

LESSONS FOR THE SISTERS

Lesson 13

The Human Life and Family Life of the Sisters (1) Expressing Christ through Human Life and Building Up a Proper Family Life for the Church Life

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:18-4:1; Prov. 14:1; 31:10-31

- I. God desires that Christ be expressed through human life—Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:22-6:9; cf. *Hymns* #403:**
- A. “I have seen some seeking ones, particularly sisters, who do not seem to be human beings. They are so ‘spiritual’ that it seems they are strange creatures—half human and half angel...We all prefer to be something else. The sisters especially like to be something else, but we all need simply to be human” (*The Visions of Ezekiel*, p. 33)—cf. Ezek. 1:5, 10:
1. We should never think that if we reach God’s standard, we no longer need to be human; the more spiritual we are, the more human we shall be—cf. Acts 16:7.
 2. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was very human; if we would live Christ, we must learn to be human in a genuine way—Matt. 15:32; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 7:11-15; John 19:25-27; Phil. 1:21a:
 - a. We are to live a genuinely human life by the divine life and nature—Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; 1:19-21a.
 - b. In this way we shall be able to live the highest human life, a life like that of the Lord Jesus.
- B. Many of those in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Catholicism have a low estimate of human life; they do not care for marriage or for the proper family life; they prefer to remain unmarried, and they aspire to live a type of angelic life; but the angelic life cannot express Christ:
1. Many monks and priests in Catholicism have a living that is abnormal.
 2. The requirement that priests and nuns not be married not only is contrary to humanity, but has its source in demons—1 Tim. 4:1-3.
- C. Christ needs to be expressed in those who are husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, and slaves; in order to express Christ, we need to have a proper and normal human life—Col. 3:18-4:1:
1. If we live in union with Christ, Christ will be expressed through our humanity; Christ is to be expressed in the human life, not in the angelic life; angels cannot express Christ.
 2. Through our family life we learn many valuable lessons from the Lord; it is not as difficult to live out Christ in the church life as it is to live Him out at home, but how wonderful it is for a brother or sister to express Christ in his or her married life!—cf. Gen. 29:16-30:24; 34:1-31; 35:16-22; 37:3-35; 42:29-38; 43:6-14; 45:26-27; 49:1-33:
 - a. No brother or sister in the Lord’s recovery should aspire to live like a monk or nun.
 - b. At the right time, the brothers and sisters should marry and then learn through the experiences of married life to express Christ in their human living.
 3. The living of the saints in union with Christ should result in the expression of Christ in human life; if we see this, we shall praise the Lord for our human living; furthermore, we shall have a fresh appreciation for married life.

- D. For us to live Christ we must practice the one spirit with Him, and for us to practice the one spirit with Him, we must exercise our spirit to pray unceasingly—1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18:
1. If we try to live Christ beyond or apart from praying we cannot make it:
 - a. If we make up our minds to try to live Christ, that is actually the living of our self; if you try to live Christ without praying you will fail.
 - b. It is only by a continual living prayer, a breathing prayer, that we spontaneously live Christ.
 - c. This is why Paul charges us to pray unceasingly; to pray unceasingly simply means to stop our own effort; if you do not pray, yet you try to do something, that is your own effort.
 - d. This point is like a small screw in a large machine; when a large machine works, it depends upon some small screws; not to try to live Christ, but to pray is a small thing, yet it is very crucial.
 - e. Do not make up your mind to try to live Christ, but all the day long pray, “Lord, live through me”; pray every moment in anything, in everything, and everywhere.
 2. In the spiritual life to pray is to breathe, and to breathe is to live; to live Christ is to pray unceasingly, and to pray unceasingly is just to call on the Lord while you are doing anything—John 20:22; Lam. 3:55-56:
 - a. We have a lot of duties and responsibilities, but regardless of how busy we are, we still breathe; while you do things, you breathe; we must build up such a breathing habit.
 - b. All day long you should call on Him; you must do all things by talking to the Lord, by praying to Him, by calling on Him—Psa. 116:1-2; Job 27:10; 1 Cor. 1:2.
 - c. By this you are breathing; this is to live spiritually, and to live spiritually is just to live Christ.

