

Ruining Young People by Encouraging Ambition & Developing their Natural Abilities? —A Rejoinder to LSM's & DCP's Accusations

Among their numerous accusations, LSM's "blended brothers" charge Titus Chu with¹ "lead[ing] many young believers into pride, ambition, and corruption..." It is alleged that² "such encouragement of ambition is contrary to the teaching in the Lord's ministry and leads to division and rebellion." Moreover, Titus and his associates' (purported) promotion of ambition is linked with the cultivation of natural abilities. Writers with the LSM-affiliate, DCP also allege³ "Some brothers have encouraged the young people to 'realize, develop, and use the gifts that God has given them...". They label this a "basic misunderstanding," and condemn it as a deviation, "encouraging ambition by stressing the development of natural abilities as 'gifts'." Moreover, the DCP-brothers denounce this view as "ruinous," claiming,⁴ "Natural abilities belong to the old creation and have no value before God...To emphasize the development of gifts or of 'a ministry' is to promote ambition, which is ruinous both to the person who takes such a word and to the church." These serious charges require a response. Is Titus Chu guilty of promoting ambition? Is it a deviation to encourage believers to "realize, develop, and use their God-given gifts"? Are our natural abilities really of no value before God? Here we analyse these allegations and present a brief response.

Is Titus Chu "Encouraging Ambition—Contrary to the Teaching in the Lord's Ministry"?

"Encouraging ambition" appears among the litany of "different teachings and dissenting views" attributed by LSM's "blended brothers" to "Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers." In supporting documents, DCP's writers allege,⁵ "Titus Chu encourages ambition among the young people 'to be manifest' and 'held in high regard' by others. He also counsels them to 'fight to make your mark before the Lord,' even if their aspiration is something of the soul-life." The DCP-brothers seek to substantiate their claims based upon two brief quotes from Titus Chu's exposition on the life of King David.⁶ The first is reproduced below. In the context of David's early accomplishments, Titus says, "David was surely a person held in high regard and appreciated by everyone. If we experience such things, we should treasure them. When you are young, you should labor to be manifested." [Titus Chu, [David](#), p. 71]

Let's pause to consider what being "manifested" means. Titus explains, "Every servant of the Lord must experience some amount of manifestation...Therefore, you should experience fruit from your gospel preaching; you should see impact when you share; and you should be appreciated by the saints and the more experienced brothers in the church life. All these are experiences of being manifested. You should not shy away from these things, but rather aspire to be useful to the Lord for His work." [[David](#), p. 70]

Perhaps Titus Chu's terminology differs from what we are accustomed. For example, being "appreciated by the saints" may correspond to the virtue of "approvedness" (e.g. Phil. 2:22.) Taken as a whole, however, I don't see anything disagreeable here, unless one is bent on fault-finding. These statements simply describe being useful, effective and fruitful in serving the Lord.

The DCP-writers' second quote should be examined in its context. Under the heading, "David's Early Manifestation was Vital to his Further Development," Titus writes, "When you are young, you *should* seek manifestation. Do not be too concerned about whether or not desiring it is something of your soul-life. Fight to make your mark before the Lord, and then let the Lord work on you! Whenever you gain some manifestation, tell the Lord, 'I am not for this. I am for You. My desire in all this is to carry out what is in Your heart.' The Lord must be your center. He alone must become the reality of your living, your serving, and your daily labor. You should not be content to simply become a good, functioning brother in the church life. No! You should fight to have something 'extra' before the Lord. You should desire that the Lord, the church, and the saints would experience blessing through your exercise. Such an aspiration is something precious." [Titus Chu, [David](#), pp. 79-80 emphasis indicates the statements actually quoted by DCP in "[Different Teachings](#).."]

Again, judged in context, I don't find anything objectionable. Titus Chu did not say, "**Do not be concerned** about whether...it is something of your soul-life." That would imply wilfully disregarding whether the soul-life was the source. Rather, he said, "Do not be **too** concerned..." Titus also exhorts the young people to "let the Lord work on you!" Moreover, his suggested prayer (omitted by DCP,) if sincerely practiced, would surely lead to some recalibration, by the Lord, if that were needed.

