

Working
Saints
Fellowship

Fellowship
With Minoru Chen
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Introduction

My burden today is with your age group, the so-called “young working saints.” I would like to share with you my recent view and burden concerning your age group; I think it is quite important and inspiring. You must realize that how we view ourselves determines how we conduct ourselves. I do not mean viewing ourselves in an introspective, selfish or self-absorbed way. I am speaking about how we evaluate, or assess ourselves, soberly. This kind of self-evaluation determines how we behave, live, and work. Whatever perspective you have concerning who you are, where you are, your commission, your responsibility, and so forth, determines, or gives you a frame of reference, as to how to actually live today.

Markers

It would be a dangerous thing for a pilot to fly into the clouds without instruments. I heard that when a pilot gets into the clouds, he can lose all sense of direction and not even know if the plane is upside down or not. Since the pilot cannot visually see the horizon, he would not know if disaster awaits him. All he can see are totally white clouds. Brothers and sisters, the same thing can happen with us spiritually. When we get ourselves in the clouds, we lose our bearings, our reference points, our markers. The markers in our life should indicate where we are, at what stage or station we are in. These markers will determine how we should live and how we should serve.

A good example is the running of a marathon in a large city like New York City or Atlanta. The organizers place clear markers along the way, at least every mile or so, in order that the runners

will know where they are – whether at mile six or mile ten or near the end. These markers are important for two reasons. First, they are sign posts to help the runners stay on course. I have heard of marathon runners who somehow got off course and ended up in a terrible neighborhood and then had to run back to the course, thus losing time while they put themselves in danger. Second, these markers indicate what stage of the journey you're on. This is very important to a runner, especially when considering when to push out the last burst of energy to get to the finish line. Runners like to know what their pace is, and the markers help them. I am not a runner, but this is easily understandable. Markers not only help ensure that you will finish the race, but may even help ones to earn a medal or win the race.

Our Christian life, both spiritually and humanly, is a race. In Paul's case, he hoped to receive a crown as his reward. Paul said, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course." (2 Tim. 4:7-8) He was referring to the race he had run. If you read Paul's story from the book of Acts through his epistles, it is clear he was constantly making adjustments, fine-tuning, to stay on course. He said he did not want to run without a clear aim, or box as beating the air. He was running to receive the prize. Still, near the end of his life, Paul declared "not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue . . ." (Phil. 3:12-14) He still pursued to gain or win Christ. He practiced to forget the things behind and to reach forward to what was before, in order to gain Christ. You could say that Paul was constantly checking the markers, because he couldn't yet see the goal line. Thankfully, he had markers along the way to help him run the race. Paul is our pattern.

Now, how about us? It is the same for us; we also need markers. I want to talk to you about your markers. These are indicated in the Bible, our only standard. Whatever we do should be according to the Word of God. So I hope to convince you from the Word of God. Let us look at the markers in the Word so that

we can run the race to the end. God did not set us on a race without giving us markers. He wants us to gain Christ and finish this race.

The Beginning of Israel's Journey

Let us consider the markers in the book of Numbers. In recent years Numbers has become my favorite book. It is a book full of typology. It is concerned with the numbering of God's people in the wilderness. The children of Israel had exited Egypt with God's sovereign help. They were led out and were released from the bondage and tyranny of Egypt under Pharaoh. That is recorded in the book of Exodus. But, God deliberately did not lead them directly into the good land. He took them another way, all the way to Mount Sinai. This was according to His design, schedule and plan. There at Mount Sinai, among other things, God gave them the law, His Word, His commandments. We know that these commandments were not merely a list of dos and don'ts or a code of divine ethics for them to keep. Even though they declared they would keep God's commandments, they failed. We have learned, with the help of this ministry, that the giving of the law was actually a wonderful covenant, like a marriage contract. It was like God was taking them to the altar in Mount Sinai to marry them. He bore them on eagles' wings. He was like a husband with a wife. These words were His betrothal to them. He was the husband, and Israel was the wife. The Word of the commandments was not something for the children of Israel to keep, but it was similar to wedding vows. In this vow you shouldn't say, as Israel did, "I do." In this vow you should say – "I can't do it." That is the best way to respond. I have never seen a marriage vow like this. If my wife said, "I may try to do it," I would ask, then why are we here? This is why everyone says, "I do." Of course, we all know that no one is able to fulfill all the vows. At a recent wedding, I heard the longest vows ever. I'm sorry, I have a hard time with these long vows.

