



COMMON DISORDERS IN CHURCHES TODAY

by Dr. Daniel O. C.

If I stop to think before I speak, I would not have to worry afterwards about what I have said. My words should edify and build up people around me, and not tear them down.

Be a blessing and not a curse. If you want people to listen to you, let your doctrine be part of your creed and let your creed be compatible with your deeds. Why are many people in a haste to leave their churches? Most are driven by frustration, discomfort, hurts and a host of other problems. Confusion, disunity and lawlessness are not what God wants for the Body of Christ. His will is that the Church should be perfect. He wants every church to be a place where His love springs out from every corner and reaches out to everyone, a place where members are united and every Christian works hard to maintain good relationships with Him and the brethren.

However, in many churches around the world, there are Christians who do not even greet some of their fellow believers or look them in the eye! Lovelessness, carelessness, selfishness and self-centredness have permeated churches and poisoned many congregations.

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Let us look at several common diseases that have inflicted the Body of Christ, starting with Divisionalism.

DIVISIONS AND FACTIONS

1 Corinthians 11: 18-19

18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.

19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognised among you.

Cliques can be found in many churches today. Members of cliques tend to sit together, talk to one another and go for meals together. They often ignore other believers who are not part of their group, or have minimal contact with those who are outside their clique.

Christians, reach out to those whom you do not know instead of sticking to the people you have known for years or even decades. You do not need to know somebody before you talk to him or her. Reach out to a stranger and offer that person a hand of love.

God wants His children to be of one accord, having unity of faith and oneness of spirit. All Christians have one common enemy, and that is Satan. No man or woman should be your enemy.

Factionalism is not God's way. Divisions are symptoms of fleshly works. A church with spiritual problems will be a divided church. A healthy church will be united because its members see one another through the loving eyes of God. When we view people with

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God's perspective, we will not have human enemies, because the Bible tells us "Love covers a multitude of sins" in 1 Peter 4:8.

A Sign Of Spiritual Insensitivity

The existence of divisions in our churches is proof that some Christians are not sensitive in the spirit. They do not respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting for them to reach out to others the way Jesus reached out to multitudes.

A Sign Of Immaturity

Mature Christians do not hide their lights. They do not avoid anyone but aim to "Live in peace with all" (Romans 12:18). Reach out to others, look them in the eyes and greet them. There should be no divisions in a mature church where the members are spiritually strong.

A Sign Of Ungodliness

Godly Christians get down on their knees and cry out to God for the brethren to live in harmony. My beloved, if we have divisions in the Body of Christ, how can we live together without strife in heaven?

A Sign Of Insecurity

Members of cliques often feel insecure when they think about leaving their comfort zones. Some prefer to maintain status quo even though they know that they have stopped growing in the Lord by staying with their group. Put God first before men and let Him be your security.

A Sign Of Disobedience

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Christians who obey God will shun partiality and favouritism. They will treat everyone fairly. It is disobedience that causes you to treat members of your clique better than you treat those who are not in your group.

A Lack Of Love

Where the love of God is, there is no division. The Holy Spirit has spread God's love in our hearts so that we can cry out: "Abba, Father." God is love, and we His children should promote love and reject divisions and factions.

A Lack Of Commitment

Divisions in the Church hinder the work of God. If you are committed to the Lord's work, you will shun in-fighting. You will focus on helping your Christian brothers and sisters to grow in the Lord and restoring lost souls to God so that they can be freed from everlasting condemnation.

A Sign Of Unrighteousness

When the righteous gather to worship God, His love abounds and there is unity instead of factions. Often, when I reach out to shake someone's hand, I end up hugging him or her because we are brethren in Christ.

My prayer is that my church, Deeper Life Christian Center, will make a difference in people's lives. I pray for my church members, listen to them, respond to their telephone calls and electronic mail, and interact with them face-to-face. I want them to know that their shepherd cares for them.

WARNINGS AGAINST DIVISIONALISM AND FACTIONALISM

Romans 16:17-18

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17 *Now I urge you, brethen, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

18 *For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.*

The Bible warns us to avoid those who “cause divisions and offences”. They include preachers who peddle the Word of God to fill their stomachs. Preaching is like a business to these people, and the Gospel is the commodity they try to sell in order to amass wealth. Apostle Paul urged true ministers of God to be sincere in their service unto the Lord.

2 Corinthians 2: 17

For we are not, as so many, peddling the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.

In the Gospel of John, the Jews were divided over the words and works of Jesus Christ.

