

Edify One Another
Romans 14:19

How are we to treat one another? The one another passages provide us with a blue print in answer to that question. They tell us the what, the how and the why. One author suggests that “the consideration of the [one another] principle(s) in the New Testament provides us with a tremendous study of what quality friendship will look like in action...In the Body of Christ we are to” exhibit these attributes and attitudes in increasing measure toward one another.

In preparing for today’s message I came across a poem that illustrates exactly what it is we are dealing with when it comes to the admonition to edify, strengthen or build up one another. Though the author is unknown it sends a powerful message with a penetrating question.

A Builder Or a Wrecker -Author Unknown

As I watched them tear a building down
A gang of men in a busy town
With a ho-heave-ho, and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.

I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,
And the men you'd hire if you wanted to build?"
He gave a laugh and said, "No, indeed,
Just common labor is all I need."

"I can easily wreck in a day or two,
What builders have taken years to do."
And I thought to myself, as I went my way
Which of these roles have I tried to play?

Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by rule and square?
Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan
Patiently doing the best I can?

Or am I a wrecker who walks to town
Content with the labor of tearing down?
"O Lord let my life and my labors be
That which will build for eternity!"

Am I building up or tearing down? That’s an important question to ponder.

Let’s define what we mean when Paul says we are to edify one another.

They used the word when they talked about building a house. From its root word we get edifice referring to a building, especially a large, imposing one, an elaborately constructed institution or organization. Think about some grand cathedral or even a skyscraper that seems to go on forever. The Burj Khalifa in Dubai stands at 2,717 feet tall and is considered megatall. Let me put it in perspective for you. A mile is 5,280 ft. This structure stands just over a half mile high.

One of the places our Sr. class trip included was New York City. It was quite an experience for a bunch of kids coming from the north woods. For most of us the tallest structure we had seen was a barn or a silo. Seeing a skyscraper was like “wow.”

I was fortunate in High school to take a building trades class. We built a parsonage for one of the local churches. I learned a lot and enjoyed the opportunity. Our instructor who was a general contractor taught us construction from digging and laying the foundation to putting up walls, making stairs, rafters and kitchen cabinets, laying block, running wiring, attaching plumbing – well, we did it all. As far as I know it’s still standing 40 years later.

I read recently that a 15 story hotel, capable of withstanding a level 9 earthquake was built in Shanghai. The amazing thing is that this one was built in 9 days using prefab walls.

The word can refer to a building or building something. It can be a physical structure or it can be something more organic or fluid like an organization. 3M has built an incredible organization which started out making sand paper.

The organization has been built so large its headquarters in St. Paul, MN has its own zip code.

We sometimes hear a sports team say this is a building year for the team. We hear that a lot with the Pistons and Lions.

Paul uses this term to speak metaphorically of the body of Christ and the responsibility we have to each other to build one another up in the faith, to build each other up to be like Christ in character. It should be our aim to promote spiritual growth and Christ like character development of fellow believers through teaching, both formally and informally, and through example.

I. EDIFICATION INSTRUCTS OTHER PEOPLE – Romans 14:19

As we discussed last week building up others is something that we are supposed to pursue, to make every effort to do what leads to mutual edification. In the context both the strong and the weak believer have this responsibility. Both are to run after what will build each other up not tear each other down. We have all experienced at one time or another encounters with someone else who has said or done something to us that has torn us down. Critical comments or judgmental spirit tears down. An unforgiving spirit tears down. An unloving or unkind act tears down. Being inconsiderate tears down.

On the other hand loving one another builds up
 Forgiving one another builds up
 Caring for one another builds up
 Being patient with one another builds up

You get the point. We don't have to go very far in the memory banks to think of an event or a comment that has torn us down or built us up.

Notice again from verse 9 that it is mutual edification. No one person or group of people has

the soul responsibility for edification.

There is a certain amount of expectation on your part that I as your pastor edify you in the faith. After all that's what he gets paid for right? When you come to a Sunday morning service or to prayer meeting on Wednesday night, there is that expectation that I have done my homework in order to build you up, to teach you something. That goes with the territory, it says so in Ephesians 4. But the admonition here is for mutual edification. You have a responsibility to build up the body as well.