II. A good church life is maintained through good families—cf. Prov. 14:1; 31:10-31:

- A. The family life of our next generation has much to do with the church life of our next generation; the church life of the next generation will be strong only if you take care of this matter well.
- B. First we need to build up the proper married life and family life, and then we shall be able to build up the church life.
- C. In order to have a proper family life, the mother is more important than the father:
 1. In a family the responsibility is mainly on the side of the wife.
 2. In order to have a proper family life with a proper home life, the wife must bear the majority of the responsibility.
- D. Although the man occupies the higher position, in a secret, actual, practical, and subjective way the real situation of the family depends on the female side:
 1. On the surface a woman’s position may not be as manifest as that of a man, because the man is the head according to God’s ordination—1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23.
 2. Nevertheless, the woman in a family bears a large and important responsibility, and her influence is profound.
 3. As a good wife and mother, a woman needs to bear everything in a family; nevertheless, she should not make decisions and act on her own; a wife should do things with her husband’s consent and under her husband’s leading, even though ninety percent of the household matters are in her hands—Prov. 31:10-31.
- E. “A wise woman builds her house”—Prov. 14:1a.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

THE FACE OF A MAN

The first face [of the four living creatures in Ezekiel one] is the face of a man. We are men, and because we are men, we should look like men. We were created as men, but we were corrupted, poisoned, and damaged by the fall. Therefore, we need the Lord's redemption. Through the Lord's redemption we are brought back to the proper humanity. Actually, the humanity we have now is not ours but His, for we have the humanity of Jesus.

Some say that it is difficult to be a man and claim that they are disgusted with being a man. Those who have this attitude toward their humanity need to see that their concept is absolutely different from the Lord's concept in His salvation. The Lord's salvation is to make us proper men. If you are a husband, the Lord's salvation is to make you a proper husband. If you are a wife, the Lord's salvation is to make you a proper wife. If you are a parent, the Lord's salvation is to make you a proper parent. If you are a child, the Lord's salvation is to make you a proper child. The Lord's salvation is to make us proper human beings. Thus, we all should bear the face of a man. However, some Christians, especially certain sisters, do not seem to be human beings. Rather, they are so "spiritual" that it seems that they have become strange creatures—half human, half angel. We need the face of a man. We should not prefer to be something else, and we should not pretend to be something else. We should just be what we are—a man. Instead of trying to be something other than a human being, we should simply be human. However, we should be human not by our natural humanity but by the humanity of the Lord Jesus.

If we read the four Gospels again, we will see that Jesus was a person with a proper humanity. Many who read the Gospels only pay attention to the miracles worked out by the Lord in His divinity; they do not pay adequate attention to the things worked out by the Lord's humanity. For example, John 4 relates how the Lord Jesus was traveling with His disciples to a city in Samaria. He was tired and thirsty, and He asked His disciples to go into the city to buy something to eat. After they went away to buy food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well near which the Lord Jesus was sitting. Although He was the Almighty God, in this situation He conducted Himself just like an ordinary man, without any indication or hint that He was God. When He asked the woman for water, He gave no indication that He was anything more than a man. The woman questioned Him, saying, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask for a drink from me, who am a Samaritan woman?" (v. 9). He responded to her question in a very human way. The four Gospels record many similar stories which show us how the Lord Jesus behaved Himself like a normal man, bearing the face of a man. Unlike certain religious people today who dress in way that is very strange, the Lord Jesus did not dress in a peculiar manner. In His clothing He was not strange or different from others. On the contrary, His living was that of an ordinary human being. His living was ordinary to such an extent that some would say, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:55). In the eyes of the people, the Lord Jesus was the son of an ordinary carpenter. Far from being strange, He was an ordinary man and He bore the face of a man. Today, we too need to bear the face of man.