Ambition vs. Aspiration—DCP's 'Straw Man'—"this Ugly and Evil Matter of Ambition"

Do the statements quoted by DCP justify the charge that Titus Chu is encouraging ambition? I think not! Notice that the term, "ambition," does not appear in Titus Chu's writing. He uses the term, "aspire"—"aspire to be useful to the Lord for His work." It is DCP's writers who redefine Titus' sharing in terms of "ambition." They are aware, no doubt, that, according to the common understanding in the Lord's recovery, "ambition" has a negative connotation compared to "aspiration." Hence Witness Lee writes,⁷ "Aspiration with a pure motive differs from ambition with an impure motive" Casting Titus Chu's writing in terms of "ambition" enables the DCP-brothers to condemn it, saying,⁸ "Such encouragement of ambition is contrary to the teaching in the Lord's ministry and leads to division and rebellion." Then they proceed to juxtapose quotations from Witness Lee about⁹ "this ugly and evil matter of ambition" with Titus Chu's (supposed) "encouraging ambition." DCP's writers employ the devious literary device of constructing a "straw man," a fabricated version of Titus Chu's sharing. They then denounce their own misrepresentation of Titus Chu's writing! This is neither fair, nor ethical!

Is Titus Chu's teaching, in fact,¹⁰ "contrary to the teaching in the Lord's ministry," as the LSM-DCP brothers allege? Note that, although the New Testament condemns "selfish ambition" (Phil. 2:3), it encourages a healthy aspiration. 1 Tim. 3:1 says, "If anyone **aspires** to the overseership, he desires a good work." The Apostle Paul testified that "we are determined," [or "we have as our ambition," (NASB)] to be "well-pleasing to Him." (2 Cor. 5:9.) Paul "**aspired** to announce the gospel" where Christ was not known (Rom. 15:20.) Moreover, he charged the Corinthians, repeatedly, to "earnestly desire" [or "cultivate" (Ampl.)] spiritual gifts, especially prophesy (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 39.) Surely these examples and exhortations commend an aspiration to be useful in the Lord's service. This is what Titus Chu calls "manifestation." This is also consistent with "the teaching in the Lord's ministry," i.e., W. Lee's expounding of these Scriptures. Would an objective reviewer, without preconceived notions, conclude Titus Chu is promoting ambition? I don't believe so. In this writer's opinion, DCP's evidence is far from convincing; their blanket condemnation of Titus Chu for "encouraging ambition" is unjustified.

Stressing the Development of Natural Abilities—the Ruinous Promotion of Ambition?

Titus & his co-workers are criticized for¹¹ "encouraging ambition by stressing the development of natural abilities as 'gifts'." DCP's writers categorically denounce this as a "basic misunderstanding," saying,¹² "What is needed...is not the development of natural abilities... but the ministry of life." "Natural abilities belong to the old creation and have no value before God," they unequivocally declare. They assert that, "To emphasize the development of gifts or of 'a ministry' is to promote ambition, which is ruinous both to the person who takes such a word and to the church." Hence this (so-called) "different teaching" allegedly propagated by Titus & co. is said to be ruining both the young people and the local church. If the DCP-brothers are correct, this is serious!

"Natural Abilities...have No Value before God"—DCP

Let's first ask—Is the DCP-writers' assertion "natural abilities...have no value before God," biblical? In fact, Scripture views the believers' "natural abilities" more positively than DCP's writers portray them. In the well-known parable of the talents, the master distributes talents to each servant "according to his own ability." (Matthew 25:15) In expounding this verse, Witness Lee says¹³ "*own ability* signifies our natural ability, which is constituted of God's creation and our learning." He elaborates,¹⁴ "Although the talents are not our own ability, but the Lord's possession, they are delivered to us according to our ability." Evidently the divinely-given "talents" are positively correlated with our natural abilities. Greater natural abilities are associated with more God-given talents. From this perspective, do "natural abilities...[really] have no value before God"?

