

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: April 18, 2010

Meet to Build Up One Another

by Dan Trygg

“So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *things*, seek in order that you might abound toward the building up of the church.” I Corinthians 14:12

“Therefore, what is it, brothers and sisters? Whenever you might come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things come to be toward building-up.” I Corinthians 14:26

“So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.” Romans 14:19

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you also are doing.” I Thessalonians 5:11

The above verses have a common theme. They all record that **the purpose we ought to have in mind when we come together is to build one another up**. This is not to be just an underlying purpose that pastors, worship leaders, or planning committee meetings are to have in their minds. **This is to be a guiding principle in all our behavior toward one another**. In fact, in Ephesians 4, Paul says that a key responsibility of leader/teachers (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers) is to prepare *everyone* in the Body of Christ to serve in ways that build up one another (vss. 11,12,15,16). As we do this, the end result will be that the entire Body will be “built up”.

The Greek word that is translated as “build up” is *oikodomeō*. It literally means to “build a house”. It occurs 59 times in the NT. Thirty-five times it is used literally for *erecting a building*, and twenty-four times it is used metaphorically for *building up people*. Interestingly, in the gospels it is used only one time metaphorically, when Jesus responded to Peter’s faith confession by saying, “upon this rock I will build My gathered-people” (Matt. 16:18). By contrast, *oikodomeō* was one of Paul’s favorite word-pictures for strengthening and developing people. He employs it some twenty-two times! (Acts 9:31; 20:32; Rom 14:19; 15:2,20; I Cor. 3:9; 8:1,10; 10:23; 14:3-5,12,17,26; II Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Eph. 2:21; 4:12,16,29) **It was uniquely suited for this, because the same word can be used in two very distinct ways: (1.) It can be used to describe us as component parts being built up into a spiritual house**, with Christ being the cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-22; cf. I Pet. 2:4-8). This captures the idea of us being individual members in a larger spiritual structure, the church. We are to be fitted together with others, in proper relation to Jesus, so that together we may fulfill a larger purpose in God’s plan. **This word picture can then easily parallel the concept of us as members of a spiritual body, another of Paul’s favorite images of the church**. We are all members of one another, because our lives are inseparably linked together in Christ. We are members of His Body, so we are also members of one another. The consistency, depth and maturity of *your* walk with Jesus will have direct and significant impact on *me*. If *you* do well, become spiritually healthy and mature, then you will be a steady, reliable source of strength *for me*. If, however, you put off any development of your spiritual life, everyone else in the Body will miss out on what you could have brought to help them. Every part of the Body has a gift or gifts to bring to the table to benefit others. If *you* remain immature, or a non-participant, then *everyone else* in the group *misses out* on your ability and support. **(2.) The word, *oikodomeō*, can also describe the building up, strengthening or developing of an individual person, or even a group**. Here the word implies a strengthening of the person, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The focus is on that person’s inner state of being or spiritual maturity. **To “build them up” means to “fortify them” in what they already have, or to add to them some new components or understanding that they had not had before**. So, whether we are adding some “new construction” to their lives, or “fortifying” what they already have, our interaction with our brothers and sisters should be designed to strengthen them in Jesus.

Notice how this theme is repeated in the above verses:

“...seek in order that you might *abound* toward the building up of the church” (I Cor. 14:12). **The word for “abound” means to “overflow” or “excel at” or “have in abundance”**. When you plug each of these definitions in for “abound”, you begin to see the impact of this statement.

“Let *all things* come to be toward building-up” (I Cor. 14:26). Contextually, Paul is addressing how *each person* was to come to a church meeting with something to share. **No one was to dominate the time, nor were people to do things that others could not benefit from or understand**. He specifically addressed the gifts of tongues and prophecy. Tongues were not to be forbidden (I Cor. 14:26,39), but those who wished to speak in tongues were to follow certain parameters, so that their gift would benefit and strengthen others (vss. 27,28). To speak in tongues, when there is no interpretation, does not help those who cannot understand. Paul did not permit people to be speaking out, if no one could render the sense of what was being said. He also recognized that listening to tongues and interpretation would not

be exciting for everyone, so he limited it to two or three people per meeting. Those who were not accustomed to, or comfortable with, this gift would not have to endure extended exposure to it. They would have some healthy exposure in small bits, however, so that they could learn about it, without being overwhelmed. Same thing with prophecy. Not everyone receives visions or revelations. Too much talk about this kind of activity could be very uncomfortable for those who had not experienced it. Again, **the goal is to help people grow, not to overwhelm them with what I may like to do. We need to be mindful of others.** Each person is to share what the Spirit is doing in their life, or what may be a message for the group. The only guidelines were that everything was to be done in an orderly fashion, and in a way that will build up others.

