

Service 8 - Building up the body of Christ

Each part functions according to its role, supporting each other according to the function of each part, causing the body of Christ to gradually grow.

1. **Ephesians 4:11-16** "... to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ... Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."
 - Here it tells us that service is not about acting alone, nor is it about showcasing oneself; rather, it is about every part of the body working together as a whole under the leadership of the head, Jesus Christ. Under the operation of the Holy Spirit, each member of the body is connected to one another, assisting each other according to their respective functions. This is the main purpose of service.
 - Why do we need to engage in service, prayer meetings, Bible studies, Sunday worship, and other gatherings? Primarily, it is so that the body of Christ can be built up. Moreover, in the process of building up the body of Christ, each person is also built up in love, growing into the image of Christ. Therefore, learning how to coordinate and communicate with others is essential in service.
 - Some people have great gifts and are skilled at preaching, leading Bible studies, or leading worship. However, they may find it challenging to coordinate with others; they often feel dissatisfied with certain individuals and find others unbearable. That's why many people prefer independent ministry over pastoral ministry, because shepherding a church requires working closely with many people.
 - When pastors need to coordinate with elders, deacons, and many coworkers, it can be very difficult and challenging. However, God intends for us to grow in Jesus Christ's love through friction and harmony with each other. It seems like God deliberately places people with different personalities and backgrounds together to serve in harmony. If we only choose to do service in church that we can do alone without needing to cooperate with others, it would indeed be more convenient. Sometimes, collaborating with others means one person's pace is faster while another's is slower; one person is frequently late, requiring others to wait. Or if someone works faster, it may create pressure. But unless we learn to coordinate with others, we cannot grow into the image of Christ.
 - Sister A and Sister B are both leaders of the same small group. Sister B, being more outgoing, is very popular, while Sister A is more reserved and tends to focus on individual counseling. Sister A often notices that when brothers and sisters have problems, they all go to Sister B, which makes her feel uneasy. She realizes she feels jealous and competitive, which she knows is wrong and causes her great distress. So, she spends a lot of time before the Lord praying, "Lord, I lay my jealousy and competitive spirit at the cross. Let Christ live instead of me."
 - As she hears more about how Sister B has greatly helped others, she says, "Lord, I praise you for helping this person through Sister B." After half a year, when she overcame her jealousy, she truly

realized that God gives each person different functions and gifts. She just needs to fulfill the function God created for her, without needing to be like others or having to compare.

- Each part of the body has its function; the foot and the hand serve different purposes. The foot should not envy the hand, saying, "Oh! The hand can grab whatever it wants, while I am only good for bearing the weight of the body, and all I do is walk, walk, and walk. Everyone sees the work of the hand, it's always visible and prominent, while I am hidden inside shoes, unseen, and not as attractive as the hand." Think about it: no matter how useful the hand is, it can't accomplish anything without the foot moving. Therefore, the foot has a very important function. We need to recognize that each part has its unique and special function. Many people are often ungrateful, and think, "God created me to be special and unique," yet they constantly envy others. God sees all He has made as good, as the Bible says, "the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable," and God gives special honor to these weaker parts.
- I've noticed in our church that less formally educated mothers often have gifts such as speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, prophesying, seeing visions, and dreaming prophetic dreams. The more educated, in comparison, seem less likely to hear from God. Why is that? It's because they lack simplicity. Even if God speaks to them, they may find it unreasonable and dismiss it, thinking it couldn't be from God, and thus they ignore it. But those who are simple-hearted immediately obey when God speaks; they do not doubt or deny God's words or voice. God often gives special gifts to such members, so God doesn't want us to envy others.
- If we often envy others, God finds it difficult to give us anything because we are frequently in the wrong mindset. God cannot use such people. You can admire others, but do not envy them. Admiration means saying, "Thank you, Lord, for blessing my sister as such. Lord, I also desire to offer myself to you like this, for you to use." But envy is different; envy degrades others and elevates oneself. Envy is like decay in the bones, and God cannot use such people. Often, those who have a big heart, who see others as stronger than themselves, often think, "Lord, you'd do better to use someone else; they are more suited for your work than I am." God often wants to use those who appreciate others because their hearts are open and can contain an abundance of God's presence, and God can entrust them with more talents to put to use.
- Sister A later discovered that she wasn't just jealous of Sister B; sometimes she envied others too. Why? The issue wasn't that others were not good enough but that she was narrow-minded and proud inside. After battling with this for six months, she found that her attitude towards brothers and sisters had improved. Therefore, our greatest enemy is ourselves: our inability to accept that others may be better or more outstanding than we are. This old self is our greatest enemy. If we don't confront this enemy, our life of service will be shallow and short-lived. The Lord cannot use us in the long term or in greater ways because we are not healthy vessels. So, we need to ask the Lord to help us know ourselves better and recognize the enemies within.

