

Care for many people and raise up pillars

**Main focus: the examples of Jesus' serving people
5 loaves 2 fish and 7 loaves several fish events**

Matt.14:20 And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.

Matt. 14:21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matt. 14:22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while **he (Jesus) dismissed the crowds.**

Mark 8:8 And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

Mark 8:9 And there were about four thousand people. And **he (Jesus) sent them away.**

Mark 8:10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

These verses of the Bible are very shocking and alert to me. Jesus was very compassionate, loving, and capable, instructing and teaching his disciples to serve ~5,000 and ~4,000. But after serving, He (not the disciples) immediately sent the crowd to leave, and urged the disciples to get on the boat and leave. He himself sent people away, because in the church life we are not able to carry out this, because we are often kidnapped by the emotions of others and do not know that to raise up the pillars (it takes much time) is a main burden of the Lord (these verses reveal this purpose to us).

Matt. 14:13 Now when Jesus heard this, **he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.** But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.

John 6:2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

John 6:3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.

Jesus who is sinless lived a life of oneness with God the Father, and often had separate fellowship with God the Father (retreat to the wilderness alone). We also need to live a life of oneness with the Lord, and cannot serve the Lord and the church with our natural ability and kindness.

The Lord and the disciples often fellowship (sit with the disciples) and serve together. It is Lord's purpose to raise them up as pillars of the church. In the church life, the service team members or service teams need to have intimate fellowship together in the Lord.

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John 6:2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

John 6:3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.

Mark 6:31 And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and **they had no leisure even to eat.**

Mark 6:32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place (G2048; wilderness) by themselves.

Mark 6:33 Now many saw them going and **recognized them (disciples), and they ran there on foot** from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

The Lord Jesus led people away from strong religious places to the wilderness and then took care of them. Many people approached Him because of His miracles (John 6:2) and knowing His disciples (Mark 6:33). Therefore, we cannot be just message listeners or believers, for examples, just focusing on meetings and not on individual saints; focusing only on the feeding of divine nature: reading, memorizing and prophesying, without focusing on the care of people's needs; that is, the genuine human needs of the saints and gospel friends such as their works, health, studies, immigration, finances, marriage, etc. We need to practice gospel preaching like these disciples (pillars in the church life), and the most important thing is to have Christ's presence and follow Christ.

Matt. 14:14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and **he had compassion on them and healed their sick.**

Matt. 14:15 Now when it was evening, **the disciples came to him and said**, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; **send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.**”

Matt. 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd **because they have been with me now three days** and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

Matt. 15:33 And **the disciples said to him**, “**Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place** to feed so great a crowd?”

The Lord Jesus, our Savior, is always merciful to and has compassion on (Matt. 14:14; Matt. 15:32) all people include us, so He is willing to provide care, and does not want anyone to starve (Matt. 15:32).

But His provision and care for many people often serve through the pillars of the church (His disciples). But the disciples here (on our behalf) feel that they have no ability to serve others, or are unwilling to serve others, and hope that the saints can take care of themselves. How about us?

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Matt. 14:15 Now when it was evening, **the disciples came to him and said**, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; **send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.**”

Matt. 14:16 But Jesus said, “They need not go away; **you give them something to eat.**”

John 6:8 One of his disciples, **Andrew**, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,

John 6:9 “**There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish**, but what are they for so many?”

Matt. 14:21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

In the case of about five thousand men without women and children, the Bible tells us that although not much Christ is constituted in us (five barley loaves, two fish), the Lord can still use it to bless many people. What happens most often in church life is that if the saints feel that they are not able to serve others, then the less they can grow (to become pillars), the less the church can be blessed. Sometimes there are only a small number of saints serving instead of everyone functions and all member serving. In addition, the serving ones (pillars) need to know the gifts and riches of the saints as many as possible, even only a little (here, Andrew knows the child who has five barley loaves and two fish). The Lord can used these to bless His church.

Matt. 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd **because they have been with me now three days** and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

Matt. 15:33 And **the disciples** said to him, “Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?”

Matt. 15:34 And Jesus said to them, “**How many loaves do you have?**” They said, “**Seven, and a few small fish.**”

In the case of five loaves and two fishes, the disciples had nothing to supply, but the Lord used them to feed about five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes received from a child. But in the case of seven loaves and several fishes, the disciples (**the pillars of the church**) had them, and the Lord used these to feed about four thousand men. Thus it is manifested that the disciples (**the pillars of the church**) have grown in the 2nd case. The Christ in the disciples (representing us) needs constant to grow, and this growth often happens effectively when serving others, and often when we fail.

John 6:26 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.**

John 6:27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” .

