

*Principle 40*  
**The Body of Christ is the  
Church**

Many times we are preoccupied with the idea that the building where we worship is the Church. Yet the early Church and the Biblical record, bear witness to the fact that the people themselves are the Church.<sup>906</sup>

The true work of God is not dependent on money or modern methods to grow, but rather on hearts that have been affected by the Gospel of our Lord. If we focus on building structures and churches, we can subtly deceive the people to depend upon such structures<sup>907</sup> rather than the living Lord.<sup>908</sup>

No structure, except the living structure of the body of Christ, are necessary in the rural underground Chinese Church. The entire movement as a whole does not own buildings but make use of fields, caves<sup>909</sup> and homes. What is most important to them is the people of God.<sup>910</sup> Such was the burden of Paul the Apostle who saw the people as being the Church and the crown of his reward.<sup>911</sup> This was also the burden of the early Church which acknowledged the priesthood of all believers.<sup>912</sup> Where every part of the body had a job or function. They did not believe

in leadership that lords itself over the body of Christ but rather serves and equips it.<sup>913</sup>

This does not undermine the usefulness of a building or structure where it can be used for a gathering of the Church. Some servant leaders in the rural underground house Church networks in China meet in barns, with animals walking around as they pray, and they receive instructions from the Lord for millions of believers. Meeting in a barn or even an old unoccupied church building is not wrong in itself. Though the underground Church in China is not as free as other Nations to meet in various types of buildings, the Church is still growing and abounding in the work of the Lord. May we not make the mistake of seeing the building as *the Church*. May we rightly view the people themselves as God's true Church, set apart unto Jesus Christ.

Bibles in the rural underground Church in China are scarce at times, and it is common for fellowships to have handwritten copies of verses and Epistles similar to the early Church days. The Chinese love their Bibles greatly and treat them as the most cherished item that they own or have in the world. Some of the current servant leaders in the rural underground Church, early on, would gladly travel a full day, one way, just be able to borrow and read a Bible. Most preaching, especially in the earlier days of the movement, was from verses they had memorized.<sup>914</sup>

“As the Holy Spirit teaches the Chinese Church, they are not *reservoirs* who selfishly keep what they learn; rather, they are clear and unobstructed *conduits* that flow to others. The believers have an unconditional and uncompromised love for each other.<sup>915</sup> They love each other according to Christ’s command.<sup>916</sup> Our Chinese brethren are walking Bibles for they have memorized much of it. We must do likewise for if we in the West have our Bibles confiscated, how will we still minister to others if we cannot recall God’s Word?”<sup>917</sup>

The underground Church in China has such a reverence for the Lord and His Words and they see themselves in the proper light of God’s holiness. A short Chinese hymn<sup>918</sup> that reflects their humble hearts realization that they were sinners in need of a Savior says: “Lord, how great You are! You didn’t abandon us. We are dust. We are no better than worms and moth, but You took pity on us. You cared for us, and chose us.” Such words show the humble attitude we should come to God’s Word with to receive life, instruction and truth.<sup>919</sup>

The underground Church in China operates like a body and one part does not demand to be recognized above the rest. One Church leader who with 7 others oversees many million believers was asked if titles are used for them. He responded by saying, “No, we don’t think like that. We’re all just brothers and sisters.” All believers in that house Church network

know who the leaders are and respect them but the leaders do not demand to be recognized by titles and other various elevated positions. Underground leaders “believe they must sacrifice for the kingdom family of God.”<sup>920</sup>

“The underground Church in China acts like the New Testament Church. No one is called doctor or pastor, they call each other *brother and sister*. What they do is defined by function or gifts, not title. One may be gifted as a teacher so he teaches. Another may be gifted in hospitality so they serve in that capacity. Their gift makes room for them to serve. They feel that titles divide. To them the Church is a familial entity; every member is essential. The Chinese see the Church as a family functioning as the body of Christ.”<sup>921</sup>