Some believers have the thought that once they begin to pursue the Lord, they should be special or different from others. We need to realize, therefore, that we should be ordinary, that is, we should be the same as common, ordinary human beings. Although we pray, read the Bible, attend the meetings, and serve God, our appearance is still the appearance of a man, and our face is the face of a man. In our dress we are proper, but we are ordinary, not peculiar or eccentric. Yes, we experience the Lord as the wind, the cloud, the fire, and the electrum, but the issue of this

experience is that we bear the face of a man. As living creatures, we are not angels but are very human. In fact, the more spiritual we become, the more normal and human we will be. The more we have of Christ as our life (Col. 3:4), the more we will bear the face of a man. In the Epistles we are taught by the apostles to be proper human beings, in particular how to be proper husbands, wives, and parents (Eph. 5:22—6:9; Col. 3:18—4:1). God's salvation causes us to be proper men for His manifestation, move, and administration. (*Life-study of Ezekiel*, msg. 5, pp. 51-53)

LIVING A NORMAL HUMAN LIFE

First, all the instructions given here [in 1 Timothy 5:1-16] are presented in a very human way. We should never think that if we reach God's standard, we no longer need to be human. Some believers have been influenced by the false teaching that Christians should be like angels, that it is no longer necessary for them to lead a normal human life. Many monks and priests in Catholicism have a living that is abnormal. Furthermore, the requirement that priests and nuns not be married not only is contrary to humanity, but has its source in demons. According to Paul's word in 4:1-3, forbidding others to marry is a demonic teaching.

We all need to learn to be human. In fact, the more spiritual we are, the more human we shall be. If we would live Christ, we must learn to be human in a genuine way. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was very human.

To damage humanity is to ruin both the means and the channel created by God for His economy. The reason demons and fallen angels forbid marriage and command people to abstain from foods is that their intention is to destroy mankind. Thus, we in the church must be human and follow the standards of normal human living. Some have falsely accused us of not being human. We utterly repudiate these allegations. In the church life we definitely emphasize the proper humanity. I can testify that I myself live in a normal human way. If you examine my living, you will find me to be very human. I am not a "saint" or an angel; I am simply a human being. Furthermore, I encourage all the elders to be human. The elders should not help the saints in their locality to be like angels. We appreciate the angels, but we do not want to imitate them. Instead, we prefer to be human.

We should be human Christians. On the one hand, we have the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4); on the other hand, we are normal human beings. The fact that we have the divine nature with the divine life does not mean that we shall ever be deified. Rather, we are to live a genuinely human life by the divine life and nature. In this way we shall be able to live the highest human life, a life like that of the Lord Jesus. When He was on earth, He lived a human life by means of the divine life and the divine nature. The Lord's human living was by the divine life. Our human living should be the same. Thus, we all must learn to be human.

In 5:1-16 we see that Paul instructed his young co-worker Timothy to contact the saints in a human way. Verse 1 says, "Do not upbraid an elderly man, but entreat him as a father." To entreat an elderly man as a father is surely to behave in a very human manner. In relation to brothers who are a generation older than they, the younger brothers should deal with them as fathers.

Paul also tells Timothy to entreat "younger men as brothers; elderly women as mothers; younger women as sisters." Timothy was not to assume an elevated position as a bishop, regarding himself as superior to others. On the contrary, he was to behave as a brother to younger brothers and sisters, as a son to a father, and as a son to a mother. In the church life there are many fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. To deal with the saints as such is to behave humanly.

Our contact with the saints must be in a proper atmosphere and with the right attitude and spirit. The atmosphere, attitude, and spirit in our contact with others mean a great deal. If a young brother assumes some kind of elevated position in relation to an elderly man, the relationship between them will be damaged. But if he would contact him as a son speaking to a father, their fellowship will be intimate, loving, touching, and even inspiring.

