



March 1997

Dear Way Corps:

God bless you abundantly in the name of Jesus Christ.

Well, by now you know that I postponed the second taping of the Advanced Class for a week. There are just too many things crowding my mind and heart to be able to give full attention and allegiance to the teaching of the class. Even now...on the third day since making that decision, each time I sit down to put my head into the Advanced Class material, it gets "crowded out" by concerns regarding the ministry and especially The Way Corps. Right now my greatest concern is in regard to a situation that alarmed and hurt me deeply, reminding me of a recent noontime sharing that was sent to you regarding the proper attitude of a minister toward finances.

We've had to "put on probation" one of our potentially capable Corps couples because they developed a terrible habit of, in guarded terms, "begging" their Branch for money! This developed in the form of overly emphasized "reminders" that they had a birthday approaching, or an anniversary approaching, or teaching more than enough times about the Oriental custom of giving gifts to a minister or holy man. See what I mean? These things are subtle, but it became very obvious to the Corps overseers in observation. The same would be true in the attitude of these individuals regarding honorariums for unique services rendered. When the attitude of the minister becomes tainted with selfishness, then he goes blind spiritually. Apparently, upon further background digging, these Corps served under a now copped-out Way clergyman who always expected a gift of some value, if not cash, every time he visited and taught any Twig fellowship!

Exodus 23:8:

And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Deuteronomy 16:19:

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

These two warnings are in the first five books of the entire Word of God which is the foundation of all revelation and direction for our lives. Even when the motive of the one giving the gift is pure and honest, if the motive of the recipient is tainted, then IT BECOMES A BRIBE as far as practical, devilish

impact is concerned. Therefore, the minister receiving the gift (even if given lovingly) perverts his understanding and judgments. Obviously then there is no genuine energized ministry, and the adversary manifests direct impact within the household of God.

The government logic on raising the salaries of senators and congressmen is that they would not be tempted to be bribed. I think that's laced with baloney, but to use it as an example, I don't believe you could possibly use that excuse for allowing your attitude to become tainted. Your salaries are at the highest possible levels to provide for current and future needs for you and your families. If you doubt the generosity of the Trustees to utilize the abundant sharing to meet your need (so that you can perform freely and capably as ministers), then you should soak your head! We live on a need basis and we allow that need to be broadly defined, as you should honestly recognize.

I am very "tempted" to just put a lid on all cash gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions in our lives from the believers and stop, for a period of time, any cash honorariums for weddings, baby dedications, memorials, or other special services provided. That alone would not change the attitude if you've allowed the motives of your heart to be stained and made detestable, but it would cease the abuse of the good hearts of the believers, and perhaps cut the adversary off at least in that category. More than likely, I'll wait until our Placement meetings to discuss these difficult issues.

When I decided to suggest to the Trustees that we make The Way Corps full-time, I was already very aware of the possible temptations that could creep in. The adversary will always be close by with his parasitical devices and methods whenever true guidance of God is carried out. He obviously will attack at the weakest points and endeavor to infiltrate and taint and stain everyone involved.

I Samuel 2:36:

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, THAT I MAY EAT A PIECE OF BREAD.

Micah 3:11:

The heads thereof JUDGE FOR REWARD, and the priests thereof TEACH FOR HIRE, and the prophets thereof DIVINE FOR MONEY: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.

Clearly these scriptures document that when men and women allow their minds to be corroded from the purity of the only genuine motive to live in life--love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength--then the office and function of a minister or overseer to God's people becomes "just another occupation." It becomes a means to manifest one's selfish intent and one's true motive of heart to become a part of them "that will be rich." The word "will" is boulomai which means to "deliberately purpose." Thus eventually, no matter who that minister is, or how faithfully that one has served, that individual will "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

It is no sin to be tempted in these categories. I could very easily squander thousands of dollars and not have anyone bat an eye, but I endeavor to be

honest about my own potentially weak areas; and I endeavor to have a "multitude of counselors" when necessary, even to the end of not only checking with my wife on certain expenditures personally that I'd like to make but also talking with Don and Howard and Rosalie regarding personal issues of spending money, not to mention ministry issues. The adversary is tough and devious, and at times even the best of us need counsel and advice, yes, and even "reproof and correction" on financial issues. I have my hobbies and interests and things that I like to do, and items of life that I like to collect and have in my personal usage, but I would never want to cross the line into selfishness and greed in my enjoyments, indeed "luxuries" of life. Obviously, for me as well as you, there never is any doubt about my genuine need being met, so certainly the temptations must come in these other categories.

Honestly, I enjoy honorariums and special gifts on occasions, as you know. There's nothing wrong with that as such, but I will certainly slam my privileges shut also if this is what it takes to cut the adversary off in this category and straighten out some of your gnarled-up minds. I am relatively sure that this would be a minimum problem in our Corps household now, but even a minimum problem cannot be ignored because it will always lead to greater problems. Remember, weakness always defeats strength if it is allowed to fester and grow.

I was blessed to receive from Stephen Roberts, our Limb coordinator in Kentucky, this memo in response to what I shared at those noontimes. His specific illustrations further verified what I said about the contamination and treachery in many of our past Way Corps leaders. Here are two vivid illustrations:

"As I was listening to the noontime sharings from March 17 and 18, your teaching from Isaiah 1 reminded me of a couple of incidents from the year I was in the Limb of D.C. with a [former clergyman]. He liked to share his heart concerning 'honorariums' WHENEVER THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF. When my dad fell asleep, he wasn't even in the ground when I received a call from [this clergyman]. He wanted to make sure that whoever was cutting the checks for my dad's affairs didn't forget his \$250. My hurt was so deep for my dad's death that I was too stunned to know how to respond. I had to call my sister, Linda, and make this information known. He even approached me on the evening of the memorial service to inquire if I had communicated to Linda yet!

"Later in the year, the Limb made baby dedications available at a summer picnic. There were twenty-five couples who responded. [He] used the Branch coordinators to deliver his 'verbal invoice' of \$25 per couple. He made sure we communicated that if people wanted to bake bread or cookies, or something like that, in appreciation, it was OK, but it was NOT to replace the \$25. He said anything less would be an insult to God's Word and the office of a minister.

"I thought this sure documents what you shared regarding those who are not with us anymore and their lust for filthy lucre. What perversion of the true heart behind honorariums."

Well, that former clergyman's life is certainly a documentation of the consequences of that kind of lustful mind-set, because certainly he is pierced through with many evils and many contaminations in his false ministry today.

Thanks for listening and considering and taking action in your own hearts where necessary and confronting one another where necessary. It certainly shouldn't be the job of the believers to keep us ministers straight on the proper mind-set and utilization of the abundant sharing and the proper attitude of "God first" in the true energizing of our ministries to the perfecting of the saints.

These are some of the things on my mind, and I'm sure this will help me get back to the Advanced Class studying at hand for a period of time.

I've collected quite a number of verses that confront bribery and dishonesty, especially in leadership, so I've included them here for you on separate sheets for your perusal and utilization.

Love you very much.

Sincerely,
In the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. Craig Martindale". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

L. Craig Martindale