John 10: 19-21

19 *Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings.*

20 *And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?”*

21 *Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”*

John 9:16 - 23

16 *Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.*

17 *They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”*

18 *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight.*

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Despite the many miracles that Jesus performed, many of the Jews chose to believe that He was not the Son of God. They placed more importance to legalism than mercy, and accused Jesus of sinning by healing a blind man on the Sabbath. Some even doubted that Jesus had truly restored sight to one who was born blind.

There are many skeptics today, even among Christians. When prophecy is given, they question its authenticity because they themselves do not hear from God and cannot believe that the Lord speaks to other believers. They doubt messages that are inspired by the Holy Spirit and refuse to believe that our Sovereign God who performed so many mighty miracles in scriptural times can and will do the same today. Christians, whether you believe it or not, what matters is the unchanging Word of God. Do not forget that our Lord is both a God of love and a God of judgement.

Differences in opinions have resulted in divisions in the Body of Christ, but as Christians, we must always ensure that our opinions are based on God's infallible Word and not our own intellect or emotions.

You can be a Christian leader but you may still be left behind when the Rapture takes place. I always tell God: "Lord, I do not care where you put me and which position you give me, but please do not leave me behind when Jesus comes again."

Beloved, I tell you that many so-called men and women of God will go to hell instead of heaven. God alone knows what we do in private, and He will never be fooled by the façade that many people hide behind in order to deceive people around them.

HERESIES

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Another disorder in churches today is the sin of speaking heresies or distortions of God's truths. Heretics may misrepresent God's Word through ignorance or a deliberate desire to mislead others, therefore every believer must ensure that he or she is a diligent student of the Holy Scriptures. Heresies are often passed down from generation to generation.

Matthew chapter 2 describes men or Magi who searched for the newborn King but at no point was the number mentioned. On many Christmas cards and whenever the birth of Christ is enacted across the world, it's common to see wise men and shepherds worshipping the infant Jesus together in a manger. This is actually an inaccurate depiction of God's Word. The shepherds saw Jesus in a manger but the wise men saw Him in a rented room. Check the Scriptures yourself and stop accepting or spreading half-truths, distortions and outright lies!

The Bible talks about 3 types of gifts so some Christians assume there were 3 wise men. It says the wise men were "from the East". So some believers claim the Magi were from Japan! Examine what you are taught against the Word of God, and reject any preaching or teaching that contradicts the Bible.

Beloved, some of the things you hear from Christian ministers may not be scriptural. The same applies to multi-media resources. Any deviation from God's truths constitutes heresy, and anyone who preaches messages that are not in line with the Bible is presenting a false religion. Heresy is a fruit of the flesh or carnal self.

Galatians 5:19-20

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19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*

20 *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outburst of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, **heresies.***

2 Peter 2: 1

*But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be **false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord Who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.***

If you are guilty of the works of the flesh described above, it is time for you to quit! Whatever you are taught, verify its authenticity by checking it against the divinely inspired Word of God. Every commandment, doctrine or teaching by men must be in agreement with the Holy Scriptures, otherwise it is a heresy that you must reject.

Matthew 15:9

'And in vain they worship Me. Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men,'

Acts 15:24

Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying: 'You must be circumcised and keep the law' – to whom we gave no such commandment

1 Timothy 4: 1

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

Do not be deceived by heresies. The religious leaders introduced many man-made doctrines during the time Jesus was on earth, and He warned the people about this. Let us take heed, and do not assume that every teaching by popular Christian leaders of today are biblical and pleasing to God.

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Matthew 16:12

Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Colossians 2:8

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Hebrew 13:9

Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

Let no man deceive you. Do not engage in futile arguments about philosophies that have nothing to do with God. Some heresies may sound very good because they are preached by charismatic smooth talkers with good stage presence. Beware! The words of false teaches and false prophets are as smooth as butter but when you swallow them, they are more dangerous than a viper's bite.

A heretic will speak heresies. A fool will speak foolishly. A child of God will represent God wherever he or she goes.

Isaiah 32: 6

For the foolish person will speak foolishly, and his heart will work iniquity: to practise ungodliness, to utter error against the Lord, to keep the hungry unsatisfied, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

A durian tree (tropical fruit in Asia) cannot produce apples and you will not find oranges on grapevines. Christians, make sure that you produce the fruit of the Spirit, and not foolishness or heresies!

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SELFISHNESS

1 Corinthians 11: 21

For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

2 Timothy 3: 1 - 4

- 1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.*
- 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
- 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,*
- 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.*

Selfishness is a major problem in many churches today. It is not the will of God for us to be selfish. Many of us are selfish, self-centred and self-seeking. However, we tend to be “right in our own eyes”. God wants us to reach out to people and love them as much as we love ourselves. Selfish people love themselves more than they do others, and they give priority to their own interests. The Bible expressly declared that people will become lovers of self in the end times. Check yourself today! Do the following statements describe you?