It can be done through teaching. Building up isn't just the dissemination of information where we learn facts from the Bible. Paul told the church in Corinth (I Corinthians 8:1) that knowledge puffs up, it can build our pride, our ego, give us a sense of elevated importance. On the other hand Paul says that love builds up. That's why when we interact with others whether formally or informally and do so in love, that builds up the body.

Some of you teach or facilitate a class.

Some of you lead a Bible study.

Edification is learning what difference God's Word makes in my life today. It's learning how to apply these truths, these godly principles in life to help me stand strong in the faith. A roof on a house won't stand a storm if it doesn't have a strong foundation or strong walls to support it and neither will a Christian stand the storms of life if not built up in the faith. Edify one another in your Adult Impact time. Use it to build each other up in the faith.

But the classroom isn't the only place where we build one another up. It's done in the checkout line or the customer service desk or the break room. Another Christian may be with you. You could be somewhere with a family member or a co-worker. How you respond when you are short changed or treated rudely by the cashier will build up or tear down the Christian who is watching you.

They will be built up or torn down when they see how you talk to the neighbor whose dog just dug up your prize begonias.

Every life event becomes an opportunity to build up or tear down. I think that's the intent of Deuteronomy 6:7. Parents are given instruction to consider every life event as an opportunity to build up the faith of their child. I think we can apply that principle to our text today and consider that we should treat every life event as an opportunity to build up others in the faith.

We see the principle of mutual edification in Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Turn to II Chronicles 17. In that chapter we read that Jehoshaphat replaced his father Asa as King over Judah. We read also that he sent troops around the kingdom to build it up and fortify it, but there is something even more significant found in verse 7.

Maybe you're asking yourself right now, what did they teach?

Did they teach swimming or knitting?

Did they teach construction or raising crops?

If he sent troops to strengthen the fringes of the kingdom, did they teach the art of warfare or self-defense?

We find the answer in verses 8-9.

These guys along with certain Levites were sent from town to town throughout all Judah for the sole purpose of teaching the law, instructing the residents to follow the Lord.

Think of what that would mean in our nation if the administrative leadership sent spiritual leaders who follow the Lord to teach the Bible in every city, town and village throughout America.

There are countries in Europe that recognize the importance of teaching biblical morality in schools.

Christian groups are able to go in and teach the Bible. And while that's great and we would add a hearty Amen and Praise the Lord, what's troubling is that they don't take their own medicine. They aren't leading by example. It's great for the kids to learn this stuff, but they don't seem to need it or want it in their life.

Why did King Jehoshaphat send these guys out to teach the Law? He did it because it was something he was following and practicing. Notice verses 3-6. To have a strong kingdom you need a strong king. To have a strong king you need a strong kingdom.

I have read books from a number of leading Christian authors and speakers who have said that if we want to have a strong church, we need a strong family, and to have a strong family we need strong men, men who follow hard after God, men who lead their families to pursue after God.

Look back at Ephesians 4 where we began this series. We see in verse 12 and 16 the idea of building up others occurs. Now in the context it is speaking of the leaders within the church having the responsibility to do the edifying but also note the purpose. Take what we read and think of what it means in the context of each believer assuming a role in building each other up.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Think of how strong each believer would become if each of us built one another up with this purpose in mind. Strong believers would be helping weak believers in the faith how to grow in Christ. They wouldn't be tossed around by every wind of doctrine that comes along causing belief to be questioned. Such intentional investment in each other would build us up together into a growing, living body that supports each other and loves each other in Christ.

In his book *The Body*, the late Chuck Colson highlights some important thoughts from this

passage that help us understand the overarching goal of edification.

Referring to the unity of the faith, the church must hold to a common statement of faith, vision, goals and desires.

The church must have knowledge of Jesus Christ with an assurance of salvation that is grounded in correct doctrine.

The church must be committed to maturing the believers through God's Word, prayer, worship, and fellowship thus exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit as we obey God's Word wholeheartedly and unashamedly. Such godly examples witness to a watching world.

Maturity is demonstrated as we grow up in Christ no longer infants in the faith, but desiring the sincere milk of the Word, eating the meat of God's Word. Colson describes it as believers being equipped with a Christian world-view.