Even though the words sound so wonderful, many of us who have been married for a while know that this is not exactly how it works. The vows were full of wonderful prose and poetry, loving expressions and gushing with a lot of desire and hopes and wishes. But, even before they drove off to their honeymoon, these vows may have been broken several times.

From Mount Sinai to Mount Zion

The giving of the law was a covenant between God and His people. This covenant was for God to keep and for Israel to keep. It is a covenant, not of the law, but of love. There at Mount Sinai, not only was the law given, but a host of ordinances were also given. These ordinances detail how the people should live, behave, worship, and serve their God. From Exodus, we proceed to the book of Leviticus. This book details how the children of Israel should worship and conduct themselves as the people of God.

Along with the giving of the law was the giving of many ordinances. These were a very important part of God's instructions given to Israel regarding the pattern of the tabernacle received on the mountain. Based on the ordinances given, the tabernacle was reared up. All the people gathered with what they brought out of Egypt to construct the tabernacle with all of the furnishings, including the ark. At this point, God had a people, a covenant, and a tabernacle of God's testimony. This tabernacle was the mutual dwelling place of God and His people Israel. But this was not the end. We next come to the book of Numbers. Now the people of God are ready to move all the way from Mount Sinai to another mountain, Mount Zion in the city of Jerusalem. This is the journey God ordained for His people to take. They were to begin with the tabernacle at Mount Sinai and arrive at Mount Zion in Jerusalem with the temple. This journey from one mountain to another started with the portable

tabernacle and ended with a solid, permanent testimony of the temple. The children of Israel journeyed through the wilderness, crossed the river Jordan, and entered into the good land. There in the good land they were to take up their allotments, labor on the land and live on it. In the good land they would build the temple of God and the city of Jerusalem. This would be God's ultimate testimony in the Old Testament as far as Israel was concerned. He would gain His corporate expression and rule on the earth with the kingdom there. All of this was a type of us today.

Markers along the Journey

The 6th Grade Marker

Now as we consider the book of Numbers, we realize that in addition to the record of the warfare and battles recorded later, this book has much to do with the numbering of the children of Israel. Here in the book of Numbers we are given some key markers by age. Even today there are some key age markers in our human life. These markers are somewhat universal. Many of you were born in and grew up in the church life. The first marker many of you encountered in this journey or race was the wonderful 6th grade marker. Around the age of twelve – for most that would be around the sixth grade – young people are beginning to have some human maturity as well as some spiritual readiness. Therefore, in many localities those who take care of the young people feel that around the age of twelve is a good time to begin to have the assurance of salvation. Young people may have been saved before then, but if not, at least at this point in time they are encouraged to receive the Lord and to be baptized. For many, this takes place at a conference or a retreat. I think that the saints in many of the churches labor in this way. Of course, we are not legal regarding these matters, but this is typically what happens.

The Marker of the Six Years of Junior and Senior High

The next marker along the way would be graduation from high school six years later. During the six years between sixth grade and the end of high school, many of the young people are engaged in the young people's meetings, the summer schools of truth, and other types of activities, including conferences and retreats for the young people. This is wonderfully designed. This is marvelous. You know, in the educational systems around the world, after nearly 1000 years, this approach has become nearly universal; first primary school, and then six years of junior high and high school. We have something similar to that in the church life. These are great markers.

The Marker of the College Years

After high school graduation there is another marker of the four years of college. If one has a heart for the Lord, these four years of college are very important. We encourage the saints not to just go to college, but to utilize this time for further pursuing. During these college years, students are still running the race, but no longer as a child or teenager, but as a young adult. By the way, I don't like to apply this phrase "young adult" to you working saints. You are adults. Young adults are those people who read high school paperbacks, etc. If you visit the Barnes and Nobles young adult section, you will find those books for teenagers. By the age of 18 you can vote and fight in the military. This makes you an adult.