Suppose that in my relationship with the saints I conduct myself as a teacher and treat the saints as my pupils. If this is my attitude, my contact with the saints will be quite poor. But if I am very human in my relationships with the saints and regard myself as a brother among brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, the contact will be loving and intimate. What a difference it makes when we are truly human in our relationships to one another! I repeat, in the church life we all must be human. (*Life-study of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, msg. 9, pp. 78-79)

EXPRESSING CHRIST IN HUMAN LIFE

God desires that Christ be expressed through human life. We see this in 3:18—4:1, a sister passage to Ephesians 5:22—6:9, regarding the believers' ethical relationships. In Ephesians the emphasis is on the need of spirit-filled ethical relationships for the expression of the Body in the normal church life. In Colossians the emphasis is that we should hold Christ as our Head and take Him as our life by having His rich word dwelling in us, that the highest ethical relationships, issuing not from our natural life but from Christ as our life, may be realized for His expression.

If we live in union with Christ, Christ will be expressed through our humanity. Christ is to be expressed in the human life, not in the angelic life. Angels cannot express Christ. The Father has ordained that we, His chosen ones, be the expression of His Son. “Live Thyself, Lord Jesus, through me,” should be our prayer (see *Hymns #403*).

If we would be those through whom Christ can live, we need to pass through the first two and a half chapters of the book of Colossians. Then, coming to 3:15 and 16, we need to be those in whom the peace of Christ arbitrates and in whom the word of Christ dwells richly. Then Christ will be expressed in our human living.

Many of those in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Catholicism have a low estimate of human life. They do not care for marriage or for the proper family life. They prefer to remain unmarried, and they aspire to live a type of angelic life. But the angelic life cannot express Christ. On the contrary, Christ needs to be expressed in those who are husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, and slaves. In order to express Christ, we need to have a proper and normal human life.

As an elderly person with eight children and more than twenty grandchildren, I can testify that the Lord knows how to choose the best husband or wife for us and what kind of children we should have. He also knows how to break us and make us transparent so that we can express Christ. Through our family life we learn many valuable lessons from the Lord. I believe that the angels are observing to see whether or not we live out Christ in our family life. It is not as difficult to live out Christ in the church as it is to live Him out at home. But how wonderful it is for a brother or sister to express Christ in his or her married life! No brother or sister in the Lord's recovery should aspire to live like a monk or nun. At the right time, the brothers and sisters should marry and then learn through the experiences of married life to express Christ in their human living.

The living of the saints in union with Christ should result in the expression of Christ in human life. If we see this, we shall praise the Lord for our human living. Furthermore, we shall

have a fresh appreciation for married life. I can testify that I am thankful for my wife, children, and grandchildren. I am grateful for all the lessons the Lord has taught me through them. The more I advance in years, the more I appreciate the lessons I have learned through the course of my human life. In the relationship between wife and husband and between children and parents we need to live out Christ and express Him.

The principle is the same in the relationship between masters and servants. In verses 22 through 25 Paul gives a charge to the slaves. In verse 24 he speaks of receiving “the reward of the inheritance.” This point is not made as clear in Ephesians 6:8 as it is here. There is an inheritance for the believers (Rom. 8:17; Acts 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4). The reward of the inheritance indicates that the Lord uses the inheritance which He will give His believers as an incentive that they may be faithful in their service to Him. The unfaithful ones will surely miss this reward (Matt. 24:45-51; 25:20-29). (*Life-study of Colossians*, msg. 30, pp. 250-252)

Study Questions:

1. What is God’s desire regarding human life?
2. How practically can we live Christ in our daily life?
3. Why is the wife more important than the husband in building up a proper family life for the church life?

References and Further Reading:

1. *Life-study of Ezekiel*, msg.5.
2. *Life-study of 1 Timothy*, msg. 9.
3. *Life-study of Colossians*, msg. 30.
4. *Perfecting Training*, chs. 13, 14, 15, and 16.
5. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1967*, volume 1, “Serving in Coordination and Washing in Love,” msg. 11.
6. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1968*, volume 1, “Various Messages in Los Angeles,” msg. 15.
7. *The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1975-1976*, volume 1, “The Crucial Function of the Sisters in the Church Life”