

BuildingUp 2020 Week #2

Build Each Other Up Romans 14:1-19 (Selected)

January 12, 2020

TEXT

¹ As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls... ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹ So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

PRAYER

That we might worship in God's word, exulting in Him, and being transformed. Protect our kids as they go out to their class, that they too will come to worship Jesus in sincerity of heart.

SERMON

I want to draw your attention to the graph on the right side of your worship guide; and there you see the image that we began using last year to explain the purposes of Agape: Who we are, What we do, Why we exist.

We are first and foremost called to be people that **Love the Lord supremely**. That circle sits a bit higher in the image to demonstrate that loving God is our highest calling.

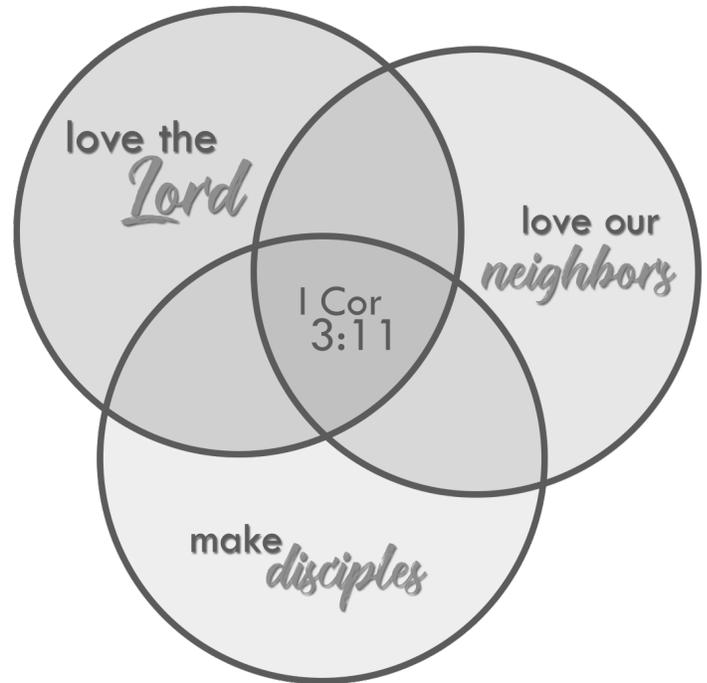
Secondly, we are **to love one another**, as Jesus commanded - but in a very particular way: We love one another AS (in the same manner) Christ has loved us.

Third, we are called **to make disciples**. To turn the hearts of the lost toward Jesus where we are given the opportunity, and teach the lost and saved alike how to follow Him.

The circles interlock to remind us that our purposes are all intricately woven together into one. The healthy Christian life will involve all of these beginning with Loving God. If we love Him, we will love others and we will work to make disciples. And there in the center, is a verse that represents our core belief; a 4th purpose really. A verse that reminds us that Jesus is our foundation; He holds all of this together. We RELY on Him for life, for our identity, for our calling, and for success in our labor.

Let me read you that passage, beginning with v9 in 1 Corinthians 3 and going through 11 - Paul says of the Apostles **9 For we are God's fellow workers. You (The church) are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. 11 For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

Paul describes the Christian life using imagery of a building. One that no doubt points us to remember that God at one time graciously to dwelt with His people in an earthly temple built with fine materials



like marble, silver, gold, and precious stones. But now, we see his graciousness in the most magnificent way - God now dwells IN His people. We are the new temple decorated not with silver, and gold, and precious stones - but with the beauty of godly character and behavior. And the foundation of this building is Jesus and His Work. He upholds us, he strengthens us, and He perseveres us. And He is worthy of receiving the honor of the entire structure.

But as we read last week in **1 Peter 2** we are not just the temple. We are being builtUp as a spiritual house, to be a Holy Priesthood to offer sacrifices that please God. Not a sacrifice of animals like in the OT, but spiritual sacrifices that please Him. What are Spiritual Sacrifices? Examples in scripture include praise, doing good works, being generous, and offering your bodies to His service. The variety of examples lead us to believe that anything we do in service to God can be thought of as a spiritual sacrifice. So look at our image again, I believe if you speak a testimony of God's grace or spend time in His word or give generously to His church - that is a spiritual sacrifice of loving God. If you forgive someone who has hurt you, if you show someone hospitality, if you do a good deed in His name - that is a spiritual sacrifice of loving your neighbor. If you learn God's word so that you may help others learn it, if you work to turn the lost to Jesus, if you live in a way that others can live by your example - that is a spiritual sacrifice of making disciples.

So as we discussed last week, our focus as we move into this new year is BuildingUp. While only God can truly bring about spiritual growth - we are clearly commanded to work toward becoming a more godly temple, becoming more holy priests, and offering better sacrifices. Last week was a call to **Build Yourself Up** as commanded in **Jude 1:20**; I challenged you last week to develop a personal growth plan, to stretch yourself by **Reflecting** on where you are spiritually, making an action plan - your **Resolves** - on how you want to grow, and then **Relying** on Jesus as you work out those to see them succeed. I hope you have done that OR that you are still doing that.

Today, our focus is going to turn corporately - to our church. How **We Build Each Other Up**. We get to participate in God's work by helping one another become more godly, more like Jesus. And just like last week we are going to challenge ourselves to grow up TOGETHER.