Now these four years of college are enormously important. We should all be encouraged, especially if you are young parents, to think this way for your children. The four years after the high school years are immensely important. These are the years that your spiritual life should flower; mine did. We should not think, "Oh, I need to be older and more mature, in my 30s or 40s before I truly develop. No – I'm not talking about maturity; I'm talking

about flowering. The six years of junior high and high school can be considered the budding years for young people. During that time, there is just budding; no flowering yet. I can also testify that during my high school years, my spiritual life budded. I was just a goofy kid, but my spiritual life budded. Then during my college years, my life in the Lord flowered. Many of us came into the recovery during our college years. I am thankful that right at the beginning of my college years, as a freshman, I came into the Lord's recovery. I had the privilege to be under Brother Lee's direct, living ministry. He put powerful fertilizer upon us, and we flowered; our spiritual life flowered.

In the first few verses of Numbers chapter 1, Jehovah begins the numbering by asking Moses to take the sum of all the assembly. Then all the males from 20 years old and upward were numbered, those able to go forth for military service. This numbering was for fighting, for warfare. Every male from 20 and above was included, without an upward cap. At the age of 20 today, a college student is probably a sophomore or junior. This to me is a strong proof that the college-aged saints are ready to fight for the Lord. They are ready to be soldiers of Christ in God's army. Again, looking back on my life, I can testify that this was my case. I started fighting during my college years. We fought on the college campus and in the meetings. Even in my college years, I was in the front row and also trying my best to prophesy in every meeting. Of course, in those days, we used the word testify. I functioned in the meetings, called hymns and prayed.

Brothers and sisters, this is very realistic – check with the Word of God. A young person can do a lot, much more than what we may think. Perhaps we have been pampering our younger generation a little too much. Sometimes we also pamper ourselves a little too much. This is why I said that the way you look at yourself determines how you act. If you look down at yourself saying, "Oh, I'm a nobody, I'm so young. I'm so immature," then that is how you will conduct yourself. But if you

say, “I’m twenty, number me for the fight,” you will be able to help fight the Lord’s battles. Look at those today serving in Afghanistan. Some of them are leading a platoon. Some of them are making life and death decisions. Yes, they are young, but they are of age to fight. We should tell our college-aged young people to please the One who enlisted them. Don’t get entangled with the affairs of this life. This was Paul’s charge to Timothy. So this is the next marker on the journey.

After four quick years is college graduation. I hope that so many of our college brothers and sisters would not waste their college years but consider them to be of utmost importance. These are the years for you to live, to fight, and to be all out. During these years you have no burdens, no husband or wife, no kids, nothing. You just carry a bag or backpack and have a bike. I still remember those days; they were like heaven on earth. It is a joy to live like this until we meet the Lord. This is the experience of our college students. That’s why we had the summer college training in Champaign. We will watch a 15-minute documentary during the semiannual training this winter of last summer’s National College Training. It will also be posted to Ageturners.com. Keep an eye out for that and watch it. When I look at these young students, my tears just come out. I cannot forget the last Friday night of that college training. Several brothers did a good job to prepare the students night after night. We had much prayer night by night for each one. By Friday evening they were very soft toward the Lord and ready to respond to Him. By the time I stood up, I just drew the net.

As I came before the students to speak I had a verse ringing in me. In 2 Corinthians 11:2-3 Paul said that he was jealous over the saints with a jealousy of God because he had betrothed them to one husband – to Christ. Yet he feared that they would be deceived by the serpent from the simplicity and purity toward Christ. I told the students, “Tonight, young brothers and sisters I came here full of jealousy. It is not mine, but the jealousy of

