

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: November 21, 2010

Being Equipped To "Build Up" Others

by Dan Trygg

"And He gave on the one hand apostles, but also prophets, but also evangelists, but also shepherds and teachers, for the equipping/mending/adapting of the saints toward work of service, toward building-up of the Body of Christ." Eph. 4:11,12

"So what is the outcome, then, brothers and sisters? 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 building-up." I Corinthians 14:26

Here in these two passages, we see both the overview of Paul's understanding of Body-life ministry, and the application of that understanding in the local church. We see both the big picture, as well as the practical instruction given to a particular group to implement this vision. We observe both the theoretical principle, and see the attempt to work that out in a nitty-gritty, down-to-earth specific gathering of believers. We are party to the coach's general game plan, and we also get a brief glimpse of a practice session, where we watch him "work the team", giving specific pointers and direction to sharpen their play. **We need to understand this entire concept of "building up", or "edification", from both perspectives. Why? Because we are to be both players and trainers, ...students and teachers, ...receivers and givers, ...those in need of healing and growth, while at the same time we are to be helping others to heal and grow. We are to be the recipients and beneficiaries of the mending and equipping process, while at the same time being prepared and involved in helping to heal and equip others. In fact, it is in *doing this service to others that our own healing and giftings become energized and full of vitality.* Our service is as much for our own growth toward maturity and health, as it is for the benefit of those we serve. We *ourselves* are strengthened and deepened, empowered and encouraged, fine-tuned and sharpened, as we actively help *others* grow and mature.**

In order to more clearly understand this whole process, let us meditate a bit on some of the truths that become evident as you study more about this whole area of "building up" one another.

(1.) We all start out as relatively un-equipped and unskilled at doing this work. This is important for us to note, because we *all* experience feelings of discomfort, inadequacy, or confusion in working out this process. **None of us comes "ready-made" as a full-grown, entirely-equipped, mature and well-seasoned veteran of ministry.** That should be obvious, but **too often we compare ourselves with other people and feel timid, shy, or awkward in our attempts to share, or reach out to one another. There is no other way to grow, however, than to work through and past those uncomfortable feelings and begin to do what God is prompting us to do.** We find the will of God in our lives by "testing out by trial", by experimentation (Rom. 12:2). That does not mean we should throw all caution to the wind, and go on without any understanding or preparation at all. There *is* value in prayer, study, forethought, observation of what others' do, sharing of ideas, debriefing, etc. (There is *also* the reality that tired people need to rest, wounded people need to heal, and confused people need time to get their bearings. It's not about getting on a "ministry treadmill" from the get-go! Serving others is, however, a natural, expected progression in our growth process.) My observation, however, is that **fear and lack of confidence are two of the biggest hurdles to overcome in this process of moving into "action-mode".** The fear and uncertainty is natural, normal, and, to some degree it is even healthy, because it makes us slow down and think through what we are going to do. The emotion is a signal to tell us, "Be cautious. Unfamiliar territory ahead. Pay attention." When it keeps us *paralyzed*, however, ...or we find ourselves just *holding back* from *any* experimentation at all..., then possibly we are treating the flashing yellow light in our emotions as if it were a stop light. **We need to reevaluate what we are feeling, and ask ourselves if we are giving our fears too much power.** Getting a new perspective on "the yellow flashing light" can free us to proceed, even though it may feel scary.

(2.) Expect to be "urged into action" by others. The functions of the gifts mentioned at the beginning of Ephesians 4:11 are intended to help you acquire perspective, skills, and motivation *in order to get you involved* in the ministry God has for *you* to do.

Apostles, God's "sent ones", are representatives of Christ, ones who have a pioneer spirit, a determination to establish a new ministry in areas or settings where there is none. Generally, they come in and get things started, and then move on. Whether you think of them in terms of the original apostles, or are open to the possibility of modern day people functioning in this type of role, these are folks who also care about the *ongoing* growth and effectiveness of the ministry they initiated, and will attempt to bring needed correction or direction to a church to help it on its way (e.g., the return visits and letters of Paul). They also inspire *us* with a vision for planting other ministry groups.

Prophets speak what God reveals to them to say to His people. Paul indicates in I Cor. 14:25, that the message of a prophet is often very direct, sometimes even revealing the thoughts and secrets of the heart. This may take the form of correction or admonition, but in any case it is intended to be for edification ("up-building"), exhortation (lit., "a coming-alongside-to-help"), and comfort. Quite often it is given in confirmation of a course of action, or to address the need to change one's ways. We can also learn from the example of prophets among us to listen for God's voice.

