

It is clear that for the Lord's incarnation, a sister needed to be involved, but before His death, why was it not a brother who poured the ointment upon the Lord's body? And at His resurrection, why was it not Peter or John or some other brother who was the first to see the Lord? This is very meaningful. The sisters need to realize that they are the ones to bring the Lord's incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection to people.

Furthermore, according to Luke 8:2-3, while the Lord Jesus was on earth, it was not a group of brothers who ministered material things to the Lord and His disciples, but a group of sisters. In Acts 12:12, after Peter was released from prison, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, where a number of saints were praying. The prayer meeting held in the sister's home ministered much life to the church in that kind of situation.

In Romans 16 Paul mentions the names of a number of sisters in his greetings to the saints. If we read all the New Testament Epistles until the end of the book of Revelation, we will realize that the standing and function of the sisters can be more important than those of the brothers. Of course, this does not mean that the brothers are useless. We can liken the brothers

to the bones of the physical body, and the sisters, to the blood. To have a strong physical body, we need the bones as a frame, and we need the blood to support the life of the body. To our body the blood is more important than the bones.

Based on my experience in the church life, I have learned that problems among the sisters are more serious than problems among the brothers. If there are some problems among the brothers but no problems among the sisters, that situation is not so serious. In a local church I am most afraid of problems among the sisters. Just as it is serious when there is a problem with our blood, whenever there is something wrong among the sisters, there is a serious disease in the Body. If the Body is to be strong, healthy, and sound, the sisters must be right. Thus, whether a local church is strong or weak, healthy or sick, depends mainly on the sisters. This is why I have the burden to point out that the sisters' standing and function in the church are of tremendous importance. (*CWWL, 1968*, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles," msg. 14, pp. 81-83)

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SISTERS IN THE CHURCH LIFE

It is very clear that the brothers and the sisters are of two categories. The Lord is the source of all things, including us human beings, but in a practical, human way mothers are the source of mankind (1 Cor. 11:12). Without mothers, mankind would not be able to continue. In the same way, the sisters are the root, the source, of the church. Just as without mothers, mankind would be terminated, the continuation of the church, the corporate new man in God's eternal purpose (Eph. 2:15-16), depends very much on the sisters. Human society and families depend more on the mother than on the father. In one sense we need a good mother more than we need a good father. A good father can do much good for his children, but what he does is not so practical and subjective. The real, secret, practical, and subjective help comes not from the father's side but from the mother's. If some children lose their father yet still have a good mother, they will still be able to be good children, but if they lose their mother, they lose their source of proper help.

Although man occupies the higher position, in a secret, actual, practical, and subjective way the real situation of the family depends more on the female side. In the church it is the same. Regardless of how fine the brothers are, if the sisters are a problem, the church will be troubled. On the other hand, if there are no problems among the sisters, there will be no problems in the church. The sisters are the factors of calm and peace, and they can also be factors of trouble and turmoil.

The younger sisters do not trouble the church as much as the older sisters do. A teenage sister may be a little naughty, but this kind of naughtiness will not cause much trouble to the church. However, the older a sister becomes, the more she may be a problem to the church. The troubles in the church often come from the older, more experienced ones. This is a practical fact.

I say this not to belittle anyone. We respect all the mothers. Humanly, they are the source of mankind, and in the Bible they are admired and uplifted as the mothers of the children of God, the Lord's people, the saints (Rom. 16:13). Whether or not the church goes on depends more on the sisters than on the brothers. As long as the sisters are in a healthy spiritual condition, the church will go on very well. However, if the sisters are not healthy, there will be problems in the church no matter how strong the brothers are. The sisters are a crucial factor in the church life. (*CWWL, 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "The Crucial Function of the Sisters in the Church Life," pp. 129-130)

Study Questions:

1. Explain the difference between the consideration of male and female in Christ in contrast to in the Body, the church?
2. From what perspective is the standing and function of the sisters in the church life more important than that of the brothers?
3. Using the illustration of blood in the body and motherhood in the family, explain how the function of the sisters is a crucial factor in the church life.

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1968*, vol. 1, "Various Messages in Los Angeles," msg. 14.
2. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976*, vol. 1, "The Crucial Function of the Sisters in the Church Life."