God. Therefore, tonight I came here to claim every one of you. I am here representing God to claim every one of you for Him.” Following that call, we asked those who wanted to make a vow to the Lord to come forward and give themselves to the Lord. Instantly many saints rose up and came forward. They lined up all the way into the hallways. Eventually we had to cut the time short because it was getting too late. Then we asked twelve of the speaking coworker brothers to come up to pray for them. I still remember that prayer – it was so special. It reminded me of the verse in Philippians 2:17 where Paul said that he was being poured out upon the sacrifice and service of the believers’ faith. The Philippians had consecrated themselves, and then Paul came and poured himself out as a drink offering upon their offering. That was the feeling on that evening. All these young students offered themselves, then these brothers came and poured upon their offering. The brothers’ prayers were a kind of laying on of hands to confirm the consecration of the young people. That night it seemed the whole auditorium was filled with a sweet fragrance of the Lord. A whole generation of college students, many of them freshmen, gave their lives to the Lord. At least 1,300 to 1,400 college students were present during this time of consecration. Consider the outcome if all of these would become soldiers of Christ, part of the army of God. They would not waste their four years in college, but would be active in every way for Christ and the church. Oh – what kind of a future we would have in the Lord’s recovery! This is the next marker.

The Marker of the Full-Time Training

Now after the marker of the college years, we have another marker, the full-time training. This is a two-year marker. There are six years through junior high and high school, four years of college, and then another two years for the full-time training. Many of you have been to the FTTA. Some of you have not, but don’t worry about it. We all should at least hear this and be

burdened by this. May we be captured by this view. It is best that after four years of college a young person on this pathway or race would run straight to the FTTA for two years.

The Dilemma

Now comes the dilemma. After a run of two years in the FTTA the trainees graduate and come out of that training without any further markers. Many ask at this point – now what? Some of the graduates will serve full-time and may still have some indicators along their path. But many graduates just go back to work or school and back to the church life to live the rest of their life without any markers. That is not running a race. That’s a default position – just living. No, there needs to be markers all along the way. What are the markers, you may ask? This is why we have the book of Numbers, especially chapter eight.

Two Kinds of Numbering

There are two kinds of numberings in the book of Numbers. The first is the numbering of the people of Israel in general. That was from age 20 and up, with no upper limit. Therefore, Caleb, at the age of 85, was still fighting. This shows that as long as your energy is present, you can fight. Moses served all the way until he was 120. There is no upper limit. In general, as far as the Israelites were concerned, if you were age 20 or above, you were considered a fighter. We should all have this in mind. The church is not just the house or temple of God, the bride of Christ or the new man. The church described in the last chapter of Ephesians is a spiritual warrior to defeat Satan and to bring in God’s kingdom. There is a fight going on and a need for an army. Even when the children of Israel left Egypt, Jehovah referred to them as “His armies.” They were not ready to fight at all, but in God’s eyes, they were His armies. And this is what we are today.

Now there is another counting in Numbers 8. This counting is the counting of only one tribe and of one house – the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron. This is because when the children of Israel were gathered at Mount Sinai, while Moses was receiving God's Law, they committed spiritual fornication. They did this in the way of idolatry which was an abomination to God. They made a golden calf and worshipped it and God's wrath came upon them. The tribe of Levi rose up among all the tribes to answer Moses' call for whoever was on the Lord's side. The Levites pulled out their swords to kill their own brothers. Thousands were slain that day, not by enemies, but by those of the tribe of Levi. This pleased Jehovah. Why? Because this tribe stood faithful to God's holiness. They stood with God. This caused them to be chosen by Jehovah to be His own tribe. From that time onward, the tribe of Levi became a special tribe. There were still twelve tribes because Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. These twelve tribes were arrayed all around the tabernacle; three tribes on each of the four sides. At the center of Israel was the tabernacle, God's testimony. The ark of the testimony was within the tent of the testimony or tabernacle of testimony. The Levites were arrayed next to the tabernacle. No other tribe had that privilege. They were there on the north, west, and south sides of the tabernacle. On the east side was Aaron's house and Moses himself. This gives us quite a picture.