2. **Numbers 12: 1-10 - Miriam and Aaron Oppose Moses for Marrying a Cushite Woman**

- When Moses was a baby, Miriam was already a young girl. When Moses was placed into the river, Miriam secretly followed the basket. Thus, from Moses's infancy, she was protecting him. When Pharaoh's daughter saw Moses, it was Miriam who approached her and said, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women?" Although she was his sister, God chose Moses to be a leader. Sometimes, being close family can make it harder to recognize authority; instead,

there's a tendency to think, "I'm your older sister!"

- Miriam criticized Moses because he married a Cushite woman. There are two possible reasons:
 1. Perhaps Miriam felt that Moses, as a leader, should not have married a Cushite woman. Many times, when we see imperfections in a leader's personal life, we may find it difficult to respect or submit to them. However, God does not see it this way. God said, "He is faithful in all My house." That's what God values, and He greatly favored Moses and chose him. I believe Miriam, like Aaron, also had visions and dreams. So, when people have special gifts, they may gradually start to think, "Does the Lord speak only through Moses? Doesn't He also speak through us?" She began to look down on Moses and became disobedient. God said, "Why are you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" As a result, Miriam was afflicted with leprosy. This passage truly serves as a warning to us. In God's church, He establishes authority and order. However, our nature often makes us think, "He has certain imperfections; he has these gifts, but so do I! The Lord also guides me in everything!" This attitude of resistance can take root, especially as Miriam was older than Moses and may have felt she wasn't inferior to him. But God has His choice and His order.
 2. Miriam might have thought that this Cushite woman, by marrying Moses, was trying to step in as a leader. Initially, Miriam was the only sister given an important role, leading the women in a victory dance. But now, another woman had appeared, and she was a Cushite, which may have stirred Miriam's jealousy. Sometimes, we can overcome our environment through praise, but we struggle to conquer the jealousy within us. That's why Proverbs says, "Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city." If we can conquer the jealousy and pride within us, it's indeed as great a victory as capturing a city.
- Sometimes when we feel jealous or uncomfortable towards someone, we may not take it seriously and just suppress it. However, this creates barriers to truly loving each other. When there are grievances and darkness in our hearts, it gives the devil a foothold. The sisters in the Maria Fellowship had a large garbage cart that was supposed to glide along a track, but it would go off track every time. Each time it derailed, they had to lift the cart, which weighed hundreds of pounds, back onto the track—a very tiring task. They began to pray and ask the Lord to reveal what was hindering them, wondering why God wasn't blessing their work. They eventually realized there was dissatisfaction and darkness among the sisters. After they confessed this to the Lord, the garbage cart never went off track again.
- In every home and every church, God deeply cares about unity among us. When we are not unified and do not love each other, it gives the devil a foothold to attack. He aims his arrows at the weakest and most vulnerable, those with darkness in their hearts. In Taipei, there was a women's home where a minister felt the abundant presence of God when she first visited. After a few years, when she returned, she found that God's presence had greatly diminished. After staying there for a few days, she discovered that there were grievances and a lack of reconciliation among the sisters. This lack of unity diminished God's presence. Brothers and sisters, this is a very real issue. If a family does not love each other or if there are issues in a church or fellowship, God cannot manifest His glory there.
- Miriam harbored dissatisfaction towards Moses, and as a result, she was afflicted with severe leprosy. She was isolated for seven days, and the people did not move forward until she was brought back in. Similarly, if there are grievances and dissatisfaction between brothers and sisters at home or in a church, without seeking reconciliation, that church or family will stagnate. Not only will it stagnate, but without repentance and intercession, it will eventually perish.