In the case where the Lord Jesus fed five loaves and two fishes, not including women and children, there were about five thousand men, everyone including us did not know that He was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. So even the Lord Jesus and the disciples came together to serve, in the aspect of knowing Him, it seems to be a failure. In fact, He has the power to provide everything we need (use the example of five loaves and two fishes as a testimony). But saints including us (desire to be the serving ones) often want the Lord to provide us with immediate needs (e.g.: work, house, car, wife, children, health, etc.; food that perishes) and enjoy such an outward blessing, but not knowing, pursuing, and continuing to serve the Lord and His beloved church to obtain the Lord Himself (food for eternal life). **It also means that it is not easy for us to grow onto the pillars.**

Matt. 14:21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Matt. 14:22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

Matt. 15:38 Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Matt. 15:39 And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

Mark 8:9 And after sending away the crowds, he got into the boat and went to the region of Magadan.

Mark 8:10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Luke 10:1 Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to come.

The Lord is merciful to everyone and needs to serve a great crowd of people through the disciples (maybe us). But His main burden is to raise up disciples (pillars of the church). When Jesus did His earthly ministry, he took care of tens of thousands of people. Except for the 12 apostles in the Bible, it seems that He did not raise many disciples (Luke 10:1 seventy). There should also be a revelation to us in the church life. It is necessary to take care of all the saints one by one, but pay great attention to raise up the pillars.

Mark 6:39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass.

Mark 6:40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties.

Mark 6:41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and **gave them to the disciples to set before the people**. And he divided the two fish among them all.

Mark 6:42 And they all ate and were satisfied.

Mark 6:43 And **they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish**.

Mark 8:6 And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and **gave them to his disciples to set before the people**; and they set them before the crowd.

Mark 8:7 And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them.

Mark 8:8 And they ate and were satisfied. And **they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full**.

In the cases of five loaves and two fishes and seven loaves and several fishes, the disciples

- 1. completely obeyed to the Lord's instructions.**
- 2. carried out very laborious services.**

Mark 6:51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,

Mark 6:52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Matt. 16:5 When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread.

Matt. 16:6 Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Matt. 16:7 And they began discussing it among themselves, saying, “We brought no bread.”

Matt. 16:8 But Jesus, aware of this, said, “O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?”

Matt. 16:9 Do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?

Matt. 16:10 Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?

Matt. 16:11 How is it that **you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread?**
Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

But in these two cases, the disciples did not learn that the most important lesson which they needed to learn was to know that He is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and He is able to supply everything for them for His purpose. The Lord has the same hope upon us. Do our services follow the fresh revelation of the Lord? Or we are just busy doing His works (of course they are hard works)?

Matt. 14:14 When he went ashore **he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them** and healed their sick.

Matt. 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion on the crowd **because they have been with me now three days** and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

In the case of five loaves and two fishes, the Lord Jesus had compassion on the people and was immediately willing to take care of them. But in the case of seven loaves and a few fishes, the Lord waited three days before he was willing to take care of them. This tells us that the Lord wanted to take care of people through the disciples (pillars of the church), but they were not ready at that tie. Thus He had to wait for the disciples to have a resurrected Christ (three days) within before He can serve the people whom He desires to serve through the Christ in the disciples.

Mark 7:24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden.

Mark 7:25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet.

Mark 7:26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

Mark 7:27 And he said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.”

Mark 7:28 But she answered him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.”

Matt. 15:28 Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Gal. 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

The Lord reminded us in Luke 7:27 (to let the children be fed first) and Gal. 6:10 to take care of every saint, with divinity nourishment and humanity cherishing. Also preach the gospel, and do not lose any opportunity to gain someone who has a thirst for the Lord like the Canaanite woman.

Matt. 14:34 And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

Matt. 14:35 And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick

Matt. 14:36 and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Matt. 15:1 Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,

Matt. 15:2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat."

Matt. 15:18 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat."

Matt. 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

Matt. 15:20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

Matt. 15:21 And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

At Gennesaret, the Lord Jesus answered the prayers of the people and saved many patients (weakness and needs in human nature). But as soon as the religious people came to make trouble, He left there. The most worthy of our fear in church life is our religion (e.g.: focusing on church meetings and not focusing on individual saints; focusing only on the nourishment of divinity: reading, memorizing and prophesying, and not focusing on the humanity need of the saints; That maybe, the real immediate needs of the saints). If so, the Lord Himself and His blessings will leave us.

Matt. 18:12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, **does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?**

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**"

The Lord's teaching in Matt. 18:12 is very of interest to me. Leave 99 and go to the mountains to find a lost sheep. Commonly saints will spend time with these 99. The lost one is due to his own fault, and it is also not easy to find this lost one.