As we interact with each other truth must be articulated in love and yet, at the appropriate time when necessary, confronting doctrinal error or some sin in love, not in a condescending way.

Members of the body of Christ must develop their spiritual gifts for the purpose of glorifying God through use but also supporting one another. The use of our spiritual gifts edifies others.

When we edify each other in such a way we will see growth both numerically and spiritually.

Bear in mind once again that the pastor and leadership equip the body to do the work of ministry which includes mutual edification. This is to be an active not passive pursuit.

Colson adds some thoughts for us to consider.

1. The church must build up its members to know

and defend their faith and to apply it in the world.

2. The church must build up its members to lead exemplary lives in the marketplace.
3. The church must build up its members to build strong marriages and families.
4. The church must build up its members to "train up their children in the way they should go."
5. The church must build up its members to fulfill their vocation, this includes having an understanding of the high call of work that brings glory to God.
6. The church must build up its members to be good stewards
7. The church must build up its members to effectively share their faith.
8. The church must build up its members to reach out to others with needs. Matthew 25:34-40

That's a tall order with a lot of responsibility.

When I read a list like that, what do you think? Are we on the mark or do have our proverbial work cut out for us? Are we doing what we can to build each other up in the faith? Church services and Adult Impact classes are only the beginning.

A couple weeks ago I attended a pastor's conference put on by Moody. It was specifically designed to provide suggestions on how we can reach men in the church and community. It set my mind in motion to consider how we can edify and equip men. But it didn't stop there.

Ideas began to percolate. The more I thought the more ideas I came up with. Right now they are just in the Petri dish spawning, but the ideas are growing.

Let me share them with you some of the things that will be developed over the next couple months. I have already mentioned them to the Board. We will continue with existing ministries for the purpose of edification and in the coming months we'll add some additional ministries to deepen our commitment to build up this body of believers. Our

purpose is clear – to build one another up in the faith. The process is being clarified and shaped.

For right now I'm thinking of calling it Life Matters. These ministries will help us grow in our faith, principles for daily living. The one another series we are currently going through are a key component to life matters. I've had a number of favorable comments from folks who are enjoying this series challenging their spiritual growth. When we practice the one another principles, we build one another up in faith.

We'll continue with the monthly men's study and the women's study. I know Connie really enjoys leading and hosting, but I want to encourage others to also take up the baton and lead a study.

In June the men will begin a new study by Francis Chan – *Crazy Love*. It is an in-depth look, compelling us to consider how we can fall in love with God at a deeper level.

Our once a month Sunday night Creation Matters will continue. I remain convinced and committed to providing some excellent material that will help understand how important and relevant Genesis is as a foundation to faith. In just the first 11 chapters we have some important doctrines introduced like God, sin, redemption, marriage, gender identity, etc.

Does it really matter whether or not you believe in a literal 6 day creation or can we entertain the notion of evolution? I have a strong belief on that. While salvation is not contingent on one's belief about creation, I think it has everything to do with one's view of sin and its consequences. For example, if evolution is fact then God's curse on mankind about death as the result of sin has little bearing on man's destiny. If evolution is true and man didn't appear on the scene until millions of years after the dinosaur then death and disease occurred millions of years before God told man that disobedience would result in death. Adam would have looked at

God and said, what's the big deal death has been around for millions of years. The curse, consequence and cure for sin would be virtually meaningless.

So, Creation Matters. By the way, we'll be looking at the Relevance of Genesis tonight at 6pm. I have a year's worth of DVD's and more to come so buckle up and join us. In a world that wants to increasingly push God out of the picture with a purely secular worldview, more and more we need to understand the authority of God's word on the subject to help us stand strong against those who oppose it.

In the fall I will begin another ministry to build up believers called *Financial Matters*. There are a number of good resources. A few of you have done the course by Dave Ramsey. He has some good stuff. I'm rather partial to the *Money Life* study by Crown Financial for two reasons. One reason is that folks from our church helped design the material and layout. The second reason is that the financial principles discussed are based on Scripture. It's a 10 week study.

One of the other benefits to this study is that it's designed for anyone to teach a group. My intention is to lead a group after which anyone from the group can lead a group. In that way you will be involved in building others up in regard to what the Bible has to say about finances matters.