- Moses later pleaded with the Lord, "O God, please heal her!" Why did God delight so much in Moses and use him so greatly? It's because Moses had an exceedingly broad heart and was extremely humble, more than anyone else on earth.
- Why was Moses' prayer so powerful? The effectiveness of intercessory ministry does not primarily depend on the length of your prayers, on using certain phrases or formats, or on how loudly you pray. It primarily depends on the intercessor's deep mercy towards those who have offended him or hurt him. The most crucial aspect of any service is not the external imitation of certain methods but the inner life of the one serving.
- Despite how the Israelites repeatedly offended him and complained against him, Moses interceded for them fervently. He prayed, "Lord, blot out my name!" In other words, "If you cannot forgive them, then let me be the sacrifice—erase my name to save the people of Israel!" Because of this deep love and mercy, his intercession was incredibly powerful.

3. **Acts 20:18-20** "...You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house"

- What about Paul's ministry? He served with humility, tears, and endured much suffering, opposition, and trials. He said, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house." This underscores the importance of service, as mentioned in Ephesians 4, "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."
- Speaking the truth in love and not holding back anything that benefits others is a vital part of service. Whether we are leading a fellowship or a small group, we often see clearly where a particular believer or member is struggling, or others may share their concerns with us. The question is, should we address it? Even though we know it might upset them, Paul said, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable." There may be a risk of facing anger or even hostility, but speaking up is an expression of true love. Ephesians 4 also highlights that, within service and the functioning of the body, speaking the truth in love is crucial; only by doing so can each member grow in all things and be joined to Christ, the head.
- There was a sister who had some dissatisfaction with a brother but had been hesitant to speak up. Eventually, she approached him with boldness, honesty, and love, only to discover that the reality was not as she had imagined. Though it seemed one way on the surface, the motivations and truth behind it were different. In my seventeen years of serving the Lord, I've encountered many similar situations where what you see with your eyes seems to be the truth, but in reality, it might be different.
- Once, someone saw another person sitting in the garden, cutting flowers while seated in a chair, and thought, "Why is this person so lazy?" Later, upon closer inspection, they realized the person's foot was either crippled or injured. Immediately, they exclaimed, "Wow! He's so diligent! Even though he has difficulty moving, he's still working." We often judge based on what we see, but the truth is different from our judgments. Therefore, it's crucial to speak the truth in love. If it aligns with reality, it can provide an opportunity for others to grow and build up each other. If it doesn't, it helps us avoid sin within ourselves, such as gossip or looking down on others. Thus, speaking the truth in love is very important.

- Especially among coworkers, there will always be differing opinions and perspectives. We should have an accepting heart while loving one another. Throughout history, many saints have had different views based on the Bible—some insisting on the rapture before tribulation, others on the rapture after; some saying salvation as a one-time event, others emphasizing working out salvation with fear and trembling... These differing views have caused division; despite all loving the Lord, they were falling into the devil's schemes.
- It's okay to have different perspectives; this doesn't affect Jesus living within us. This difference in views is also a sign of spiritual growth. As a person matures, they become more capable of accepting that others may see things differently. After all, any situation can be viewed from many angles, and it's not necessarily true that my perspective is the most important, best, or most correct. For example, within a family, even a simple decision about buying a refrigerator can bring different views—should it be new or second-hand? Should it be placed in the living room or the kitchen? Even between husband and wife, who are one, these differences can arise, let alone within a church with many departments—children's Sunday school, youth ministry, and so forth. There are countless matters to coordinate, and many opportunities for differing perspectives. That's why the Bible teaches us to set aside our own views and to consider others as better than ourselves. Unless a leader has received a vision and calling from God and the group they lead does not yet share this perspective, they must stand firm for the Lord.
- After a group has discussed and decided on something in a meeting, it's important not to privately tell others afterward, "I really disagree with that decision!" This can easily create division within the church. Why? Because if you had a different opinion, you should have expressed it at the time. If you didn't speak up and the meeting reached a decision, even if you think your viewpoint is better or that the decision is inappropriate or disagreeable, you should not criticize it privately. Doing so can leave room for the devil. All opinions should be brought up and discussed during the meeting. Once the meeting concludes, further private discussions should not occur. We can't say, "Oh! I didn't dare to speak up at the time!" If you don't have the courage to speak, then you should respect the decision made in the meeting, right? This is a lesson that God's children should learn; otherwise, it gives the devil a foothold. Being unified in the truth means we often need to seek unity with others. After a collective prayer and discussion, we should submit to the decision that is made together.

