

46. Learning to Build Relationships Between Others

In our last topic, we saw that Paul spoke of the fact that God opens doors of ministry for us. He also reminded us of the fact that when there are open doors, there will also be opposition from Satan. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the doors that the Lord opens for them to share the Gospel. At the same time, we also want to prepare them for the opposition that will accompany those open doors. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul gives us some key examples about the way to build relationships with other Christians and between other Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 16:10-12, we read, “And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also *do*. Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren. Now concerning *our* brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time.” Here, we see that Paul wanted to build the relationship between the Christians in Corinth and Timothy. Paul encouraged them to treat Timothy in such a way that he would not experience fear. This reminds us that when Christians have conflicts such as the Corinthian Christians had that their conflicts can produce fear in others.

Paul also wanted to help the Corinthian Christians realize that Timothy was doing the same work that he was doing. In the same way, we need to help our children realize that other godly Christians are partners in ministry and not competition. All true ministry is the Lord’s ministry and not ours. Paul also encouraged the Christians to share with Timothy financially to help him in his travels.

In addition, Paul also reminded the Corinthians that Apollos was a partner in ministry. In 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, Paul had said, “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Then, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” Paul wanted to make it clear to the Christians that we are not to follow individual leaders. Instead, we are to recognize that as Christians we are partners in ministry and it is God who gives the increase because He is the One that we serve.

Here, we see an important lesson that we want to teach by our example and help our children to understand. We are not to spend our time fighting other Christians. Instead, we are to fight sin and the devil. Even though other Christians may teach some nonessential doctrines a little differently than the way we teach them, they are Christians that are working under the head who is Christ. Christ told the disciples in Mark 9:38-40, “Now John answered Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.’ But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.’” Instead of spending our time fighting other Christians, we need to pray for them because we will spend eternity with them when we meet the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13-18, we read, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that you do* be done with love. I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.” Here, we see that Paul gave us a second example of the way to build relationships between other Christians.

Paul wanted the Christians to stand fast in the faith, to be strong and to do all that they did in love. Stephanas and his family were among the first to become Christians when Paul originally brought the Gospel to Corinth. 1 Corinthians 1:14-16 says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.” Here, we see that Paul only baptized the first few believers and then those men or others baptized the rest of the Corinthians that became Christians. We also see that Stephanas and his family had devoted themselves to serving the other Christians in Corinth. Here, we see that Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to submit themselves to Stephanas as well as to the others who had worked with Paul in the development of the church at Corinth.

Stephanas and the others who had worked to help develop the church at Corinth were the leadership that Paul had left to lead the church when he left Corinth. The writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 13:17, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” To “submit” means *to place your full potential at the disposal of another*. We have seen that the church at Corinth had many problems because many of the Christians were carnal. Paul encouraged the Christian in Corinth to place their full potential at the disposal of these godly leaders and help them in the work of serving the Lord. Here, we see that Paul was working to build the relationships between the leaders and the rest of the Christians in Corinth.

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had come from Corinth to share what they had with Paul to help him in his ministry in the city of Ephesus. Paul said that the three had refreshed his spirit just as they had refreshed the spirits of the Christians in Corinth. As a result, Paul encouraged the Christians at Corinth to acknowledge these men. The word that is translated “acknowledge them” means *to recognize them and become thoroughly acquainted with them*. Many times, those who have devoted their lives to serving other Christians are unnoticed by the rest of the Christians. Here, we see that Paul encouraged the other Christians to spend time with these men so that they could really observe them and get to know them. Paul had seen that Stephanas and probably the other two had a real servant’s heart. That was exactly the kind of example that the rest of the Christians in Corinth needed to follow in order to become spiritual instead of remaining carnal. In the same way, Christians today need to recognize and spend time with those Christians that have a servant’s heart so that they can learn from their example. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to build such a relationship with these men.

In 1 Corinthians 16:19-24, we read, “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The salutation with my own hand—Paul’s. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.” Here, we see that Paul also wanted to build relationships between the churches in different areas. As a result, he said that the churches in Asia also sent their greetings to the church that was in Corinth.

In addition, Paul also sent hearty greetings to the church at Corinth from Aquila and Priscilla and the church that was in their house. In Acts 18:1-3, we read, “After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” Here, we see that Aquila and Priscilla had lived in Corinth for a period of time. In fact, Paul had stayed with them and worked with them when he first came to Corinth. As a result, many of the Christians in Corinth knew Aquila and Priscilla. Then, they had traveled to Ephesus with Paul; there was now a church in their house in that city.

Paul wanted to continue to build the relationship between the church in Corinth and Aquila and Priscilla. In this way, Christians in Corinth were also reminded to pray for Aquila and Priscilla as they served the Lord in Ephesus. We also see that everywhere Aquila and Priscilla went, they used their home as a place of ministry. As a result, their home was used as the meeting place for one of the congregations that had developed in the city of Ephesus. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to use their homes as places to minister to others.

Paul also said that all of the brethren in Ephesus and the surrounding area wanted to send their greetings to the church in Corinth. Paul also told the Christians in Corinth to greet one another with a holy kiss when they met each other. Although Paul had dictated the letter and had someone else write it, he wrote this last paragraph and signed the letter to show his love for the Corinthians. Paul also warned that any who did not love the Lord were actually still accursed, which meant that they still faced eternal judgment and needed to prepare because the Lord is coming soon. Paul wanted every person to experience the grace of God by placing their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This should also be our own prayer. As we have this concern in our own lives, our children will develop the same concern for others because they see our example. Paul concluded this letter by reminding the Corinthian Christians of his love for them. We also want to regularly remind our physical and spiritual children of our love for them. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to build healthy relationships with others.