Evangelists, too, are given to equip us for the service, to "up-build" the members of the Body. These folks **have a passion for proclaiming the Good News to those who have yet to hear it.** Their passion, and their example, is meant to agitate, motivate, and remind us to keep the mission of the Kingdom of God before our mind's eye. Christ sent us to seek and save that which was lost, to even assault the "gates of hell", the strongholds of the enemy, to free those in darkness and bondage to sin. Evangelists in our Body will serve to keep that burden and focus on our heart. If they are actively using their gift, their experiences will also give us practical examples of how God can use someone in the lives of others. We can learn much that is practical from them, if we are open to learn. They will press our comfort zone, however, because this is their passion. Not all of us are to be exactly like them, but we are to be equipped and motivated by them, to some degree, ...enough so that we can effectively "do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4:5), even if we don't have that spiritual gift.

Shepherd-teachers are also ones who will motivate and direct us. *They observe* who we are, and attempt to help us find where and how we fit in the Body. **They bind up our wounds, attend to our hurts, and feed us** (in teaching) **what they perceive we need in our spiritual diet to move toward health and maturity.** They monitor our interaction with others in the flock, to teach us to get along together. They have a passion for *the flock*, as well as for *the individual*. From them, we can learn to teach and shepherd others, even though we may not be gifted as they.

All four of these "equipping gifts" are people who communicate the word of God, in one form or another. In each case, because they are teaching new information to people, the truth will confront and will require change. This does not necessarily mean a hard confrontation, though it could be at times. Often it is in the form of an encouragement, a prodding, urging and prompting toward growth.

Finally, there is the **"one another ministering"** our brothers and sisters in Christ will do for us in the Body. *The "equipping ministry" does not just belong to people with the specific gifts mentioned in vs. 11. It is part of what we are all to do for each other.* We are all to be "truthing in love" one to another (Eph. 4:15,16). As we do this, we help mend and equip one another, and we help one another find our place in the Body. We are also to watch out for one another, caring for one another, serving one another. Part of the equipping process is that we learn to do for others those kinds of things that were helpful to us (II Cor. 1:4; II Tim. 2:2). The expressions of the equipping gifts become practical ministry models and "tools", which are then employed by the rest of us.

(3.) The purpose of "church", the gathering, the ekklēsia, is to be a place where we come together to mend, encourage, equip, and learn to work together. It is *not* to be the root of our relationship with God. Our relationship with God should be cultivated and active *all week long*, ...outside of church! We should be developing a consistent walk with God throughout *every day*. The very word, "disciple", implies that we are to be people of "discipline", meaning that we have a plan, ...and develop habits..., that are designed to help us grow. Bible reading, prayer, fasting, fellowship, intentional giving and serving, are ways that we can deepen our spiritual walk.

Why do we come together? To worship God? I do not see *that* as our primary purpose for meeting! I see no place in the New Testament where that is given as the main reason for gathering together. The word "ekklēsia" refers to those called out to meet for a purpose. **God has given us a purpose, ...an assignment, if you will..., that we are to accomplish in our meetings. It is to build one another up!** We are to heal, restore, mend, equip, educate, impart-skill-to, encourage, experiment, nurture, and fortify one another. **We are also to meet to develop partner-relationships with one another to accomplish what God has for us to do** in this world. That is the assignment God has given for us to accomplish in these meetings. Think about it. It makes *sense*. We can worship God all day long, any day, when we are apart. **God wants us to make full use of the time we are together, when we can employ our gifts and strengths toward edifying one another.** God is *already* full. He does not *need* our worship. (Now, having said that, let me say that we *do* worship when we are together, because He *is* the source of our life, and we *do* enjoy Him and love to sing His praises, and *it does edify us* to do so, ...and because we are free to *enjoy the frosting on our cake!*)

Refocus your thinking. Why am I here? I am here *to build up* others, and *to be built up* in Christ. I am here to learn new skills and insight, and to be equipped. I am here to encourage others, and to be encouraged. I am here to *move others to take risks* in new growth areas, ...and to *accept their challenges to face risks and changes* in mine. I am here to network together with my brothers and sisters, so that we can develop *ministry teams* to serve Christ together.