4. A Leader's Vision

- Every leader, whether it's the principal of Sunday school, a youth counselor, a small group leader, or a minister in the church, should not operate through scheduled programs but by receiving direction and vision from God. "Oh! How many times should this program happen in a month?" Someone suggests a certain speaker, so they're invited. Or someone says there should be a celebration, so a party is organized. All decisions are driven by circumstances. If a church lacks its direction and calling from God, over time, it will become like scattered sand, unable to build anything.
- Everyone in a position of responsibility should regularly seek direction from the Lord; this is called faithfulness. Moses faithfully served God's people in this way. When the people complained, "Moses, this path is too difficult and there's no water; let's go back to Egypt!" How many times did they argue like this? Did Moses follow their demands? No, he didn't. He continued towards the land of Canaan. "Thirty-eight years have passed, should we still wander? Forget it, let's go back to Egypt!" But Moses kept moving forward because he had a vision, a calling, and a mission. Anyone who serves in spiritual matters—whether leading a worship team

or any other group—should receive guidance, vision, and a calling from the Lord. A life rooted in Him will produce power. The depth of your faithfulness, self-denial, unity with the Lord, and obedience will determine the strength of your service. Additionally, we should continually ask the Lord to grant us true love, enabling us to genuinely love those we serve, love the church, and love the group. When love grows sincerely, it brings forth gifts, so everyone serving the Lord should be continuously growing.

- Some people are willing to receive training and equip themselves for service but are unwilling to actually serve others. In other words, many times we are willing to attend conferences, training sessions, and receive preparation. However, when God calls us to learn to be a servant, to serve others, to make phone calls to care for others, to visit people—would you be willing? Service is very practical; it's a way of life and encompasses our entire existence. All this service is preparing us for reigning with God in heaven.

5. Romans 12:1 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship”

- Romans chapter 12 talks about being fervent in spirit and serving the Lord constantly. It's not about serving passionately only when my name is on this year's list of co-workers. If my name isn't there, I need not serve. No, this is a command: we should always keep the fire burning within us and continually serve the Lord.
- To serve means to offer my body as a living sacrifice. A living sacrifice means though alive, I am as if dead, having surrendered my own opinions and views. Therefore, the essence of service is to offer myself as a living sacrifice to the Lord, giving up my rights and showing willingness to listen to His commands. Scripture describes this as a reasonable act, so everyone should offer themselves as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Such service is pleasing to God.

Service 8 Questions

1. While serving, have you encountered challenging colleagues? What have you learned from this experience?
2. Have you ever experienced jealousy towards others? How did you overcome it? Or are you currently going through it? Has this audio recording helped you in any way?
3. Each part of the body has its unique function; God created each of us uniquely. What are some ways in which God has made you unique?
4. People who are good at appreciating others are often used by God. Do you appreciate your colleagues around you (recognizing their strengths)?
5. Do you find it difficult to respect or submit to a leader because of their imperfections in life?
6. The sisters in the Maria Fellowship had a large garbage cart. Why did it keep going off track each time? And later, why did it stop going off track?
7. Moses later pleaded with the Lord to heal Miriam. Why was Moses' prayer so powerful?
8. Has anyone ever spoken the truth to you in love? How did you respond? Did it help you grow?
9. Have you ever spoken the truth to anyone in love? Did they benefit from it?
10. Have you ever thought something was true initially, only to realize after speaking with the person involved that you were mistaken?
11. If a meeting has reached a decision, even if you disagree, what should your attitude be?
12. In your position of service, are you someone with vision and a sense of calling?
13. Suggested hymn: #388 from the Hymns of Praise
14. Memorize: Ephesians 4:11-13, Romans 12:1.