Marriage Matters is a third ministry we'll be developing. Whether recently married or married a long time – Marriage Matters. Patrick and Tammy, Luke and Sarah will tell you I have a pretty extensive pre-marital counseling program I take couples through before their big day. Most of our discussion isn't about the ceremony, although we do chat about that. I want the ceremony to be what they want. More importantly we talk about what happens after the honeymoon for the rest of their married life, because Marriage Matters.

I get resource notices all the time and for a couple years I have looked at some material and thought maybe someday but not today. This past week I decided it was time so that I can build up marriages. This will also be a 10 week study and the material is from Dr. David Jeremiah. I'll also share some other excellent resources.

You'll be hearing more about these ministries and as other ideas surface that I think will edify you in your daily faith, we'll be considering them as well. My desire is to help transform us into a mature body of believers who will build up/edify/teach one another godly principles for daily living that will transform us into the image of God in character.

Robert Morley in his book *No Man Left Behind* writes: "Christianity is not about behavior modification; it's about heart transformation."

I think that's the goal of edification.

Creation Matters

Financial Matters

Marriage Matters

Because Life Matters – godly life that honors God.

And we each have a part to play in this process of instructing others which involves others.

II. EDIFICATION INVOLVES OTHERS

I have shared a fare bit about what I am doing and what I hope to do in the near future to edify you. But keep in mind this is a mutual responsibility. So the question is, what are you going to do to build up each other?

It doesn't have to be a formal setting sitting in a class discussing questions.

It could be with just one other person over a cup of coffee or a Pepsi. It could be informal and periodic to begin with that turns into something that keeps going.

It could be inviting some friends over to watch a DVD series and then a time of discussion.

It may be just for a few weeks and then a break.

It can be in a home, a garage, a workshop, a restaurant, a breakroom.

Years ago I met with a college student by going for runs with him and then we would sit in the car and talk about spiritual things.

I Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

The end of that verse is significant "Just as you are doing." They were already in the practice of edifying one another and Paul was encouraging them to continue, to keep it up. In the context of their edification it had to do with the end times. If there is ever a day in history where the church needs to stand strong, it's now. Maybe you're already doing that, keep going. If not, jump in and join others. You'll be encouraged as you encourage them in their faith.

I am once again inviting you along this journey we call life for the purpose of growing in our faith together building up one another so that we can be strengthened in the faith.

Paul encouraged Timothy to entrust to faithful men the things he had been taught. I want to do the same. I want you to do the same.

I Corinthians 3:10-15

One day God confronted Cain concerning the whereabouts of his brother Abel. Cain responded with a question of his own: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9)

I want to propose to you that yes, we are our brother's keeper. According to II Peter 3:18, we all have a responsibility to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which includes a responsibility to sharpen each other in our faith.

John Phillips writes "Building a house is used to depict the development of spiritual growth and the building of Christian character. It implies that

spiritual progress results from patient and diligent labor. All believers are to help develop Christian character in others in view of the Lord's return."

When we learn together through teaching, we build one another up.

When we pray together and for each other, we build one another up.

When we fellowship together, we build one another up.

Our Church Constitution begins: "The purpose of this Church shall be the edification of believers..."

I have only scratched the surface of possibilities for mutual edification. We are limited by our own imagination as to what else we can do to build up one another.

But that's not the only limitation.

We are limited by a lack of desire.

We are limited by a lack of willingness to count the cost.

We are limited by a lack of willingness to make sacrifices for the purpose of investing in the lives of others.

If we are to be united as a church, we must edify one another.

A Builder Or a Wrecker -Author Unknown

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A gang of men in a busy town
With a ho-heave-ho, and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.

I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,
And the men you'd hire if you wanted to build?"
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Just common labor is all I need."

"I can easily wreck in a day or two,
What builders have taken years to do."
And I thought to myself, as I went my way
Which of these roles have I tried to play?

Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by rule and square?
Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan
Patiently doing the best I can?

Or am I a wrecker who walks to town
Content with the labor of tearing down?
"O Lord let my life and my labors be
That which will build for eternity!"

I want to close with a word from the Apostle Paul.
I want this to be my prayer, our prayer – a prayer of seeing what God can do through us as we build one another up for His glory and our good.
"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21