

CHAPTER THREE

WORDS OF ADMONITION FOR DOING THINGS

Those who serve the Lord must remember the following points when doing things:

NOT RELYING ON OURSELVES BUT ON THE LORD

When we do things, our heart and attitude should indicate that we know our limitations, that whether something is done well or successfully is not in our control. Our attitude and heart should be to do our best but rely on the Lord, not on ourselves. The more we know God and the more capable we are, the more we know that we are limited, inadequate, and not reliable. The requirement of a matter may exceed our capacity. Hence, we are not reliable. Even experienced people in the world say, “Man proposes; God disposes.” The young people who have just begun doing things and are inexperienced show much confidence. The experienced ones know that it is possible to fail even in doing something small. We often cannot meet a small requirement because our ability is limited. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission described the way he wrote letters to reply to the questions of his co-workers. As he wrote, he looked to the Lord and could finish only by continuously looking to the Lord. Therefore, when people read his letters, they sensed God’s presence and received the proper answer. When we are in the process of doing things, our heart and attitude should be to continually deny ourselves. The more we rely on ourselves, the more we will fail in the things that we do and in the words that we speak. Only the Lord is omnipotent. We should do our best, but in our heart know that we cannot succeed by ourselves. To do things while relying on the Lord is to have a relying attitude and a sweet spirit, a relying spirit. This is the principle of the tree of life—dependence. We should do things with our whole heart and whole strength, but we cannot leave the Lord and should always rely on Him.

NOT RELYING ON OUR INTELLIGENCE BUT ON THE LORD’S LEADING

In doing things, we should not rely on our intelligence but on the Lord's leading. The previous point concerns not relying on ourselves, which includes everything we are. This point concerns not relying on our intelligence and includes wisdom. The Lord's leading refers to His instructions. Doing things requires consideration, and this requires intelligence. However, we should not use our intelligence first but should follow the Lord's leading. Our intelligence should cooperate with the Lord's leading. In order to rely on the Lord's leading, we must care for our inner sense. We should put the sense of the Lord's leading before our consideration. There was a brother who was greatly used by the Lord, and consequently, others were jealous of him. Someone wanted to harm him and wrote a letter asking him to go and help someone. The brother went immediately after he received the letter. When he arrived at the door, however, his inner sense strongly forbade him to enter, so he went home. On the second day he received another letter asking him to go to another place to help someone. When he arrived at that place, he was forbidden from within again, so he left. After a few days he received a summons from the court. The judge asked him in court whether he had received letters to go to certain places. Both cases involved criminal and illegal matters. If he had entered, he would have been trapped in those matters. When Brother Nee was in England, he stayed in the house of an elderly brother who feared the Lord. Every day the son of that elderly brother would drive to his office. Before he left, the elderly brother would say, "Do not rely on your own intelligence. Rely on the Lord's grace." He did this every day. We need to use our intelligence to do things, but we should not rely on our intelligence. We should rely on the Lord's grace. The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10). Doing things requires us to use our intelligence, but the final decision should be according to the Lord's leading. It is difficult for intelligent people to rely on the Lord's leading after they use their mind. Getting things done is secondary. The primary matter is to learn to touch the Lord in the process of doing things.

ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH AND NOT ACCORDING TO PERSONAL AFFECTION

In doing things to serve God, we should avoid personal affection. Personal affection is often the source of strife and confusion among the brothers and sisters. Those who do things according to personal affection will suffer loss in life and service and will produce a disharmonious spirit in the church.

BEING HONEST

In doing things, we should be honest, not crooked, and not use excuses. Crookedness and excuses are craftiness used by people in the world. We should not do things in such a way. Some people use the giving of gifts as an excuse to visit a person in order to speak to him about other things. This is crooked. We are not saying that we cannot give gifts, but we should not use it as an excuse for other things. How much a person is gained by God depends on whether he can do things without being crooked. The principle that a person keeps before God determines the extent of the Lord's blessing. Concerning the principle by which the Lord deals with man, the psalmist said, "With the pure You show Yourself pure, / And with the perverse You show Yourself contrary" (18:26). We need to be honest in our speaking, but we also need to be wise in order to care for others' feelings. Our honesty should not give others heavy burdens. We need to be honest but not foolish and wise but not crooked.