From this picture we can see markers with this group of people. Brothers and sisters, we have two statuses before the Lord as His nation, as Israel. First, we have a general status as the people of God. As such, we are all encamped as one of the tribes around the tabernacle. But we also have another status. We have the status of being the chosen tribe of Levi. In this status we are able to serve God by handling the tabernacle and by maintaining the tabernacle and all its furnishings. We actually have a third status, the status of being the priests of the house of Aaron. According

to Revelation 1:6, we are all priests of God in this New Testament age. We are a nation of priests. It was God's original intention that the whole nation of Israel would be priests to serve God. But due to the fall into idolatry, God called a faithful remnant to serve Him instead. Brothers, this is the principle of the overcomers. Levi is in the principle of the overcomers – a small number chosen to handle the things of the tabernacle. The people of Israel as a whole could not touch the tabernacle. It was only the serving Levites who were there to protect the tabernacle, not from outside enemies, but from the ordinary, common hands, including the strangers among Israel.

The Markers of the Priests and Levites

The numbering of the Levites was special. It was not just 20 and above. No, in Numbers we see some markers. First, from 25 to 30. Then from 30 to 50. Third, from 50 and above, or as some brothers say, 50 to infinity. This is very meaningful. Those who are age 25 to 30 are what we today would call apprentices, interns, or learners. Ages 30 to 50 are the ones who are in the actual official service for a twenty-year period. Then those age 50 and above are those retired from the official service. However, according to Jehovah's charge, this age group still has work to do. They are to minister to their younger brothers – to those who are learning (ages 25 to 30), and even to those who are serving (ages 30 to 50). The Levites who are 50 and above have experience as serving ones and are more mature. Therefore, they have the function to mentor, apprentice, or train and perfect the younger ones as to how to serve God and maintain the tabernacle.

Today the tabernacle is the church life. Now here are the markers. I would like to suggest that those who come out of the full-time training consider these markers. When brothers and sisters graduates from the FTTA they are usually around age 24-

25. I told these graduates to set their next marker at age 30. I encouraged them that regardless of where they go – to Boston, to their home locality, or wherever, to take the next five years as a period in their journey to learn as much as they can. These five years are a time to learn how to serve the Lord in the church. Looking back at my life, this is how my journey unfolded. I wasn't that mature, but I had some basic foundation. In the FTTA today, you get a basic foundation through a lot of classes. Now, after that, you need to take all these basic learnings into the field of the campuses and the church life. The field is whatever area of service you pick up. Now take the next five years to apply these things you have learned to the job. You're still not official yet, but you are learning. In general, the years between the ages of 25 to 30 are also the years that a person comes of age, gets married and starts a career. So humanly these age categories also somewhat match in that these are the years that you get settled as a human being. You learn all the spiritual things as much as you can in the church life under those who are mentoring and perfecting you. You have a lot to learn from them. But there is a marker at the age of 30. Again, these numbers are not legal, but are just markers.

The Ages of 30 to 50

Then, according to the book of Numbers, what do you do during the ages of 30 to 50? You officially serve. No one is going to put a bar on your shoulder or put any title, etc. upon you, but these are the years that one should serve the Lord in an official capacity. This is not about rank or position. You don't need any special appointment. But according to the markers in Numbers, you should enter into the service. The word "service" in the book of Numbers has the meaning of military service. Even when it says that the priests shall serve or the Levites shall serve, it is the same word, *saba*. This is the same word in chapter 1 of Numbers. So even the priestly service was a military one. And the Levitical

service that assists the priestly service was also considered a military service. This is very interesting.

So, brothers and sisters, if you are now within this age group of 30 to 50, according to the book of Numbers, you are both a Levite and a priest, and now should be officially serving. Don't say, "Oh, the older saints are more mature. I am still very young. I am merely 37." What? Age 37 is very young? Are you kidding? Even in the world at that age you are supporting a family and raising up your children. You are the dads and moms. There is no way that you should consider yourself as so young. Brothers and sisters, I am speaking to those who are between the ages of 30 to 50 right now. Some of you are in your late twenties, but most of you are 30 to 50. I would say that you need a change in your mind. In your church-life you should have this realization, that you are the core or torso of the Body, of the Body life. You must bear the main burden of the church life in your area, whether you are in a large locality or a small locality. You must bear the burden in the meetings, in the services, in the contacting of people, in the opening of your homes, and in shepherding and even perfecting of others. In your age group, you should be doing those things. This is what the Levites of that age group did.

