

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc dantrygg@msn.com Today's Date: October 12, 2008

Are You *Sure* You Want To Be Part Of Jesus' Church?

by Dan Trygg

"...I will build My church; and Hades' gates will not prevail against it."

Matthew 16:18

"And He gave some... for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature person, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:11-16

It was very clear from Jesus' first declaration about the mission of His "called-out people" that **the church was never intended to be a harmless, passive, religious society. It is to be an aggressive strike force to assault, overcome, and destroy the entrenched power of the enemy, Satan** (Mt. 16:18; cf. II Cor. 10:4-6). Like Jesus, we are to give hope to the poor, liberate the oppressed, and restore sight to those who have been blinded (Lk. 4:18,19). The church is portrayed as one necessary component of the offensive forces of God's Kingdom engaged in the struggle for the liberation of planet earth from the influence and devastation of evil. **We are to be a company of Kingdom commandos and compatriots who are here to bring the liberating, healing, and restorative influence of the King's dominion into territory that has been held by the enemy.** God does not expect us to be able to totally banish the enemy's presence and influence. That is a job reserved for the final assault and conquering of this planet at the return of Christ. **What, then, is our job? To establish points of light in the midst of the darkness, so that the reality and hope of the Kingdom of God could be clearly seen** by those whose hearts long for it (Mt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:14,15). We are to bring a visible, tangible expression of God's nature and influence, so that people will be able to see His heart toward humankind, and to witness and hear the hope and promise of the Good News of His love to anyone who will come to Him. Thus, **it is imperative that we work hard to *establish and maintain* the quality, clarity, and brightness of the light that we bring.** Since we ourselves are coming out of darkness, **for each of us this is a process of renewing our minds, and aligning our lives with God's purposes, so that we can effectively radiate His glory** which indwells us by the Spirit.

This process of renewing and aligning ourselves is part of what the apostle Paul is referring to, in Eph. 4:15, when he wrote, "...we might grow *all things* into Him...". Earlier in the same paragraph, he referred to some who have been given the ability to "equip the saints for work of service, unto building up of the Body of Christ". The word translated as "equip" can also mean to "mend, restore, set right, adapt, prepare, make complete, outfit, or train". This covers both healing from past damage, as well as preparing for future usefulness. **The focus of the work of service in which we all participate has to do with building up one another.**

"Building up"? Building up for what? Paul states the goal in the next couple of verses, "until we all might attain to the oneness of faith, and of a experiential knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fully-grown person, unto a measure of the maturity of Christ's fullness...". In other words,

when we meet together, we ought to do whatever is *necessary* and *helpful* to assist one another in *removing blockages* to our development, and in *furthering growth* in three basic areas:

- (1.) a common understanding of the faith;
- (2.) an experiential relationship with Jesus; and,
- (3.) Christlikeness in our character.

Why these three areas? (1.) Because we need to know enough truth to stay firmly rooted in what matters, and to avoid deceptive teaching that would lead us astray into things that are unprofitable or dangerous. (2.) We also need to begin to discern how God communicates with us individually, so that we can respond to the inner workings of His Spirit to take action. As we act on these promptings, the power of God can flow through us into the lives of others. (3.) Finally, we need to become like Jesus in order to express the character of God in the everyday life, so that other people can see that Jesus is real, and the Good News really *is* something positive that

produces health, happiness and benefit. Love is the goal of our training process, and the identifying mark that we are true disciples of Jesus (I Tim. 1:5; Jn. 13:34,35).

This encouragement toward growth which we work on with each other can happen in many different ways, and at many levels. It can refer to *emotional encouragement*, or "cheerleading" someone to take risks to stretch in new ways. It can mean *coming alongside someone to instruct* them in specific ways from the Scriptures, from your own life experiences, or from insights received from the Holy Spirit, so that they can expand their understanding and discover new ways of living life, ...or stop doing what doesn't work, or what may be harmful to themselves or others. This can be as simple as telling your own story, or it may take the form of more direct counseling, instruction, correction or admonition.

All of this interaction should be from hearts of love and affirmation. God's example is quite clear: He hates *sin*, but He loves *sinner*s. He loved them enough to take the drastic and extreme action of coming into this world to die for them, to pay for their sin, and set them free from its power so that they could live a new life that honors God and fulfills what He has created them for (Rom. 5:8; Isa. 53; Jn. 3:16; 8:31-36; II Cor. 5:14,15; Eph. 2:10). Unfortunately, those who reject His grace and counsel remain under the heaviness of the consequences they have created for themselves, and the judgment and wrath of God (Jn. 3:36; Eph. 5:6). It is *because of love* that we should want to help our brother or sister move beyond the bondages of sin. Paul says that effective Body-life ministry happens as we express the truth to one another *in love* (Eph. 4:15). **Though we may have to expose or confront immature or sinful behavior, the messages we share ought to strengthen and affirm the person.** When we experience feelings of inadequacy, guilt and remorse over past or present failures or habitual sin, the value of healthy Body-life consists in the messages of grace, esteem and encouragement from others which can help us press through those numbing emotions to find solutions to our struggles.

There is no room here for negative criticizing, arrogant judging or condemning others. Such attitudes come from pride or fear, and are not consistent with God's heart toward the person He has redeemed. **Our job is not to slander or criticize our brother or sister, it is to help them overcome what remains of their past ways of thinking and living life.** We cannot afford to be "shooting our wounded", or "beating up the broken". Every person is too precious to lose. Their potential is too important to leave undeveloped, or to disregard in any way. Remember, the redemption of their soul is costly, and God strategically put them into our path for a reason.

You are given a stewardship when God brings someone into your life. You are to treat them as He wants you to treat them, ...and you will be held accountable for what you do.

We must have grace for one another, and remember that *people who are stuck are stuck*, ...they do not see how they can get out of their mess, and they may even be too tired and "beat up" to put up much of a struggle. A *blind spot is something you can't see*, so how can you begin to address what you don't even perceive is a problem? Paul urges us to "rebuke the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all people..." (I Thess. 5:13). This tells us that **people can be in different stages of ability to address their issues. We cannot expect the same thing from everyone at the same time.** It also indicates that *we must deal with different people differently*, depending on their heart condition. In another place, we are told that those who are spiritual should "restore" those who are caught or entrapped in sin (Gal. 6:1). This is the same word as "equip", mentioned in Ephesians 4:12. **There is a need for healing from past scars, as well as learning new skills,** implied by the use of this word.

Life, recovery and Christian growth can be messy, at times. Mature Body-life includes the commitment of going through the messes with people, and of allowing others to help you work through the messes in your life.

So, you want to follow Jesus? He warned us to count the cost. Are you willing to do things His way? Are you willing to go with His program for your life? That is what it comes down to, isn't it? If He is the Lord, and He is good and wiser than you are, then you must embrace His way of doing things, and what He has for you. His plan for church is different than maybe what you expect. **His plan was that we be an interactive team of people growers.** Our job is to work at growing *every* aspect of our lives into alignment with Jesus, ...and to help everyone else do the same in their lives. **His plan was to get all of us to help each other grow.** That means **not only should we expect others to speak words of encouragement and even correction to us, we should even welcome that kind of accountability.** Why? Because they are not putting us down, they are *helping* us. So, are you ready for that kind of church? Count the cost, because that is what we are about here.

"Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you. Reprove a wise person and he will love you. ⁹ Give *instruction* to the wise and he will be still wiser. Teach a righteous person and she will increase *her learning*."

Proverbs 9:8-9