

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: June 8, 2008

Let's Be Part of the *Solution*, Not Part of the *Problem*

by Dan Trygg

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, rather if any *word* is good toward edification of the need, ...in order that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Eph. 4:29,30

“And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,¹² to mend, equip and adapt the saints for work of ministry and service, for building up the Body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the true-knowledge of the Son of God, to mature personhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ...¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole Body, joined and held together by every ligament of support and supply, according to the proper functioning of each part, makes the Body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Eph. 4:11-13,15,16

I Thess. 5:11

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up...”

“What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. *Let all things be done for edification.*”

I Corinthians 14:26

What is church all about? What does God want us to be doing when we meet together with one another?

What is expected of a “kingdom person”? Those who would want to follow Jesus must listen to His directives, and abide by them, putting them into their day-to-day lives. There is no room for slackers, fence-sitters, or the willfully disobedient. The kingdom of God is available to those who will *obey* the King. True, God will accept us where we are, *but* He has an agenda. **God's agenda is to turn us into an army of kingdom warriors and workers, a host of people who will join with Him in liberating people from the oppression of sin and the power of our common enemy, Satan.** This means YOU! From the time we choose to ally ourselves with Jesus, and we are born from above, our eyes begin to open to see the spiritual battle that has been raging all around us. This is a serious business, and there are casualties. **The enemy is busy, and he holds the entire culture that surrounds us in the webs of his deception (Rev. 12:9), to one degree or another, ...including most of the Christians!**

Unlike the enemy's kingdom, which operates by selfishness, greed, lust, fear, deception, and the abuse of power, **the kingdom of God is characterized by good-hearted people, ...men and women who are willing to put God before self, who are willing to give, to serve, to love, to help and lift up others, as God enables and directs.** Jesus said that there is a great divide, a fork in the road, which we all will have to face. There is the broad way, where most people are going, a way of self-interest and creature comforts, ...and there is a narrow path, which diverges from this other roadway. This narrow path leads to life, but few are those who find it, and travel its often seemingly constrictive path (Matt. 7:13,14). One huge lesson from this picture is that *you cannot travel with the crowd and be on the narrow path at the same time.* The narrow path goes off in another direction. If you are still traveling with the larger culture, with unholy friends doing old things, then you are deceiving yourself to think you are on the narrow path. You are either on a clever religious imitation, which is *designed* to lull you into complacency while the “weaver of webs” binds you again in his lies, or you are standing at the narrow gate, but have not broken company with the multitude going to destruction. **You can't have it both ways. Either you are for Jesus, or you are not.** He said, “The one who loves his life will ruin it, but the one who disregards his life in this world for My sake and the gospel, will rescue and preserve him or herself for eternal life” (Jn. 12:25; cf. Matt. 10:39). **If you are for Jesus, then you will be willing to put aside your agenda and patterns of living in order to fulfill God's purposes in your life.**

Let's get to the point. **We are commissioned by God to work together to help one another succeed in our spiritual journeys.** We are appointed by Him to serve one another by encouraging and building up one another. **God will hold us accountable for this.**

We are *not* to be tearing down one another.

We are *not* to be speaking evil of one another (Jas. 4:11).

We are *not* to be judging one another (Rom. 14:13).

We are *not* to encourage one another to sin, or soft-sell the seriousness of playing at sin. Jesus calls that being a stumbling block to one another (Matt. 18:6-8).

When we do that, *we compound the seriousness of our sin.* Not only are we ourselves guilty, but we are pulling other people into *our* junk. Then we are not working *for* Christ; we are working *against* Him!

Let's face it. We all have our old sinful behaviors, our old deceived ways of thinking, which still surface to plague us from time to time in our lives. **How dare we take someone else's inventory, when we have plenty of our own problems!?** Jesus put it this way, "Why do you look at the *speck* in your brother's eye but don't notice the *log* in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, there's a log in *your* eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5). It doesn't matter what our brother or sister may be struggling with, or what pattern of sin they may still be stuck in, we are *not* to think that somehow we are better than they are because we don't have that particular issue. We have plenty of our own! We certainly are *not* to sit around talking about their sin with others. **The clear message of what Jesus is teaching is that we are to help our brother or sister to get free of their "speck".**

Comparing ourselves with them *does nothing to help* anyone.

Judging a sister or brother, **or harboring resentments and unforgiveness,** *does nothing to help* them grow or change, either.

We can't help them if we don't come alongside them, and treat them with appropriate respect as a fellow struggler, ...as a child of God who struggles with sin, as you yourself do (Gal. 6:1).

There is a passage in Romans 12 that is very appropriate at this juncture. Verses 9-13 are all one sentence in the Greek. The main sentence is "**Let love (agapē) be without hypocrisy** (phoniness; pretense)". The remainder of the passage are **phrases that flesh out what "unhypocritical love" would look like:**

"...hating-and-separating-from the evil, joining-oneself to the good;

"in the brotherly-affection towards one another, tenderly-bonded-together-with-a-family-bond;

"going-before-as-leader in the honor/value of one another;

"not sluggish in diligence, boiling in the Spirit, serving the Lord;

"in hope rejoicing; in affliction enduring; in the prayer, continuing-unremittingly;

"in the needs of the saints, sharing-together;

"pursuing the love-of-strangers (hospitality)."

The phrases that strongly apply to our commission regarding helping one another succeed in our spiritual journeys are the second and third couplets listed above. **The first of these phrases indicates both a tender affection toward one another** (repeated twice) **combined with a family bond.** This is translated by the NASB "be devoted to one another in brotherly love". Unfortunately, it is hard to capture the real thrust of the language in English. If we emphasized the "be devoted to one another", we come a little closer. But **the apostle uses a word which means that we should "stick together like family". This has huge implications for when a brother or sister in the Lord does something that hurts us. No matter what they may do, or how they may irritate us, they are still family.** They are our brother or sister in Christ. We should want to see them do well. **We should come to their defense, rather than be among their detractors and critics.** Remember, we are all on a growth journey. Whatever irritating behaviors they may have will go away as they become more and more like Jesus. Besides, **who would be better able to talk to them about their faults than those whom they are convinced value them and are on their side?**

This leads us to the next phrase, "going-before-as-leader in the honor/value of one another". This is translated by the NASB marginal translation as "outdo one another in showing honor". **Can you imagine if we really had a group of people who took delight in honoring one another? If every week people took time to say and do thoughtful things on your behalf to show you that you are appreciated, do you think you would likely do things to hurt or insult them?** No. The root of the word translated as "leader" means to "consider, think, ponder" with a prefix meaning "ahead of time". In other words, **we are to ponder or think ahead of time how we might show honor to our brother or sister.** This is very similar to the admonition in Hebrews 10:24,25, "consider one another towards a sharpening of love and good works". **Instead of being critical or negative about others, we should take responsibility for helping them grow. We should think ahead of how we could bless them, make them feel important and valued. If we do this, then maybe they will be able to listen to us when we have to share a word of admonition or instruction.** If they feel that everyone is down on them, they will probably get defensive. If we are walking in love, it will be much easier for them to try to change. This is nothing but *wisdom* in dealing with people. For example, Solomon wrote in Proverbs, "The tongue of the wise *makes knowledge acceptable...*" and "The wise in heart will be called understanding, and *sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness*" (Prov. 15:2; 16:21).

We can be part of the problem, or part of the solution to help them grow. We can stick it out with them in a commitment to value them as our brothers or our sisters, in spite of their unlovable qualities or behaviors, or we can side with the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10), and tear them down and keep our distance.