- You love yourself more than you love anyone else.
- You love yourself more than you love your spouse.
- You love yourself more than you love your children.
- You love your family more than you love God.

If so, may you come before the Lord our God in repentance and be cleansed, renewed and transformed for His glory in Jesus’ name, Amen!

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God wants you to love Him with all your heart, soul and spirit. He also wants you to love your neighbours as you love yourself (Galatians 5:14). The cross is a central symbol of Christianity. It represents a vertical relationship with God and a horizontal relationship with our fellow men.

Deuteronomy 6: 4-6

- 4 *Hear, O Israel: The Lord, our God, the Lord is one.*
- 5 *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*
- 6 *And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*

Do you love God? Or are you selfish? When you come to the house of God, do you say: "Lord, I come and lay down my love for everyone." Even though people may trample on your love, you do not need to worry about that, for God will take care of it. Selfishness is one of the fruit of the flesh.

It is not enough for you to speak in tongues and dance in the spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit must be evident in your life if you are a child of God. His love must flow from you and reach out to others. The inflow of God's love will bring about an outflow that will overflow and touch people around you. Do you genuinely care for others or are you consumed with fulfilling your selfish ambitions?

2 Corinthians 12: 20

For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults.

One businessman told me: "Pastor, it is good to be a child of God, but in the business world, if you do not eat your neighbour, you will not grow fat." This Christian brother

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has subscribed to worldly wisdom which states that in this 'Dog Eat Dog' world, rivals must tear down one another in order to survive and succeed. This worldly principle contradicts God's way. Many people step on others so that they will be elevated as they climb the ladder of success. They forget that once these artificial steps are removed, they will tumble from the heights. Why not grow gradually and naturally as the Lord leads and empowers you?

James 3:16

For where envy and self seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

The wisdom of the world breeds self-seeking individuals but the wisdom of God produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Do you have God's love, joy, peace and patience? Are you long-suffering and compassionate? Anyone who preaches the Word of God must do so with sincerity. The Bible warns us about those who preach to attain their own selfish goals.

Philippians 1:16

The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my chains.

2 Corinthians 10: 12

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

God did not establish us in order that we should compete with other people. He established us to enable us to live above sin in this evil world. Our Lord Jesus Christ lived on earth and was without sin. Tell God you want to be like Jesus: "I need to be a

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part of what You are doing among men. Let my life be totally changed so that I will live above sin.”

Philippians 2: 3, 4

- 3 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*
- 4 *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Do not let selfishness and selfish ambitions motivate you but always consider other people’s interests before your own. Much of the rivalry and fighting going on today result from Man’s desire to occupy the best position and enjoy prime benefits and advantages. We want to be served, but we are not willing to serve. We want to be loved but we are not willing to love others. You may be asking how you can avoid being selfish? Simply lead a life full of love that is without hypocrisy.

Romans 12: 9, 10

- 9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*
- 10 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another;*

Some Christians abuse the gifts of the Holy Spirit by exercising them selfishly. They do not operate within the level of grace and faith given by God.

Romans 12: 3-8

- 3 *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*
- 4 *For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function.*

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- 5 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another*
6 *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them;*
if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;
7 *or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;*
8 *he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with*
diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

I do not want any trace of selfishness in my life. I want to be a person whom God can be proud of. I do not want all in heaven to weep when my name is mentioned. What about you? Does your name bring shame to the Lord or draw praise for Him?

God testified that Job, Noah and Abraham were righteous men. What can He say about you? Be faithful in giving to God. The Lord loves a generous giver, so do not give out of a selfish heart. The Israelites were liberal in their offerings to God and gave beyond what was needed.

Exodus 35: 20-21

- 20 *And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of*
Moses.
21 *Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing,*
and they brought the Lord's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for
all its service and for the holy garments.

Exodus 36: 5-7

- 5 *And they spoke to Moses, saying, "the people bring much more than enough for the*
service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do."
6 *So Moses gave a commandment and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the*
camp, saying, "let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the
sanctuary." And the people were restrained from bringing.

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7 *for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done – indeed too much.*

Nowadays, when the offering bag is passed around, many Christians rummage through their bags and wallets for coins. After the church service, they happily pay several tens or hundreds of dollars on a meal. They forget that God is the giver of all good things and everything they have comes from Him. The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:6 that what we sow is what we reap. If you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully. This principle does not just apply to money, but also to your time, talents and other resources.