Witness Lee stressed that the Apostle Paul's natural abilities¹³—"constituted of God's creation and his learning"—prepared him as an extra-ordinary vessel for God's use. He pointed out that Saul (Paul) was qualified with¹⁵ "the three main elements of western culture: Hebrew religion, Greek culture and Roman politics. He was taught according to Hebrew religion, he was trained in Greek culture, and he was a citizen of the Roman Empire." In contrast to¹⁶ "Peter and John, who were unlearned Galilean fishermen...No one else was as qualified as [Paul] to bear the commission to bring God's New Testament economy to the Gentile world." Here is a striking contrast between

Witness Lee and the LSM-DCP brothers. DCP's writers are not being faithful to his ministry! Brother Lee did not say that Paul's "natural abilities...had no value before God"! On the contrary, W. Lee says Paul's natural endowments of birth and up-bringing constituted a¹⁷ "threefold qualification—in Greek culture, Hebrew religion and Roman politics," for carrying out God's commission.

Second, we reject the DCP-brothers' implicit assumption that developing gifts or natural abilities "is to promote ambition." Regardless of whether gifts or abilities are developed, believers must overcome selfish ambition by denying the "self," and taking up their cross to follow Christ. The scriptural injunction to "do nothing by way of selfish ambition" (Phil. 2:3; 1:17) applies independently of natural abilities, education, training and skill-development. Since these are two separate matters, the existence of the "evil matter of ambition" does not imply that the believers' gifts and abilities should go undeveloped. This *non sequitur* negates the DCP-writers' argument.

In the past, the "Lord's ministry," through Brother Lee, emphasized the development of the believers' abilities and skills through education and training. When expounding the role of Hiram, the skilled craftsman, in building pillars for the Old Testament temple, Witness Lee emphasized the value of education in enhancing the believer's secular skills. We reproduce below some of W. Lee's exhortations to young people, while expounding this topic:

- "I encourage all the young people to get a college degree. Do not make spirituality an excuse for not studying. Rather, study more diligently than the secular students, get the highest grades, and go on for advanced degrees. Do not stop with one Ph.D., but get two or three Ph.D.'s. Also learn to speak a number of other languages...Become a doctor in biology, medicine, or nuclear physics."¹⁸
- Moses and Paul are presented as role models. "Paul was brought up 'at the feet of Gamaliel' (Acts 22:3), a doctor of the law. At that time, law was the highest science among the Jews, and whoever became a doctor of law was considered to be most outstanding...Consider also the example of Moses. Moses was...brought up in the royal family in Egypt. Acts 7:22 says, 'Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians...' He was a scholar in Egypt. Paul was a scholar of religious knowledge, and Moses was a scholar of secular knowledge. However, again the principle was the same."¹⁹
- "Are you anxious to be a Hiram? If you are, then you must...learn the 'Tyrian' skill and trade, and gain the wisdom of the 'Egyptians.' Do not stop your schooling too soon. You should get a master's degree, or preferably a Ph.D. All the church people must be learned ones. We are neither ignorant nor undereducated. Rather, we would have the highest education. We would acquire all the wisdom of the 'Egyptians'."²⁰
- "We need some brothers and sisters with doctor's degrees. It would be very beneficial to have some with Ph.D.'s in biblical Hebrew and Greek. It would also be helpful for some to earn Ph.D.'s in space science and nuclear physics. The church should not be poor or on a low level. Rather, it should have the highest people on earth. Young people, this must become your burden."²¹
- "As young people, you must use your time to study...If you are under the age of twenty-three, your time must be devoted to your education. You should finish your university course by the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. This is not a regulation of the church in the Lord's recovery; this is my teaching."²²

These quotations establish unequivocally that Brother Lee did not denigrate the development of natural abilities. Has not Witness Lee (by the words quoted above)²³ "encouraged the young people to 'realize, develop, and use the gifts that God has given them for the building up of the churches'? Yet the DCP-brothers call this "a basic misunderstanding"! DCP's writers misrepresent Bro. Lee's ministry by asserting, "natural abilities belong to the old creation and have no value before God," and claiming that "to emphasize the development of gifts or of 'a ministry' is to promote ambition, which is ruinous..." Contrary to DCP's assertion that the enhancement of gifts