Ministering to the Tabernacle

In the limited time here I would like to share with you three areas of service that God instructed for the Levites. These are the three services that no other tribes had any share in. It is recorded in chapter 1 verses 50 and 51. First, the Levites were to transport or carry the tabernacle wherever it went. That meant they set it up, packed it up, and carried it on the journey. Second, their job was to minister to the tabernacle, meaning that they attended to the things in the tabernacle and all the furnishings so that the priests could function. Third, they were to dwell by the tabernacle or next to the tabernacle. Recall that the tabernacle refers to God's

testimony. We call it the church life today, Christ with the church.

What are the significances of these three services? First, this group of people bore on their shoulders the burden of transporting the tabernacle, of carrying out God's move. God was moving through the wilderness into the good land. God is still moving on the earth today. Today we are hearing about the concern for the refugees that are flooding Europe. Some saints will be going there to pass out literature, to preach the gospel, and to spread the Lord's testimony in continental Europe. This is all part of God's move. God is moving in this country also, in all the GTCA cities through the migrations. This is God's move. He is moving also in other parts of the world. Our God is not static or stationary. Who is carrying His testimony onwards? It is the priests who carry the ark, but the Levites carry everything else.

Yesterday we mentioned 1 Kings chapter 8 where it says that there is a transition from the tabernacle to the temple. Have you read that passage? In that portion it also refers to the same matter, that the priests carry the ark and the Levites follow with all the other things of the tabernacle. The Levites are supporting. Brothers and sisters, your job in the church life is to bear God's move everywhere.

Second, to minister to the tabernacle, what does that mean? That means you first minister to the Lord, to Christ. Christ is the reality of all the materials in the tabernacle. To minister to the Lord is not a small thing. Even though the priests are the ones who minister directly to God, the Levites are there supporting so that the priests can function. This is a great and holy job! The Levites are the ones that touch the tabernacle and don't die. These ones are ordained to handle and manage all these things. This is to minister Christ. This is also to minister Christ to others. What you handle of Christ as furniture, you also minister to people along with the priests. That is your job from age 30 to 50.

This is how you bear the main burden of the church life.

The third service is to dwell next to the tabernacle. This group of people sleeps right next to the tabernacle, the church life. This is you. It doesn't mean necessarily that you sleep next to the meeting hall, but that you should be guarding all the aspects of the church life. You should be standing, guarding or garrisoning God's testimony so that nothing would defile or profane it. You fight to keep God's testimony pure. Whether there would be outward opposition or inner turmoil, you stand faithful to the testimony of the Lord. You may not have realized that this is your job; you may feel that you are not qualified to do this. Well, at least according to your age, you are qualified. You may question how you are going to serve like this. Well, you best do something quickly, remedially, and jump right into it. You know, many times the best way to pick up something is to just do it – learn on the job. But to begin with, the most important thing is to identify yourself with this age group, with the commission of this age group. This will help you know where you are running. You will know what you ought to be doing – for the next ten years, twenty years, or even the next twenty-five years. Next you may ask, "What will I do when I am fifty?" Well, don't worry, you have a few years before then. There is a lot to do when you reach 50 that younger ones cannot do. It's called mentoring or perfecting. The saints over the age of 50 can be involved with training or shepherding. Today we need more saints 50 and above that can minister to the younger saints.

Now, this picture in Numbers gives us a view for all ages. All the age groups are accounted for, giving indication where each belongs. We should take heed to these markers as we go forward on our journey. Take a look at the book of Numbers. I'd like to leave you with an assignment to read and consider the book *All Ages for the Lord's Recovery*, and I'd like to also charge you to stir up one another in your localities. Incite one another to good works! The Lord's recovery proceeding depends on you. Keep in

mind that there are some younger ones at your heels coming up, and they need role models. You are the ones they will look to and will imitate. You are the generation now that is after the turmoils, the post-rebellion generation. Many of your predecessors were wiped out. We are burdened that this generation would not only be preserved, but would also run the race, set an example, and set up a standard for the generations to come. What a great thing that will be! Now let us pray and give ourselves to the Lord for this. Amen.