BEING SERIOUS

In doing things, we should be serious, not superficial or careless. This means that we need to be accurate. We should be thorough and accurate when we do things. This is to be serious. Because our human ability is limited, we cannot be one hundred percent accurate when we do things. Our attitude, however, should be that we hope to be one hundred percent accurate. The inability to be fully accurate because of our inadequacy cannot be counted as not being serious. We should exercise to do things seriously. In this way our Bible reading will be accurate, and our receiving of the Lord's leading will also be accurate. A person who is not serious is sloppy in seeking the Lord's leading and cannot properly receive the Lord's leading.

BEING RESPONSIBLE

In doing things, we should be responsible and not make promises lightly or be sloppy in performing our duty. In order to be serious and responsible, we must have a sense of responsibility. In doing things, we need a proper procedure so that we do not forget something. When we promise someone that we will do something, our intention must be that we will be responsible and do it even at the cost of our lives. The Lord said that we should not swear (Matt. 5:33-37). Because we must fulfill our promises, we should not casually make a promise. Before we make a promise, we must consider whether we can fulfill it. We must not care for our gain or loss. The young people who want to have a future in service must exercise to be responsible.

BEING PRACTICAL

In doing things, we should be practical and not aim too high or be ambitious. We should not set lofty goals that are not realistic and that we are not able to achieve. We must be sober in everything we do and seek to be practical.

BEING HIDDEN

In doing things, we should be hidden and not be extravagant or make a display of ourselves. Everyone desires vainglory and wants to make a show of the self when they do things. The Lord said, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (6:3). We should be practical and hidden and not display ourselves in public. People generally do things with the desire to receive praise or gain sympathy. Receiving praise and sympathy are the same as making a display of oneself. Every matter that is made a display of is destructive. The more hidden a matter is, the better. This can be compared to food that is exposed to the air. The longer food is exposed to the air, the sooner it will spoil. A person who makes a display is without learning and can destroy what he is doing. Doing things in a hidden way is a protection. Things that others will inevitably know cannot be hidden, but the key depends on our intention. If there is a way for something to be hidden, it should be hidden. To be extravagant is to make a display. The Lord's serving ones should learn to do their best to do things in a hidden manner. If

something can be done in a hidden way, there is only benefit and no harm. To be hidden is to not be in darkness.

DOING MORE AND TALKING LESS

In serving the Lord, we should do things without talking; that is, do more and talk less. This is a beautiful condition. The most beautiful church is one where everyone is doing things without words, without opinions. We cannot do things well by talking; we must be practical. Those who are the most capable in doing things do not talk much. Much talking annuls the effectiveness of one's work.

FINISHING WHAT WAS BEGUN

In doing things, we should finish what was begun with perseverance and persistence. Most people begin things but do not finish, or they begin something well but finish it poorly. In everything the Lord's serving ones should persevere and not hope to finish quickly. They should have a good beginning and a good ending. If the beginning is difficult, they should continue steadfastly with perseverance until they finish. They must not quit halfway.

BEING AGGRESSIVE BUT NOT HASTY

In doing things for the Lord, we should be aggressive but not hasty. Then we can be successful and not make many mistakes. Most mistakes are made because of negligence and haste. We should be serious and aggressive, but we cannot be hasty. Because we want things to be done, we should be aggressive, but we should know that doing things takes time. We should not try to shorten the time. When we shorten the time, we are hasty. We should exert much effort and spend the necessary time, but we should not hope to see a quick result. Whoever hopes to see a quick result is not of much value in the service. When the Lord was on the earth, He worked aggressively, and He was not hasty. God is always working, and He is not hasty. He is patient. We should be aggressive in order to exert the necessary effort, but if we are hasty, we will want to shorten the time that is necessary.