(natural abilities) promotes ruinous ambition, W. Lee regarded this as providing the necessary base for later ministry. Hence he charged,²⁴ "Young people, you must endeavor to gain the best education. Arrange your daily schedule...In this way, **by the time you are thirty you will be able to begin your ministry** like the Lord Jesus did (Luke 3:23)." His view matches Paul's admonition to "take heed to your ministry...that you fulfill it." (Col. 4:17) An anti-higher education concept was prevalent among young believers in the 1970's following the "Jesus Movement." It also existed among young people in US local churches. As a result of Bro. Lee's admonition, many local-church believers revised their earlier prejudice. He responded,²⁵ "After hearing the messages on Hiram, the builder of the pillars, **many young people have been motivated to further their education. This is excellent.** In order to be a capable pillar builder you need to acquire a good education and to experience the termination of the source of that education." Evidently Witness Lee was more forceful than Titus Chu and his associates in promoting the development of natural abilities!

Brother Lee's Balance vs. the DCP-brothers' Bias

Brother Lee's balanced word on this topic contrasts with the imbalance expressed by DCP's writers. The latter assert,²⁶ "What is needed...is not the development of natural abilities... Natural abilities belong to the old creation and have no value before God." Taken literally, this word deprecates all development of the believers' natural capabilities. This extreme position discourages all forms of training, education and skill-improvement! On the other hand, the DCP-writers emphasize a one-sided "spiritual" view of gifts and ministry. They say,²⁷ "The gifts that are useful for the building up of the church are the issue of growth in life...Ministry is developed...through the unsearchable riches of Christ being constituted into our being as we live a life of being conformed to the death of Christ." In contrast to the DCP-brothers' narrow "spiritual view," Witness Lee emphasized the enrichment of the believers' God-given abilities accompanied by their exercise in resurrection. Bro. Lee used the figure of Hiram's father from Tyre (who had apparently died) to illustrate resurrection. Based on this, he said,²⁸ "All the 'Tyrian' fathers must die...This means that the source of our secular or religious skill must die, but that the source of our human being must still exist." He cautioned,²⁹ "The secular skills we gain will only be useful for God's building in resurrection...you must not remain a natural person...we must exercise ourselves to be in resurrection." Notice this implies that, "in resurrection," secular skills are useful for God's building.

Elsewhere Brother Lee used the sign of Moses' staff in his encounter with God at the burning thorn-bush (Exodus 4) to illustrate the same principle. According to his exposition, the sign of Moses' staff means that "anything we rely on apart from God—our education, our occupation etc...at God's word we throw it down and then take it up again...in a way opposite to the practice of the worldly people, **using it for God's purpose...**" (Exodus 4:3, note 1) Moreover, he said,³⁰ "The Lord wants us to cast our rods down, not to throw them away. **Do not throw away your education...** The young people in the Lord's recovery should attend college and study diligently, not for themselves, but for the Lord...The Bible does not forbid that young people get a good education. But the young people must learn to pick up their education by the 'tail'." Unfortunately important elements of Brother Lee's balanced and finely nuanced exposition are lacking in DCP's publication. This produces a biased and deficient presentation, contradicting both Scripture and W. Lee's own ministry. It seems, in their haste to condemn Titus Chu, DCP's writers play fast and loose with W. Lee's ministry, emphasizing only one side of his teaching, while entirely ignoring other aspects. This leads us to ask--who, in fact, has a "basic misunderstanding of what gifts are, [and] how the genuine gifts are developed"? Is it "some brothers" [Titus & his co-workers] or is it DCP's writers who denounce them? On this point, whose presentation is more consistent with Scripture and Witness Lee's ministry? More fundamentally, what is behind the "blended brothers'" denunciation of Titus Chu for "promoting ambition" and the DCP-writers' condemnation of "some brothers [encouraging] the young people to 'realize, develop, and use the gifts that God has given them'"? Could their source be the subconscious concept that only LSM's "blended brothers" are qualified to "perfect" local-church believers in their functions and develop their ministries? Contrary to such elitist notions, the "blended brothers" do not have exclusive proprietary rights in these areas.