I am very happy whenever I give unto the Lord, and I am also happy whenever I am being criticised for doing what is right before the eyes of God. When everybody compliments me for being a good man, I am quick to examine myself. I check myself to ensure that I have not fallen into the trap of dancing to the tune of this world. I do not want people to consider me a good person because I preach what they want to hear. I want to speak forth God's message even if people dislike what I say because it exposes their sins and careless lives. Give yourself and all you have freely to the Lord so that He can use you to be a blessing to others.

King David set his affection on the House of God and gave freely to the Lord for the building of the temple. His godly example was followed by the people he ruled, and they too "offered willingly" for the work of God.

1 Chronicles 29: 3-5, 6-8

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- 3 *Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver,*
- 4 *three thousand talents of gold of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to over lay the walls of the house;*
- 5 *the gold for things of gold and the silver for things of silver, and for all kinds of work to be done by the hands of craftsmen. Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?*
- 6 *Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly.*
- 7 *They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.*
- 8 *And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the Lord, into the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.*

Where do your affections lie? If you love the things of God, you will give liberally to Him. Many Christians struggle to pay their tithes to God. Perhaps He has blessed you and enabled you to sell your property at a profit of one million dollars. Are you negotiating with Him because you feel that one tenth or \$100,000 is too much to offer Him? When the Lord blesses some Christians with good increments and promotions, they stop tithing because they feel that one tenth of their higher salary is too huge to give to God. Are you like this? Do you struggle to give back to the Lord a portion of what He has given you?

This is a serious matter. What you give to the Lord, demonstrates how much you truly love Him. Jesus asked His disciples: "Do you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15).

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Do you love the Lord more than you love your possessions? Let us look at more examples of liberal giving in biblical times.

2 Chronicles 24: 9-14

- 9 And they made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the Lord the collection that Moses the servant of God had imposed on Israel in the wilderness.*
- 10 Then all the leaders and all the people rejoiced, brought their contributions, and put them into the chest until all had given.*

Ezra 1: 5-6

- 5 Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.*
- 6 And all those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold,, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.*

When Jesus was on earth, He taught about the value of sacrificial giving. His disciples were impressed by the rich men who gave large sums but it was a poor woman who caught the Lord's eye even though she had very little to offer.

Luke 21: 1-4

- 1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury,*
- 2 And He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.*
- 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;*
- 4 For all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."*

If you lack and still give, you show genuine love. If you give out of your abundance, you may do so carelessly, without really caring for the recipient. What is an offering of \$20 from a person who has \$2000? It's a different story when you are down to your last

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\$20 and you still choose to give it away because you love God. The early Church was marked by unity and a strong bond of love. They shared all they had with one another so that no believer would suffer lack.

Acts 4:32-37

- 32 *Now the multitude of those who believe were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*
- 33 *And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.*
- 34 *Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold.*
- 35 *and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*
- 36 *And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,*
- 37 *having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Do you give generously unto the Lord? Know that whenever you withhold your hand from giving to the Lord, you are actually robbing yourself. You can never outgive God, and He has promised to reward His children who are faithful in tithing (Malachi 3:8-10).

MISUSE OF THE CHURCH

Another disorder in our church today is the problem of the abuse of church.

Matthew 21:12-13

- 12 *Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.*
- 13 *And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.'"*

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Our Lord Jesus displayed godly anger when He saw the people misusing the temple of God by turning it into a market place. There are Christians today who use their church as a place to socialise and build up business contacts. They violate the sanctity of God's House. It does not matter whether the service you attend is conducted in a church building, auditorium or hotel. The Bible tells us in Matthew 18:20 that where two or three people are gathering in the name of the Lord, He is there. Therefore, you must maintain holiness in the way you dress, talk, act and think. Never forget that you are in the holy presence of our Almighty God!

1 Timothy 3: 14-16

14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;

15 but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER

The Holy Communion is not just grape juice and crackers, but a lasting symbol of the redemption work of Christ on the Cross and His Second Coming. That is why the Bible warns us to examine ourselves before we partake of the Lord's Supper, or risk God's judgement.

1 Corinthians 11:27-30

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- 27 *Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.*
- 28 *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*
- 29 *For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*
- 30 *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*

EXAMINE OURSELVES

1 Corinthians 11: 31-32

- 31 *For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*
- 32 *But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

Examine yourself before you partake in the Holy Communion. Let your heart and hands be pure.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified.

If you need to forgive someone or seek somebody's forgiveness, do not hesitate. Discard bitterness, malice and wrath and put an end to contentions, strife and infighting.

Psalms 24:3-5

- 3 *Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place?*
- 4 *He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol. Nor sworn deceitfully.*
- 5 *He shall receive blessing from the Lord. And righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

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He or she who wants to stand before God to receive His blessings must have clean hands and a pure heart.