HAVING A DEFINITE VIEW BUT WITHOUT PREJUDICE

No matter what the Lord's serving ones do, they should first go before the Lord to know His will and take His will as their view. The Lord's serving ones cannot be without a goal. To have a goal is to have a definite view. Our view should be the Lord's will. We should have a view as we proceed, but we should endeavor to listen to the views of the brothers and sisters and adopt their views. The Lord's serving ones should not be prejudiced. Prejudice refers to a self-made rule that cannot be changed. It also refers to accepting one's own opinion and not accepting others' views. In doing things, we should have established rules regarding principles, but we should be flexible with the details in our application. To have a definite view concerns principles and goals. To be prejudiced concerns details and procedures. In everything the Lord's serving ones should have a firm and definite view regarding principles but be flexible in application of the details. To have a definite view requires faithfulness, and to eliminate prejudice requires being broken. Those who are broken are not prejudiced. Those who have been touched by the Lord have a definite view. The more we hold to a definite view, the more we are blessed before the Lord. The more our prejudice is broken, the more we have the presence of the Spirit, and the more the Spirit will work.

LISTENING TO OTHERS' IDEAS

We need to learn to listen to others' ideas and adopt them. The elders should have a definite view regarding how the church preaches the gospel, but in practice they should endeavor to listen to the brothers' and sisters' ideas and adopt them. In order to do things, serve, work, and administrate the church together, we must learn to listen to others. We often listen to what others say, but we have our own views. Therefore, even though we hear what others say, we do not accept their views. Listening is very important. In listening to others express their views, we need to hear them and also understand them. For this we must stop ourselves and focus our mind and attention on the

speaker. When we are without prejudice, we can listen to others and understand them.

CARING FOR OTHERS' FEELINGS

Some believers are willing to speak, but some are unwilling to speak. Therefore, it is not sufficient to listen to their views; we must also care for their feelings. In some situations a person cannot speak what is on his heart, so we should care for and understand his feeling. When a person is spiritual, his sense is keen. Those who know how to do things also have keen feelings. In order to do things successfully, our feelings must be sensitive. This does not mean that we are sensitive in a selfish way but that we are keen. A person may have a good view but not express it. This does not mean that he has a problem. Sometimes it is because he does not like to speak according to his natural disposition, always accommodates others, or does not know how to express himself. Therefore, we need to understand his feeling. The Lord's serving ones need to listen to others and also make the effort to care for their feelings. The Lord's serving ones should be open and transparent and endeavor to care for others' feelings. However, we should not trouble others by asking them to care for our feelings.

BLENDING AND COORDINATING WITH OTHERS

The Lord's serving ones should be able to blend and coordinate with others. It is not easy for a prejudiced person to blend and coordinate with others, and a person who cannot listen to others and does not care for their feelings cannot blend with others. We need to learn until we can blend with those who are fast, those who are slow, those who are smart, and those who are foolish. Some people are so self-abasing that they cannot blend with smart people. This is not right. Other people think that they are smart and cannot accommodate others. This is not right either. These conditions require our disposition to be broken. If our disposition is not broken, we cannot blend with others. We should learn to have a definite view, but our disposition must be broken. A person with a weak disposition cannot be spiritual, and the stronger his disposition, the more useful he will be, but his disposition needs

to be broken. In order to blend and coordinate with others, we must be broken. We should not bear with others blindly in everything, nor should we ask others to bear with us. Bearing with one another is temporary and has a hidden danger.

NOT HOLDING ON TO OLDNESS OR CHANGING THINGS LIGHTLY

In doing things, the Lord's serving ones should not hold on to oldness, nor should they change things lightly. A person who does not hold on to oldness can change easily. The Lord's serving ones need to learn to improve without rigidly adhering to formalities. In working and serving, we must improve and not hold on to oldness. When we improve, we should not change things lightly. We should be sure that there is a definite benefit and a definite basis for making a change. The way we study the Bible also needs to continually improve.

HAVING RULES AND ORDER

In everything the Lord's serving ones need to have rules and order that do not violate principles or neglect details. Many people do things and speak in a disorderly manner. Whether a person can do things well depends on his rules and order, which are visible in his daily talk. Those who do things without consideration do not have principles or detailed rules. If there are no rules, there is no order. Some persons do not have principles but have many detailed rules, which is equivalent to not having rules. Others have principles but do not have detailed rules, which is to be without order. Those who have both principles and detailed rules can have rules and order. The producing of rules and order requires principles and detailed rules. A person without rules and order will not study the Bible, work, or administrate the church properly.