“So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Rom. 14:19). The verb here is quite strong. It means to “pursue, run after, hasten after, strive for, seek, press on after”. Note that **Paul includes not only the things that build up, but also the things that make for peace. You can’t strengthen or build up someone that you are having hostility with.** We need to resolve differences, bear with one another’s unpleasant quirks, and try to look past irritating characteristics or behaviors *so that we can build something better into one another’s lives.* In Romans 14, where this verse is from, Paul was dealing with divisions in the Body over points of theology. Some were legalistic in mind, while others understood more of the liberty they had in Christ. **Paul clearly told them not to judge one another, or pick arguments. They were to get along, even bear with one another’s weaknesses, so that they could be about the business of building one another up.** Find the common ground, and invest in Jesus. Help one another grow, and the differences will dissipate as you draw closer to Him. As a person grows in Christlikeness, those irritating behaviors will disappear, as well. If you can develop relationship with them, you may even win the right to speak into their lives in a way that will be accepted as loving concern, not perceived as an attack. **We are to pursue, ...run after, ...hasten after, ...strive for, ...diligently seek, ...and press on after the things that make for reconciled relationships and a peaceful environment, as well as what builds others up.**

“Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, just as you also are doing” (I Thess. 5:11). Understanding the context here is so important. The flow of thought comes down from verse one. Paul refers to the “big picture”, the “times and epochs” of history. He reminds them of what they had been taught, namely that **the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night upon those who are not walking with Jesus.** They will be thinking that everything is ok, when calamity and destruction will suddenly come upon them. Then, however, Paul mentions that **we are not in darkness that we would be caught unawares.** We are sons and daughters of light, not children of darkness. Therefore, **we are to remain alert, and not be lulled into complacency, lest we also be caught unaware. We are to stay on task, ready for the spiritual battle that goes on around us, so that we may make our lives count for Jesus.** This is the urgent reality in which we live. Our lives, and our opportunities, are rapidly passing by. Soon they will be gone. Therefore we need to be involved in one another’s lives to encourage each other and keep one another growing. He goes on to remind the Thessalonians to learn from and value their leaders, who have taught them and diligently worked among them. Then, **Paul admonished them to live at peace with one another. How easy it would be for the enemy to derail their lives and spiritual progress by setting them against one another, and embittering them toward each other.** That is the devil’s stock in trade. He is not called the slanderer for nothing. (The word translated as “devil” means “slanderer, malicious gossip”.) “Divide and conquer” is a primary part of his strategy. Paul also exhorts them to take responsibility to “...admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (5:14). **We need to do what we can to help others grow and progress in the faith.** Sometimes this calls for confrontation and stern rebuke, even consequences, so that people will stop their unruly, undisciplined or disorderly behavior, and get on track with God’s plan for their lives. Others, who are “fainthearted” or “despondent”, feel discouraged because they feel like they don’t have what it takes to get certain things accomplished. They need someone to come alongside them and speak in an understanding, friendly manner to arouse and strengthen their motivation to press ahead. If people really do need help, we are charged to be their support, ...to be devoted to them. **Whatever the lack in peoples’ lives, we are to be patient, and keep helping them move forward, as we can.**

One last thought comes from the Greek of this last verse. It is not translated well in our English versions. It really drives the point home that each one of us is responsible to do what we can to build up others in the Body. The first part of the verse is accurately translated, “Therefore, encourage one another”. The next phrase, however, is much more vivid and specific in the Greek, “and y’all build up, one the one”. The language is *unmistakable*. **Each one of us is to build up another.** Would you begin to pray and prepare for this? **If you begin to be mindful and prayerful about it, God will bring to your attention things you can say or do to encourage, help and serve others to build them up.** Let God lead you. Depend on Him. He will show you the practical things you can do.