Building Up The Church

Intro: Eph. 4:11-16 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” The work of the church is that of saving souls. (Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”) This work is exhibited in three areas; preaching to the lost, edifying (or building up) the saved, and benevolence. In this lesson we wish to discuss the second of these; edifying (building up) the saved.

1. WHAT IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO BUILDING UP THE CHURCH.
   a. These do not necessarily help nor do they hinder—they are neutral.
   b. Famous people.
   c. Large numbers.
      i. Gideon won a great victory for God and Israel with a small number; Jud. 7.
         (1) Gideon verses the Midianites (135,000 men).
         (2) Started with 32,000.
         (3) God only needed 300 men.
      ii. Jesus started with only the twelve apostles, yet they evangelized the world; Col. 1:23 “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;”
   d. Wealthy members.
      i. 1 Cor. 1:26-27 “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;”
      ii. James 2:5-7 “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?”
   e. Beautiful buildings.

2. HINDRANCES TO BUILDING UP THE CHURCH.
   a. Lack of knowledge.
      i. Isa. 5:13 “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.”
      ii. Hos. 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”
iii. We today have a spiritual famine in the land; Amos 8:11 “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:"

iv. We must study and learn God’s Word; 2 Tim. 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

b. False Doctrine.

i. False doctrine condemns not saves.
   (1) Only truth saves; John 8:32 “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
   (2) 2 Pet. 2:1-2 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”
   (3) 2 Tim. 2:17-18 “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

ii. The time and effort we must spend combating false doctrine takes away our time from teaching the truth to others.

c. Apathy

i. Apathy is a lack of concern.
   (1) A meaning no or without and pathos meaning feeling; thus no feeling or without feeling.
   (2) Synonyms are indifference, lethargy and complacency.

ii. Jeremiah lamented Israel’s apathy over Jerusalem’s destruction; Lam. 1:12 “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”

iii. Rev. 3:15-16 “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

iv. Some evidences of apathy in the church today.
   (1) Irregular church attendance.
   (2) Lack of and shallow prayers.
   (3) Lack of Bible knowledge and study.
   (4) Failing contribution.
   (5) Slackening efforts to evangelize (both home and foreign missions).

v. God expects us to be zealous.
   (1) Rev. 3:19 “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”
   (2) It was said of Jesus; John 2:17 “And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”
   (3) Tit. 2:14 “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
d. **Members not living faithful lives; worldliness.**
   i. Christians have the admonition to live separate from the world.
      (1) Jam. 4:4 “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”
      (2) 1 John 2:15-17 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”
   ii. No man can serve both the world and God; Mat. 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

e. **Failure to discipline members.**
   i. Often the work of the church is hindered because others live ungodly lives.
      ii. 1 Cor. 5:7 “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”
      iii. 2 Cor. 6:17 “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,”
      iv. Eccl. 8:11 “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

3. **What is Essential to Building Up the Church.**
   a. **A Converted membership.**
      i. Mat. 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
      ii. They love the truth; Pro. 23:23 “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”
      iii. They have conviction; stand for something.
   b. **A Working membership.**
      i. Jam. 1:22 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”
      ii. Mat. 7:21 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”
      iii. This will prevent worldliness and many church troubles.
   c. **A Praying membership.**
      i. Prayer will help center our minds upon that for which we pray.
      ii. There is power in prayer; cf. Jam. 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
      iii. We need to learn to talk to God; cf. Luke 11:1 “And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”
      iv. We have our part to do in conjunction with our prayers.
         (1) Pray for the sick - minister unto them.
(2) Pray for the lost - take the gospel to them; cf. Rom. 10:1 “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”

d. A Sacrificing membership.
i. Willing to work and give; spend and be spent.
ii. Christianity is a story of sacrifice from beginning to end.
   (1) Rom. 12:1-2 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
   (2) Mat. 20:28 “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

e. A United membership.
i. Christ prayed for it; John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
   ii. Paul pleaded for it; 1 Cor. 1-4. see 1:10 “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
   iii. Mat. 12:25 “And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:”

f. A Separate membership.
i. Separated from the things of the world.
   (1) Eph. 5:11 “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”
   (2) 1 John 2:15-17 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”
   (3) Rev. 18:4 “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

ii. We must be the light of the world.
   (1) 1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”
   (2) Mat. 5:14-16 “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

g. A Missionary-Minded membership.
i. Jesus gave us the commission to go.
   (1) Mark 16:15 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
(2) Mat. 28:19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

ii. Concerned about the lost here at home.

iii. Concern about the lost in the rest of the country.

iv. Concerned about the lost everywhere.

v. This concern will lead to proper giving of our means upon the first day of the week; 1 Cor. 16:1-2 “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

h. An Optimistic eldership.

i. Men of vision and foresight.

ii. Plan for the future - 5, 10, or 25 years.

i. A Bible centered membership.

i. Bible studying.

(1) 2 Tim. 2:15 “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

(2) 1 Pet. 2:2 “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

ii. Bible preaching and teaching membership.

(1) 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

(2) 1 Cor. 1:21 “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”

iii. When we fill our minds with the Bible:

(1) We will not sin; Psa. 119:11 “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

(2) We will preach that message.

(a) Jer. 20:9 “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

(b) God will take care of the numerical growth

(i) Isa. 55:11 “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

(ii) 1 Cor. 3:6 “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

Conclusion: It is our duty as God’s children to grow (2 Pet. 3:18 “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”). When each Christian grows, then the church as a whole will grow. Are you a Christian? As a Christian, are you growing?