LEARNING BY DOING

We should not wait until we know how to do something before we do it. We should do it before we know how. We do not do by learning; we learn by doing. This implies that we are not discouraged, and we are not proud. We should not quit because we do not know how to do something, and we should not stop learning because we already know how to do something. We

should not be discouraged or self-contented. Those who do not know how to do something should do it, and those who know how to do something should continue learning. Paul was learning in his old age. This is seen in his asking someone to bring him scrolls (2 Tim. 4:13).

DOING THINGS AND LEADING OTHERS TO DO THE SAME THINGS WITH US

The things in the church should be done by everyone, including the older ones, the younger ones, the experienced ones, and the beginners. Therefore, we need to learn to do things and lead others to do the same things with us. Those who can lead should endeavor to lead others to lead, and those who cannot lead should endeavor to be led by others. When everyone does his own thing, the church will be weak. When we are learning to lead one another, the church will be upright and strong. This way will produce useful ones and bring forth spiritual children. We cannot be without disciples in our service in the church. Paul did not go out alone but brought others with him, such as Timothy and Titus. The experienced ones should lead the less mature ones to pursue life and learn to serve. The less mature ones and younger ones need to learn and receive leading from experienced ones. Even after younger ones learn from experienced ones, they still need to improve. The younger ones should not be proud, and the experienced ones should not drop the younger ones. The younger ones should humbly learn from the experienced ones, and the experienced ones should lead the younger ones to work with them in love. The basic principle in the church and in the work is that everyone should do things together, not individually. Doing things together does not mean that everyone is equal. To be equal in this way is to be weak; to lead others or be led by others is to be upright. If we can learn from others, we should endeavor to learn. If we can lead others, we should endeavor to lead. In this way the service will be upright and strong. We should not be ashamed to learn from others, and those who teach must not be proud. In this situation the church will be harmonious and beautiful. In today's society those who do not understand do not want to be taught, while others keep

their knowledge as a secret and do not teach others. In society there is neither teaching nor learning because of selfish interest and a sense of shame. We should not think that it is shameful to learn from others but that it is a glory to teach others. We should be humble to learn from one another and be happy to teach one another. The younger ones who know how to do something should teach the older ones, but they must teach in a respectful way.

OBEYING AND INSTRUCTING

When we serve in the church, we need to listen to instructions and give instructions. Those who can understand instructions and accept them can do things properly, and those who can obey instructions can give instructions. When young people learn to serve, they must learn to ask, that is, accept others' instructions. We need to exercise to not do anything by ourselves, but to ask the leading one who is the closest to us. In the service of the church there is an arrangement for everyone. Therefore, we must learn to ask what we should do. The younger ones should ask the older ones, and the serving ones should ask those overseeing the service. When there is no one left to ask, we still need to ask the Lord. Those who can ask can obey instructions. The more we can obey, the more we can instruct. Under the Lord's sovereign arrangement, there is always someone we can ask. We must ask concerning things, because our service has a head, a leading. In order to ask what to do, we need to lay aside our opinions and views. The young people must learn to ask what to do without expressing their opinions. Those who have learned the lesson will always ask first. We should not consider things first; we should consider things after we receive instructions, and our considerations should be based on the instructions. In our service the success of a matter is secondary, but the perfecting of the believers is primary. In spiritual service the emphasis of exercising to obey instructions is not on the success of a matter but on the exercise of life. There is value in obeying instructions, but there is even more value in being able to obey "wrong" instructions. It may seem right to argue when we receive wrong instructions, but it will take some time to recover our loss in life if we argue. Our human life is dealt with when we can obey the

wrong instruction. It is a loss for a person to do something successfully without being perfected. Conversely, it is a success for a person to fail in a matter but be perfected. The work of the church is a success when the believers are perfected.

KEEPING ONE'S POSITION

The older ones have the position of the older ones, and the younger ones have the position of the younger ones. The younger ones should learn to keep their position. The older ones can do and say certain things that the younger ones cannot do or say. If the younger ones say or do these things, they need to change their tone and attitude. The most blessed matter in the church is to keep one's position. In their speaking and in the practical service, the young people must keep their position. In the church there are two kinds of older brothers: one is older in physical age, and the other is older in spiritual age. The first rebellion in the universe was caused by the archangel's not keeping his position. This caused a collapse in the universe. The young people should remember their position when they meet the older ones. How the young people do things is based on their position. In order to do things in the world, one must not be wild. In order to do spiritual things, one must be fine. This is a higher requirement.