

## **Character (1)**

### **Lesson 1**

#### **VERSES TO READ:**

#### **2 Timothy 2:2**

And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.

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#### **FOUR ASPECTS OF BEING USEFUL TO THE MASTER**

What kind of person is useful to the Lord? There are at least four aspects. First, he must love and desire the Lord. Do not even talk about being used by the Lord if you do not love and desire Him. Second, he must have a vision of the Lord and an encounter with Him. He needs to have a revelation that God's eternal purpose is to work Christ into us and to express Christ through us. I have met many saints who love the Lord but have not seen this Christ of God. They have seen only Jesus their Savior, not the Christ of God. These may be zealous and full of love, yet in their service they do not minister the Lord to others, because they have not seen this Christ and have not received this revelation. In order to be useful in the Lord's hand, one must see the revelation concerning Christ. Third, his self, his person, must have been dealt with by the cross. He must realize

that whatever he has and whatever comes out of him cannot be brought into the Lord's service. His natural being must have been terminated on the cross. Only those who have seen their flesh and their natural man realize how precious the cross is. Only when you have seen that you are fleshly and nothing but a thorn-bush, a leper, and a natural man will you treasure the experience of the cross. This can be called the revelation of the natural man or the revelation of the cross. After you have a heart to love the Lord, you must have at least two revelations, one concerning Christ and the other concerning the self, which also concerns the cross. You cannot lack any of these three aspects.

However, these three aspects are not sufficient. Suppose there is a brother who sincerely loves the Lord and is not occupied with the world. He has been enlightened, he has seen the Christ of God, and he sees that the purpose of God in this universe is Christ, and that it is to work Christ into men and then to work Christ out from within men. He truly has the revelation of Christ. He also sees that what hinders Christ the most is his self, his flesh, and his natural life, and seeing this, he has fallen down. When you meet this one, you always sense that the Lord is so sweet, so lovely, and so great. However, you see some peculiarity in this brother. For example, if you ask him if he could find time to assist certain brothers who need help, he will answer, "Fine, fine." But when he goes home, he will soon forget about it. Such a thing actually happened.

This brother really loves the Lord, receives mercy, and sees himself and the way of the cross; however, there is something lacking in him which renders him useless to the Master.

A cook must take four steps to prepare a meal: first, he must go shopping at the market; second, he has to remove many things, such as leaves of bamboo shoots, fish scales, and vegetable roots; third, he needs to cook the food; and fourth, he must prepare the chairs, plates, chopsticks, and spoons. Why is this fourth step necessary? Is the cook serving chopsticks and the table as food? Certainly not. However, without chopsticks, spoons, plates, and a table, the dinner cannot be properly served. These eating utensils illustrate the character of us who serve the Lord. Without them the food will stay in the cookware. One could still eat it but would not enjoy it. No one would eat the chopsticks and spoons along with the food; that would be terrible. We serve people a meal, so that they may eat the food and not the utensils. Similarly, we do not minister our character to others, but we bear Christ to them by our character.

For example, a certain brother may be absent-minded and forgetful. Can his forgetful character replace the Christ whom he knows inwardly? Not at all. But his character greatly affects his service. He must make up this lack if he wants to be suitable for the Lord's use. He must learn to remember things. He should carry a pocket notebook to record things that need to be done.

## SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR CHARACTER

Now let us come back to consider ourselves. I have mentioned that laziness is a major shortcoming in our character. Especially with regard to the young brothers and sisters, if you do not build up a diligent character, your work will have no future. At most you can be only a pretty flower for people to admire; you can hardly be a vessel to supply God's children. Even though you may know the cross, Christ, and the natural man, if you are not diligent enough, it will be difficult for you to minister Christ to others. Christ will be nullified by your laziness. If you do not believe my word now, you will twenty years from now. You do not know how many things you will spoil because of a lack of diligence in your character.

Many people are willing to take on grand tasks but not small ones. This also is a shortcoming in character. If you desire to do only the big things and not the trivial, you are through. Whoever is useful in the hands of the Lord must be utterly broad on one hand, and extremely fine on the other. Such was Moses' law. You should do minor jobs well, and you should also be able to carry out major assignments. Your character needs to be dealt with on this point. If you take pleasure only in preaching the all-inclusive Christ and His all-inclusive death on the cross, yet you are not willing to engage in trivial duties in your daily life, there is a shortage in your character.

Then, there are those people who are careless in everything; this characteristic makes them unsuitable for God's use. You should be accommodating to others, but you should not tolerate sloppiness. Some people are irresponsible. Moreover, their irresponsibility is spontaneous and not intentional. It seems that whatever matter you entrust to him becomes lost or disappears. He takes care only of those things which he happens to come across. This is because he lacks a sense of responsibility. The unconscientious person who serves the Lord cannot expect to be able to render help to others. We should not only love and care for people but also learn and practice before the Lord to be conscientious. Once certain matters of the church are entrusted to us, our heart should be in them. We should carry on our heart those whom we prayed for. Learn to have a sense of responsibility.

There is no need to illustrate further. If you check with yourself, you will see that there are still many areas of your character which are unfit for the Lord. As one who lacks the many qualities which are useful to the Lord, you must spend sufficient time to exercise to build up your character. Only then will you be useful to Him.

Therefore, in order to serve the Lord, to preach the gospel, and to establish churches, you must build up a character that is useful to the Lord. In your daily life you need to attend to and diligently learn everything related to character, whether it is great or small. You should not

place your clothes or books sloppily; all your belongings must be put in their proper place. This will help you to build up an exact character so that you will not do things in an unclear and careless way. You need to practice to be exact, never speaking carelessly or inaccurately, even remembering precisely the words of the Bible and their references. You need to cultivate your sense of responsibility and to work it into your character. May the Lord have mercy upon us that we may realize what kind of character is useful to Him.

### Group Discussion:

1. You love the Lord, no doubt. You have a revelation of Christ. Your self has been dealt with by the cross. Why is there still a need to have a proper character to be useful to the Lord?
2. Give us a practical scenario or experience in line with having proper character or bad character affecting your usefulness or service to the Lord.