

Relationship Edification

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: Phil. 2:1-4

- A. At some point in life, everyone needs to be built up. Even the tallest mountain range has more valleys than peaks.
 - 1. Even the strong can benefit from edification
 - a. An airplane can fly against a wind, but flies faster with a tailwind
 - 2. Each Christian can be edified to some extent on his own - Jude 20-21
 - a. We can build ourselves up with God's word - Acts 20:32
- B. However, we were designed to be mutually edified - Eph. 4:11-16
 - 1. In fact, we are instructed to build up each other - 1Thes. 5:11
 - 2. In the church, we must pursue Christian interdependence, not American independence.
- C. Relationship evangelism is the most effective means presently of teaching the Gospel to the lost
 - 1. In an era of electronic relationships, the Bible principle of relationship edification is the most effective means of building up Christians.
 - 2. Edification has never been limited in the Bible the way it is often limited in our teaching. We tend to think of edification as something that comes only through verbal teaching or observing examples. This limited understanding of edification is our own, not God's
 - 3. Edification - "oikodome: architecture, a structure; confirmation, building up, edify, edification, edifying" (Strongs)
 - 4. Edification - "From late Middle English: from Latin aedificatio, aedificare the act of building, the promotion of growth in Christian character; to edify is to instruct someone in way that enlightens them or uplifts them morally, spiritually, emotionally, or intellectually" (BibleHub.com)
- D. Are there Bible examples of relationship evangelism?
 - 1. Christians were together in more than just assemblies and Bible classes from the first day the church began - Acts 2:44-46, 5:42
 - 2. We want relationships that will build us up - Prov. 12:26, 13:20
 - 3. We must be with one another in order to edify one another.

I. EDIFYING RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT ON UNITY

- A. Christian unity is unlike the unity of the world.
 - 1. The unity of the world is based on common interests or preferences.
 - a. Worldly unity is defined by sameness in order to exist, and is often based on meaningless externals. Steeler fans do not wear Baltimore Raven jerseys
 - 2. Christian unity is built on the common faith, godly love, and holy fellowship, and is defined by the absolute, sublime importance of what they share in common - Eph. 4:1-6
 - a. Same body, saved by the same blood, sharing in the priceless inheritance in same family
 - b. Same Spirit, same seal of ownership, same source of guidance, same motivation
 - c. Same hope, same eternal destiny, same anticipation of heaven

- d. Same Lord, same commander, same Divine purpose in life
- e. Same faith, same belief system, same moral values, same wisdom and knowledge
- f. Same baptism, same birth experience, same life commitment
- g. Same God, same devotion, same Being worshiped, same love
- B. Christians are united by the word of God.
 - 1. The scriptures teach our common heritage.
 - 2. The scriptures provide a mutual code of conduct.
 - 3. The scriptures provide us with a unified view of God.
- C. Christians are bound together by the same worthy purpose for life.
 - 1. 1Peter 2:9; 2Cor. 5:20
- D. This unity facilitates our mutual up building

II. MUTUAL EDIFICATION IS BUILT ON PATIENCE

- A. Patience is a fundamental element of love - 1Cor. 13:4
 - 1. God shows us a Divine example of patience - 2Peter 3:9
 - 2. What we do with regard to patience toward our brethren, is what we want from God under similar circumstances - Matt. 18:24-30
- B. Patience is required of all Christians toward all other Christians - 1Thes. 5:14
 - 1. We come from a variety of backgrounds; we grow at different rates
 - 2. Rom. 15:1-2, 7
- C. Mutual edification is facilitated when we are patient with one another

III. MUTUAL EDIFICATION IS BUILT ON EMPATHY

- A. All of us battle temptations in one form or another; no one is exempt
 - 1. We often distance ourselves from disciples struggling with temptation instead of supporting them. Musk oxen surround and protect their vulnerable and wounded from wolves
 - 2. "Shoot the wounded... what we do to people who are the most vulnerable... we shoot the wounded. As if they haven't suffered enough, we add to it by gossiping and treating hurt people like outcasts. I think we kill the spirits of those who suffer, instead of coming alongside and supporting them through this." (Lynn Dove, Shoot the Wounded)
- B. We face temptation and sin more successfully with others than when alone
 - 1. Life on earth is a war - Eph. 6:10-17
 - 2. Temptations are common to all men - 1Cor. 10:13
 - 3. When we are alone in the flesh, we often fall into sin through our temptations - James 1:14
 - 4. We all lose battles against the Adversary - Rom. 3:10, 23
 - 5. Every Christian sins - 1John 1:6, 8; Rom. 7:18-19
- C. Mutual edification comes, not from a position of moral superiority, but one of personal, heart felt empathy - Gal. 6:1-3
 - 1. Mutual, relationship edification is a requirement, not an option

Conclusion:

- A. Christians must edify and encourage each other, and they must be together often in order to do this - Heb. 10:23-25