From one perspective, if some pillars life (have relatively matured life of Christ) are raised up in the church, they will have the burden and the life of Christ to serve the 99 including themselves. In this way, the main serving saint (the shepherd of Matt. 18:12) can go out to find the one who is lost, and it also means that he can spread testimony in another locality as is taught by Acts 1:8.

On the other hand, Matt. 18:12 indicates that it is difficult to find the lost sheep in the mountains, and it may not be easier than to take care of the 99.

From another perspective, if the church does not raise up pillars, the main serving ones may be only able to serve the church meetings (most of them are like 99 sheep), and cannot labor very hard to spread the gospel, testimony in another locality, or take good care of each people (each lost sheep).

Acts 8:5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

Acts 8:6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.

Acts 8:7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

Acts 8:8 So there was much joy in that city.

Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,

Acts 8:25 Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Acts 8:26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place.

Acts 8:27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship .

Acts 8:29 And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”

Acts 8:30a So Philip ran to him

Philip preached the gospel in the city of Samaria. Acts 8:7,8 revealed that the city was very blessed. Peter and John also went to help. But Philip could still hear and follow the Lord's fresh leading and speaking, and immediately left the city of Samaria and walked far away (~100 kilometers away) into the wilderness to preach the gospel to an eunuch. This is an example of what the Lord Jesus says in Matt. 18:12.

From another perspective, I firmly believe that Philip, Peter and John must have raised up some pillars in Samaria to lead the church in that city and take care of and accompany saints. Therefore, if the pillars are raised up, and the main serving ones in the church may be called by the Lord to fulfill God's higher or unique wishes and testimonies (in Acts 8 it was to preach gospel to an eunuch and baptize him).

Gen. 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

Gen. 13:8 Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.

Gen. 13:9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”

Are we merely “good” people enjoying the church life, or do we understand and testify God? (Genesis 13:8,9). Lot did not take the initiative to separate from Abraham. Rather it was Abraham who initiated the parting of ways. This shows that Lot loved his uncle and did not want to leave him. He had a good humanity and he was no doubt cognizant of Abraham’s care and love of him in raising him up as practically his own son and bringing him out of Ur into Canaan. It was because of Abraham that Lot had become rich. Lot probably realized that when he was with Abraham, he was blessed and he was grateful for such a person in his life. Peter in his second epistle even describes him as “righteous” and “godly” (2 Peter 2:7-9). He was what we might call today a “good” brother. Yet when Abraham proposed the parting of ways, Lot agreed and left. Why? He did not know or understand God. Indeed, he enjoyed the blessing of being with Abraham, but when he was given the choice to leave and priority of choice of land, he promptly departed. He was not a bad person, but he left. Are we like this?

Many saints are “good” brothers and sisters. We may like to help people (cook for them, help them move etc., all very precious virtues). We may enjoy the social aspect of the church life (which we need), caring for one another and even testifying how sweet the church life is. But somehow we may leave. This may be an indication that we may not understand the Lord. We may even read the Bible and attend meetings. This does not necessarily mean that we grow. This should be a warning to us.

