

35. Learning Why it Is Important to Edify Others

In our last topic, we saw that it is important to speak the Word of God so that other people can understand what we are saying. We saw that one of the problems of the Christians in Corinth was that they were trying to build up themselves instead of building up other Christians. Today, we are going to see why it is important for every Christian to learn to build up other Christians. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn both how and why it is important to learn to build up other Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 14:6, we see that Paul had to help the Christians in Corinth understand what was important when the church met together. Paul used himself as an illustration. That verse says, “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?” Paul said that it would not profit the Christians if he spoke to them in another language unless someone interpreted what he said. Instead of speaking another language, Paul pointed out that there were four different ways that he could speak to them in their own language.

First, Paul said that he could benefit the church by revelation. The word translated “revelation” spoke of truth that had been previously unknown. In Galatians 1:11-12, Paul wrote, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:17-18 points out the fact that Paul had been given this revelation from Christ in the desert of Arabia. As a result, he could benefit the church if he taught them what Christ had taught him.

Second, Paul said that he could benefit the church by knowledge. Here, we see that he could benefit the Christians by sharing with them the knowledge that was known to many of the Christians in other areas. In Romans 15:14, we read, “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” Here, we see that the Christians in Rome had been well taught in the knowledge of Christ and so they were able to teach and admonish each other.

Third, Paul said that he could benefit the church by prophesying. Prophesying is reading and explaining the Word of God that is already written down. Paul knew that he could help the Corinthians grow in their understanding if he explained how Christ fulfilled many of the prophecies in the Old Testament. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 14:22, Paul said, “Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.” In this verse, Paul made it clear that any godly teacher can help Christians grow if they will explain how Christ fulfilled various promises in the Old Testament.

Fourth, Paul said that he could benefit the church by teaching. The word that is translated “teaching” in the New Testament speaks of giving instruction to help Christians grow and mature. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In this verse, we see the four basic things that helped the new

Christians grow in Jerusalem. These are the basics to help new Christians grow in any church in the world. These four are the apostles' doctrine (the teachings of Christ to the apostles) and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.

After reminding the Christians of the things that he had done to help them grow, Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 14:7-9, "Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air." Paul pointed out that even musical instruments must be played in such a way that those listening can recognize what is being played.

If the trumpet played a mixture of musical notes when soldiers were supposed to hear the music that said they were about to be attacked, they would not prepare for battle and many would be killed. Paul said that the same thing happens when we do not speak words that are easy to be understood. If the words are spoken in another language or the language of the highly educated, most people will not understand what has been said. In fact, Paul said that a speaker who uses such words is speaking to the air instead of speaking to the people. Such speech will not do any of the four things that were mentioned in verse six. Instead, there will only be confusion.

Paul then said in 1 Corinthians 14:10-11, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me." Paul made it clear that he recognized that there are many different languages spoken in different parts of the world. In fact, every one of those languages is important to the people who speak that language. God gave them that language so that they can communicate with each other. We want to help our children realize that the reason God gave them the ability to speak one or more languages is so that they can clearly explain to others what they have learned about Christ.

Paul then used himself again to illustrate what he meant. He said that if he did not understand the language of a person that was speaking that he would be a foreigner to that person. In the same way, that person would be a foreigner to Paul. The word that is translated "foreigner" means *a stranger or foreigner who speaks a language not spoken by another*. They would not be able to talk to each other because neither one of them would understand the language of the other person. Both people would be speaking a known language. However, they would not be able to understand each other because they did not know the language that was being spoken by the other person. As a result, neither could build up the other person in their spiritual life.

In 1 Corinthians 14:4-5, we saw that our goal should always be to edify the church. Those verses say, "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification." When we speak and explain the Word of God in the church, the other Christians will all be built up. If we speak in another language, the other Christians will not be built up unless

there is someone who can clearly interpret what we are saying so that they can be built up. This is a reminder to all who speak in the church that we are not speaking to benefit ourselves by receiving the praise of the people for our speaking abilities. Instead we are speaking to the church to build up the people in the church so that they can grow and mature in Christ.

That is why 1 Corinthians 14:12-13 goes on to say, “Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.” The Corinthian Christians were eager to use their spiritual gifts. Paul makes a key correction in their thinking. Paul said that instead of being eager to use their spiritual gifts they should be eager to build up the other Christians in the church.

Here, we see that there is a great difference between seeking personal glory and seeking to carry out godly service for the Lord. A person who wants to show off their spiritual gifts will exercise those gifts in their own strength. Paul warns against this attitude when he says in Philippians 2:3, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Here, we are reminded that such attitudes are really the result of selfish ambition or pride. The Bible always condemns such pride.

In contrast, when a person chooses to use their spiritual gifts to carry out godly service for the Lord, that person will choose to yield to the Lord so that the strength of the Lord can work through his or her life. That means that whatever happens will be done in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of the human strength of that person. In Acts 8:4, we see that when the early Christians fled from persecution in Jerusalem they depended on the Holy Spirit to work in their lives and through their lives. As a result, Acts 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” We see some of the results of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives in Acts 9:31 where we read, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” As we show our physical and spiritual children how to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of their own strength, they will see the Lord build up other Christians and also multiply churches.

We also want to help our children realize that when they have an opportunity to share the Word of God with the people of another language they need to pray that the Lord will provide someone that can interpret what they are saying into the language of the people to whom they are speaking. In this way, the Lord can use them to begin helping Christians who live in other cultures and speak other languages. This will multiply their ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the importance of edifying others without seeking personal glory.