DISPUTES

Luke 22:24

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

The disciples of Christ argued about rank. How many of you have fought to be recognised as a leader? Physical might or a superior intellect will not earn you the right to enter the Kingdom of God and enjoy eternal life. My beloved, you do not enter into the Kingdom of God because you are weighing 300 kg or because you have five degrees or doctorates.

These are the criteria to enter:

- You accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour
- You walk with humility before God
- You live worthy of His holy calling
- You lead a blameless and righteous life that is above reproach

Those who have godly wisdom will avoid foolish disputes. They will not be quick to argue and fight with people.

Titus 3:9

But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.

1 Timothy 6:4

He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions.

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1 Timothy 1:4

Nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.

God knows the right people to place in positions of leadership, and as His children, we must be willing to let Him make the choices.

**BRIBERY, NEPOTISM AND
FAVOURITISM**

Some Christians use love offerings to try to buy positions of authority in a church or ministry. They tell their pastors they want to bless them with offerings, but in their hearts they hope to be appointed as church leaders. Beloved, give with sincere motives and avoid bribery.

Proverbs 29:4

The king establishes the land by justice, But he who receives bribes overthrows it.

Isaiah 1:23

Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them.

Amos 5:12

For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins; afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate.

Ministers of God must be careful to be innocent of nepotism and bribery. Do not put someone in a leadership position just because of your personal preferences or relationship with them, or because of the size of their offering. Pray for God's wisdom and guidance before appointing a leader.

Exodus 23:8

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And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

Deuteronomy 16:19

You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.

Ecclesiastes 7:7

Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, and a bribe debases the heart.

REJECTION OF THE POOR

In many churches today, those who are poor are rejected or marginalised. They are ushered to the back of the sanctuary or ignored, whereas those who are rich and well-dressed are urged to sit at the front near the church leaders.

I have made it clear to the ushers in my church that anyone can sit anywhere, apart from the sections reserved for those on duty such as the worship team and the ushers themselves, or for the elderly and those with young children. However, latecomers should sit at the back in order to avoid disturbing the congregation in the middle of the service. If you want to sit at the front of the church, simply turn up early and occupy the seats near the pulpit. This is how we operate in my church. Everyone is equal in the eyes of God. If you think you deserve to be treated as a Very Important Person, you will not be happy in my church because we do not practise partiality.

James 2: 1-9

- 1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.*
- 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,*

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- 3 *and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or "Sit here at my footstool,"*
- 4 *Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?*
- 5 *Listen, my beloved brethen; Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?*
- 6 *But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?*
- 7 *Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?*
- 8 *If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you do well;*
- 9 *But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

It does not matter whether a person's tithe amounts to \$10,000 or \$10. Do not treat the rich well and the poor with disdain. That is sin. When you reject the poor, you reject God.

Proverbs 17:5

He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker; He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 18:23

The poor man uses entreaties, but the rich answers roughly.

Proverbs 21:13

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.

Proverbs 30:14

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There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Heed the cries of the poor and plead their cause before our merciful God. Meet their needs with the resources that the Lord has blessed you with.

Proverbs 29:7

The righteous considers the cause of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such knowledge.

Proverbs 31:9

Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Isaiah 25:4

For You have a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat; for the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

Humility is the weapon of the poor, and the Lord will not forsake them. He will deliver them.

Isaiah 41:17

The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

Jeremiah 20:13

Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For He has delivered the life of the poor from the hand of evildoers.

Check your life today! God has shown us the common disorders plaguing the Church today so that we can repent and turn from our wicked ways. I pray that your church and mine will stand firm on the Word of God so that His will can be established on earth. Live right, and be exemplary Christians who glorify God wherever we are. He

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who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Church today. Do not harden your heart, but tell the Lord: "Heavenly Father, touch my heart. I want to live right. I will change my ways and walk according to Your directions and Your will. Strengthen me and give me Your wisdom to lead a life that pleases You. I pray in Jesus' most precious name, Amen!"

Do you want to see God's healing power flow in our churches worldwide? Do you long for a manifestation of God's presence? Put an end to divisions and factions in your church; stop all heresies; avoid selfishness; prevent anyone from misusing the church or partaking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner; stop all disputes; reject bribery and partiality; and do not reject the poor.

Do all things according to God's Word and stop relying on Man's wisdom. I pray that your church and mine will shine brightly in the midst of darkness so that God alone is glorified. May our churches be places where people will be totally redeemed from the curses of Satan. Let us take heed of God's warning and turn wholeheartedly towards Him, our source of victory throughout the ages.

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