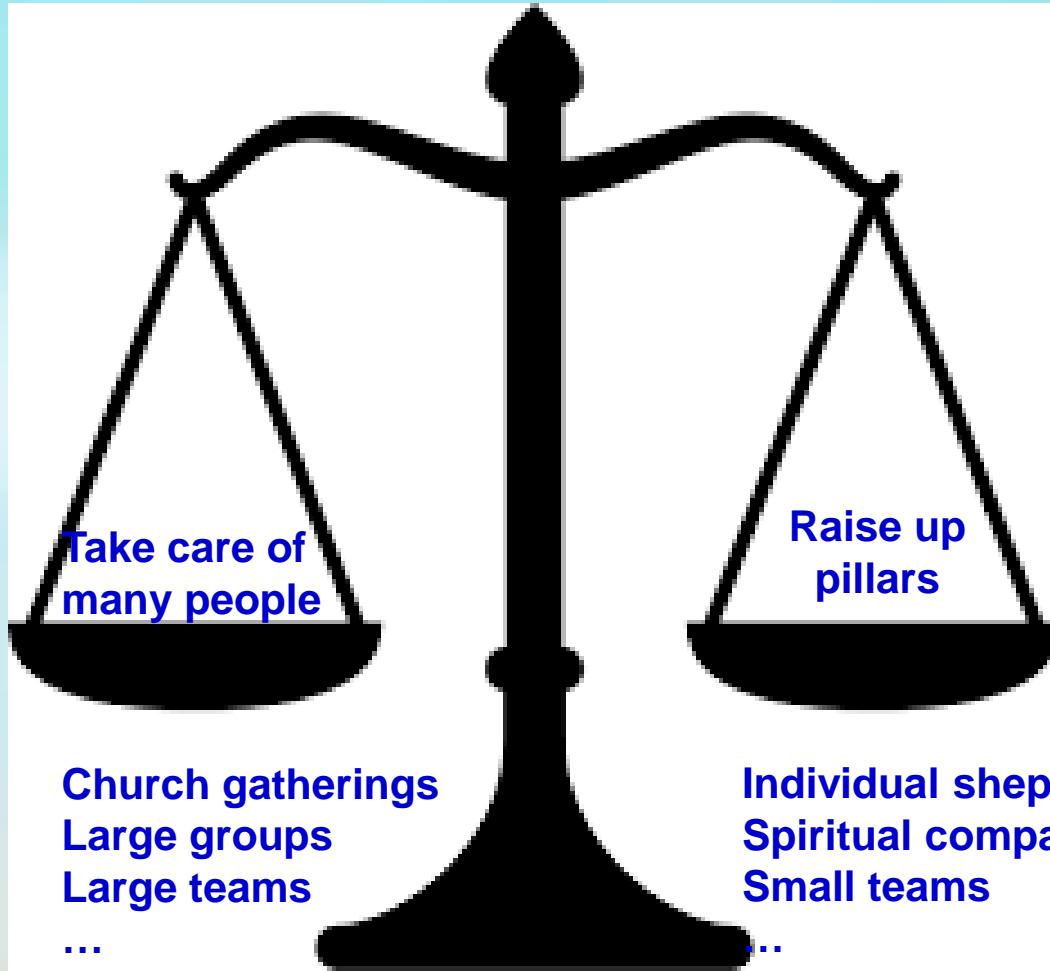
Another very important thing is why did God want Abraham to leave Lot? God wanted to raise up Abraham (a pillar), and wanted to elevate him to a higher and broader heavenly realm. Many matured brothers often said, "In life, is it easier for a brother who is relatively mature in life to pull up a younger and weaker brother in a slope, or is it easier for a relatively young and weak brother to pull down a relatively mature brother in life in a slope? At Montreal, there are not many saints who are burdened to serve people in the church life, but there are many saints. It also take a lot of time to raise up the pillars. Unless the church is extremely healthy and everyone functions (mainly preaching gospel and accompany people), all member serve (mainly preaching gospel and accompany people), otherwise, unavoidably there will be complaints in the church life. It is really difficult!

In the church life, if we are taking care of a brother or sister who may be heading in the direction of Lot, what do we say? (Genesis 13:9). Let us analyse Abraham's proposal to Lot and consider its implications. It must not have been easy for Abraham to take such a step. What must have been going through his mind? Here is his nephew whom he has raised up. If he leaves, what will happen to him? Who will protect him? Abraham may even have felt guilty in taking such a step. Yet it was necessary. Several Bible commentators consider Abraham's proposal as a demonstration of faith. He allowed Lot to choose first, not grasping his own choice, but trusting in God that He would be faithful to His promise to give his offspring the land. No doubt this is a possible interpretation.

But let us go a step further. Suppose Lot had chosen the land of Canaan instead, and not Sodom? Would not Abraham have been "forced" to remain with him in the good land, thereby remaining "kidnapped" by a person who did not see the same thing that he saw, and had no vision of God? The Bible may have had a different script in that case! Might Abraham's proposal have been the expression of natural love, in that in allowing Lot to choose, he still left the door open for Lot to continue to remain with him, in case Lot chose Canaan? No doubt Abraham initiated the separation (a sign of his growth, as we have seen earlier), but couched the proposal with an ulterior "escape clause," thus reserving the option of holding on to Lot. He was faithful to cut ties, but his natural love for Lot still surfaced. This is another interpretation.

What does this mean to us? In the church life, it is not easy to shepherd "Lot." Who is Lot? Actually we do not know, and it is dangerous to label people "Lot." Yet we may spend months and even years with someone, always thinking that they will respond to the Lord (and maybe they will), but because of lack of time we do not preach the gospel nor contact new people. Our natural love for people may override God's purpose for us to raise up pillars, those who want to serve Him and raise up His testimony. Must we care for Lot? Absolutely. But if we are "kidnapped" by such ones, we may be lulled into thinking we are loving people when that love is mainly natural and not motivated and inspired by God.

In addition, when Lot left Abraham, did God protect and take care of Lot's family? Of course it is affirmative (Genesis 14 and 19), but according to God's own will and according to the level of the faith in and love of God of Lot and his family's members. Thank the Lord, this is something we cannot dispute. This should be our realization that the church should takes care of many people but need to raise up pillars. God knows that we have many limitations.



Because our time, ability, physical strength, life and gifts are limited. How to take care of many people and in the meantime to raise pillars is not easy. Therefore, it is necessary for the Lord to have a clear burden and leadership, and a service team to work together in one accord to perform their portions is a more effective operation.