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NOTES:

1. The "blended brothers" in their "Warning Letter" quarantining Brother Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers allege that they "lead many young believers into pride, ambition, and corruption, supporting their use of worldly and fleshly means to preach the gospel and gain increase." ["A Warning Letter to all the Saints and all the Local Churches in the Lord's Recovery..." (Oct., 1, 2006) page 3, point 6] Presented at Living Stream Ministry's (LSM's) International Elders' Training (ITERO) Whistler, BC, Canada, October 2006
2. The DCP-writers then assert, "Such encouragement of ambition is contrary to the teaching in the Lord's ministry and leads to division and rebellion." [Defense & Confirmation Project (DCP), "Different Teachings and Dissenting Views of Titus Chu and Certain of His Co-workers, Point C6, page 16] Also presented at LSM's International Elders' Training (ITERO) Whistler, BC, Canada, October 2006 This DCP document provides the "evidence" backing up the "verdict" contained in the "blended brothers'" Warning Letter of quarantine.
3. This quote in context, under the heading, **Encouraging ambition by stressing the development of natural abilities as 'gifts'** reads: "Some brothers have encouraged the young people to 'realize, develop, and use the gifts that God has given them for the building up of the churches.' Although such words are pleasing to the ear, they betray a basic misunderstanding of what gifts are, how the genuine gifts are developed, and how they relate to the building up of the church. What is needed for the building up of the church is not the development of natural abilities, such as musical or dramatic performance, but the ministry of life. Natural abilities belong to the old creation and have no value before God. The gifts that are useful for the building up of the church are the issue of growth in life; they are not developed apart from our pursuit of Christ and His dispensing of the divine life into us as we fellowship with Him. To emphasize the development of gifts or of 'a ministry' is to promote ambition, which is ruinous both to the person who takes such a word and to the church. Ministry is developed not through the cultivation of ability, but through the unsearchable riches of Christ being constituted into our being as we live a life of being conformed to the death of Christ. To employ any natural ability is contrary to the fundamental nature of the Body of Christ, which is a constitution of divinity mingled with humanity and is absolutely in resurrection. The Lord did not carry out His ministry based on His own natural ability (John 5:19) and neither did Paul (refs)." [Defense & Confirmation Project, "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published subsequently in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 9] This book is part of DCP's 28-book, "Attack Pack" introduced at LSM's Memorial Weekend conference in St. Paul, MN, May 2007. It was introduced by Bro. Benson Phillips as part of LSM's "One Publication," having been reviewed by LSM's editors.
4. Defense & Confirmation Project (DCP), "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published subsequently in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 9] Unless otherwise indicated DCP quotes are from this source. The same DCP-publication (pp. 33-37) reproduces a "letter of Concern from 5 Brothers in Toronto" criticizing the "Roots Boot Camp"- a discipleship camp for young people conducted in Columbus OH Summer, 2006. Evidently the object of this critique is the young peoples' work related (directly or indirectly) with Titus Chu and/or local churches in the area where he and his co-workers serve.
5. "Titus Chu encourages ambition among the young people 'to be manifest' and 'held in high regard' by others. He also counsels them to 'fight to make your mark before the Lord,' even if their aspiration is something of the soul-life." DCP, "Different Teachings and Dissenting Views of Titus Chu and Certain of His Co-workers," Point C6, page 16. The double quotes "... " give DCP's composition. The single quotes '...' are phrases from Titus Chu's writing quoted by DCP in their composition.
6. Titus Chu, DAVID: A Person who Served his Generation by Struggling after God's Heart, Good Land Publishers, November, 2005, based upon Titus' ministry to young people in Montreal Canada, July, 2005
7. New Testament, Recovery Version (RcV.) 1 Tim. 3:1, note 1.
8. DCP, "Different Teachings..." Point C6, page 16
9. DCP, "Different Teachings..." Point C6, page 16 The phrase appears in W. Lee Life-study of 1 & 2 Chronicles.
10. "Such encouragement of ambition is **contrary to the teaching in the Lord's ministry** and leads to division and rebellion." [Defense & Confirmation Project (DCP), "Different Teachings and Dissenting Views of Titus Chu and Certain of His Co-workers, Point C6, page 16]
11. DCP, "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 7
12. DCP, "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 9
13. Note 2, Matt. 25:15, RcV.
14. "Although the talents are not our own ability, but the Lord's possession, they are delivered to us according to our ability. Our ability is constituted of God's creation and our learning." [W. Lee, Life-study of Matthew, p. 762, emphasis added]
15. Witness Lee, Life-study of Acts, p. 203
16. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts, p. 204

17. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts, p. 203
18. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis, Message 85 Consider also Brother Lee's reference to his grandson, in the same message: "**I would encourage you all to learn how to make money.** I have encouraged my grandchildren to study medicine. Although some saints have tried to discourage them from studying medicine, telling them that they only need to read the Bible and love the Lord, I have said, "Don't listen to this talk. Those who say this don't know life. You must listen to your grandfather. He knows life better than you all. Go to study medicine." One of my grandsons took my word and earned all A's in his first year of pre-medical studies. Do not think that this is a kind of love for the world. As you shall see, I have a definite purpose in doing this. Hiram became the builder of the pillars. But if his father had not been a Tyrian, he would not have had the skill to fashion the pillars. We all were born of a "Danite" mother and we all need a "Tyrian" father. The more of a "Tyrian" our father is, the better. If you think that I am too extreme in saying this, I would ask you to read this message to the end." [W. Lee, LS of Genesis Message #85.] In the same context, he said, "I encourage all the young people to get a college degree. Do not make spirituality an excuse for not studying. Rather, study more diligently than the secular students, get the highest grades, and go on for advanced degrees. Do not stop with one Ph.D., but get two or three Ph.D.'s. Also learn to speak a number of other languages. Gain the "Tyrian" skills and the "Egyptian" knowledge. Become a doctor in biology, medicine, or nuclear physics. But then let the "Tyrian" father die. I have told you how I encouraged my grandson to study medicine. Now I will tell you what is truly on my heart. After he finishes medical school, I will say, "Forget about being a doctor and use your medical training to interpret the Bible." His medical training will make him very useful. Young people, gain all the up-to-date knowledge, graduate from college, and then say goodbye to your "Tyrian" father. Graduate from seminary and then say, "Seminary, thank you and goodbye. I have nothing more to do with you, but I will use the skill I have gained from you." [W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 85]
19. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 85. We quote at length from W. Lee's writings NOT because his writings are the standard or a "third testament." The Bible is our only standard. The extensive citations from W. Lee's writings are provided to document the fact that the LSM-DCP brothers have NOT presented W. Lee's ministry in all its facets. Rather, the DCP-writers' presentation contains serious deviations from W. Lee.
20. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 85
21. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 86
22. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis, Message 86]
23. The following quotation is from DCP's critique, "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 9
24. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 85
25. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis, Message 87
26. DCP "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 9
27. DCP "An Appeal to the Young People..." posted on AFW.org July 10, 2006; published in Using Worldly Means to Gain the Increase, Book 6, p. 9
28. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 85
29. W. Lee, Life-study of Genesis Message 86. Along the same lines W. Lee writes: "**The secular skills we gain will only be useful for God's building in resurrection...**you must not remain a natural person. Anything natural is a waste. Instead of being natural, we must exercise ourselves to be in resurrection in every aspect of our living. This is a great matter. The more you exercise yourself to be in resurrection, the more useful you will be. You must be in resurrection even in your relationship with your wife. All the skills we acquire must be in resurrection." [W. Lee, Life-Study of Genesis Message 86]
30. W. Lee, Life-study of Exodus, vol. 1, pp. 88-90