Love More and More

In our first scripture reading today from **1 Thessalonians 4**, we see Paul touch on some of these themes. In **verse 1** he urges the church to **grow** in living to please the Lord - *you are doing it, but do it more and more*. And in **verse 3**, He reminds them that sanctification (which is growth in holiness) is God's will for

your life. And then in **verse 9-10** he demonstrates that these commands are not simply for individual Christians but for the church as a whole. **Concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another...But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more...** So spiritual growth involves loving God more and more (resulting in our sanctification) AS WELL as loving one another - MORE AND MORE. You know as Christians that we are to love one another. Depending on where you are in your Christian walk, you have practiced this to some degree. But your call from God is to keep going. **Grow** in love for each other - do it more and more and more.

Pursue Mutual Upbuilding

Our second reading in **Romans 14** further develops the command to grow in love for one another, but also helps us understand the aim of that love. The high level view of the context of this passage is life in the church; where members may have differing opinions on non-essential subjects. When I say non-essentials, just to be clear, I mean a subject where God has not given a clear command or perhaps in talking about theological matters, a clear explanation. In Paul's day it was differing thoughts on diet and what days to celebrate or not; The church is told not to quarrel over issues like this; not to judge or despise someone who takes a different stand than you do; if need be we are told to refuse to exercise our freedoms in order to not cause a fellow believer to stumble; We are told to walk (or live) in a way that shows and expresses love, that serves others **instead of** indulging our preferences. To be an embodiment of the same patience and grace God has given you. And then in **v19** we see the aim or the goal of these instructions: **Pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.**

The word translated upbuilding is literally the act of building; and it is used in the NT to reference spiritual advancement. So God commands through Paul that the church not get distracted by focusing on needless controversies; But to walk in love; and **the aim** of loving one another is that there might be mutual growth in the faith. Paul writes it again just a few verses later (**15:1-2** not in your notes) **We who are strong have an obligation...not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to BUILD him up. For Christ did not please himself..**

We are called to love each other More and More. Keep going. Deeper and higher than you have. **And why?** So that you can help others in the church advance in their faith.

BuildingUp 2020

So let's talk about how we can set our minds for this year, to Build Each Other Up. Like last week, I want to give you a few challenges; and my hope is that you will actually use some of these challenges in your personal growth plan. How you are relating to other believers should absolutely be apart of personal Reflection and setting Resolves:

1. I challenge you **to build each other up by exercising a ministry of presence**. What I have in mind is first, gather with the church when it meets. I know some gatherings are more convenient than others, but each one that we do relates to a purpose. And in order to build people up - we must be present with people; But not just physically: If you do not already, especially on Sundays and Wednesdays, come a little early, stay a little later to be present with others. Remember that being together and encouraging each other is a form of spiritual protection against sin **Hebrews 10:25n** so the enemy will constantly seek to keep us from it.
2. I challenge you **to build each other up by serving one another**; Paul in **1 Cor 14** urges the church to use their gifts to build others up. For some of us that is wrestling with why we may have lost the heart to serve; for others it is stepping out in faith to start serving; for others it is going deeper in serving. *Next week you will have the opportunity to consider further ways to serve each other at our Ministry Fair.* Seasons and life changes, we all have challenges, but there is no role of spectator in the church, and there is no retirement plan.
 - a. Let me say one thing: In general - the central places we are called to be present and to serve is our homes and with our local church (whether you are at Agape or anywhere else). Other places you gather with Christians and join in service can be very good; I am not pointing you away from that as long as they do not keep us from each other. There are certainly exceptions to this for some people in some seasons of life (for example missionaries). But generally I believe the Bible points us here: that outside of our family, the people in the church God has placed you, should be the primary receivers of your ministry. *This is why we do church membership here; In recognition that everyone should be committed to a body of believers where they are investing and they are being invested in.*
3. I challenge you to build each other up by fighting for unity and peace in this church. Kill that in your flesh that would destroy unity: Do not gossip, do not envy, do not deceive. Do not avoid hard conversations when needed, but do not make every conversation hard. Make peace. Go deeper. If you are at odds with someone, resolve it. Look for the good in every person. Be kind and patient and gracious with others as God has been with you. Forgive and LOVE, LOVE, LOVE.

4. I challenge you to Build each other up by going deeper in knowing each other and building NEW relationships in the church. Let me lay out 3 specifics:
- a. We are planning 4 events this year - family fun day type events - for the purpose of the church just coming together and hanging out. These will not be outreach events (visitors are welcome) but we are not advertising them on FB - as the focus will be building relationships in the church. So we want you to plan to come to those.
 - b. I am asking each family here to make it a goal to invite at least 3 families that you do not know very well into your home this year for fellowship. Sometime in the next 12 months, 3 families over for dinner. Fight all the excuses that just came to your mind (we do not have room, we do not have money, we do not have time). There is a way around all of that. But I want you to stretch yourself in getting to know others - for the purpose of building each other up. So many people, even in a church our size, feel utterly disconnected at times. And we think it's just us. It's not. And the best cure is to reach out, love well, make connections. And the reason that I am asking you to do so with families you do not know, is because it is easy to get locked into only being with people that we are comfortable with; or that are like us; and we are called to walk in love for mutual upbuilding of everyone in this church.
 - c. Join with and participate in a GC. This is the primary way we connect with others in the church. Eric Cleveland.

Closing and Prayer