

KINGDOM COMMUNITY: All Types of Edification

One of the things we need to get right in a Kingdom Community is that the saints are being edified. Edification was exemplified in the 1st church and was the admonition of Paul in his writings¹.

Paul teaches that:

1. Meeting together is for mutual edification²
2. Our speech should be full of grace so that the hearers are edified³
3. We are to comfort and edify each other⁴
4. We are to pursue peace and what edifies others⁵
5. We are free to do anything, but we are to choose what is edifying for ourselves⁶
6. The teaching we look for should be edifying, not divisive⁷
7. Prophecy should be for edification⁸
8. Zeal for spiritual gifts should be for the purposes of edifying the saints⁹
9. An apostle's authority was for edification, not destruction¹⁰
10. What apostles do is for the edification of the saints¹¹

So, to be edifying in what we do and say, we need to know what 'edify' means.

- The Amplified bible uses the following synonyms for 'edify' – 'mutual up-building', 'mutual development', 'build another up spiritually' and 'to strengthen another'.
- Thayer¹² defines it somewhat as – The act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety and holiness.
- Vine¹³ defines it as – The things of building up, as in the character of a believer, by teaching or by example. It can also be used to mean to embolden a person.

So **edifying** is [building one another up](#).

It's here that our understanding often gets unstuck because we think that any time we are upset emotionally we are not being edified. The very damaging side-effect of that attitude is that the other person is not considered to be edifying us if we feel emotionally negative about it. This means that we point the finger at them (not always literally) and declare that they are not edifying. In most cases, this conclusion is a 'furphy'.

We must get away from the soulish, fleshy, worldly, culturally-approved method of assessing things by using our happiness as the barometer. As spiritual people we must only judge by the spirit. This is the essence of 1 Corinthians 2:15 as exhibited in the Amplified translation:

1 Corinthians 2:15 (AMP) – *But the spiritual man tries all things [he examines, investigates, inquires into, questions, and discerns all things], yet is himself to be put on trial and judged by no one [he can read the meaning of everything, but no one can properly discern or appraise or get an insight into him].*

We all have emotions, and happiness is one of them. We know that scripture admonishes us to "rejoice

1 – Romans 15:2

2 – 1 Corinthians 14:26

3 – Ephesians 4:29

4 – 1 Thessalonians 5:11

5 – Romans 14:19

6 – 1 Corinthians 10:23

7 – 1 Timothy 1:4

8 – 1 Corinthians 14:3

9 – 1 Corinthians 14:12

10 – 2 Corinthians 10:8

11 – 2 Corinthians 12:19

12 – Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Lexicon (<http://biblesuite.com/thayers.htm>)

13 – W.E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (1940) and without copyright. (www.menfak.no/bibel/vines.html)

with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”¹⁴, which is about our emotions. Unfortunately, this quote is used by many to say being emotional is OK. This one verse should not be used as a proof text to justify using our emotions in any way we want. For example, making decisions using the emotions is equivalent the making decisions in the ‘flesh’, but contrarily, there’s so much written in the New Testament is about dying to the ‘flesh’.

What is the ‘flesh’?

- Thayer¹⁵ defines it as – The sensuous nature of man, “The animal nature”.
- Strong¹⁶ defines it as – Human nature with its frailties and passions.

If a person is controlled by their emotions, they must bring their emotions under control. Their emotions must not dominate or control them. They must have self control – one fruit of a spirit-led person.¹⁷

In the name of ‘edification’, emotionalism has even hijacked the prayer line and the ministry time in church meetings. My observations of the charismatic and pentecostal systems over 25 years in Australia has shown me that these prayer/ministry systems are now (in the main) a ‘feel good’ time. Although prayer ministry originally began with spiritual intent, it is failing to deliver Kingdom outcomes. Week after week the same people mostly come for prayer and a cursory analysis of their lives show little change over time and almost no progressive maturity. What’s happened?

When people come back from the prayer time they are often euphoric and many say they have been touched by the Spirit or that they feel much better. Meeting with many of them the next week, or even during the week, yields the same despondency and the same old negative talk. What appears to have transpired as a consequence of being prayed for is the assent that God has changed them from the outside-in because they ‘felt better’. These people feel edified. Maybe this is because they got to a different point within themselves without going through any pain in the process.

Those in the Kingdom need to ‘do business with God’ if they are to see any real change in their lives. This is the one-on-one process of the Spirit moulding, shaping, refining, changing them because they have submitted themselves to the master’s hand. This entails chagrin – the pain of the process. **This oft-times excruciating process produces maturity, so it is edifying** (by definition).

Regarding edification, even our understanding of intercession is not accurate. Effective intercession is not praying long prayers asking Father for the needs of the person being upheld. Effective intercession is strategic. It’s about receiving strategies from heaven to know what to pray, how to pray, and what to declare. Also, what wisdom to verbally pass on to the person so they enter into Father’s will and so that the plans of the enemy are thwarted.¹⁸ It’s not about feeling good within ourselves because they’ve ‘interceded’ for lengthy times for someone.

So, what is edification? Is it what makes us ‘feel good’? If we aren’t feeling happy, are we not being edified? Is happiness our measuring system to check the level of edification?

ACTIVITY: Take an overview look at all the epistles to see how the writers edified their readers.

When doing this overview, forget about using the normal Greek method of analysing the epistles’ content, book by book, verse by verse. Look at them collectively, as a unit, in a Hebraically way and get a feel of purpose, relationship and community.

14 – Romans 12:15 (NKJV)

15 – Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek Lexicon (<http://biblesuite.com/thayers.htm>)

16 – James Strong's Concordance with Hebrew and Greek Lexicon (www.eliyah.com/lexicon.html)

17 – Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6

18 – See <http://strategicintercession.org> for strategic intercession on a global scale. It will give you some insight into the process.

A very important fact will emerge from such an overview: The letters are all about building up the fledgling churches and their members. Interestingly, you will observe that it includes both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ content.

Matthew Henry describes Paul’s writings as follows:

“This was his great aim and design, to do good, to lay the foundation well, and then with care and diligence to build the superstructure. He would not shrink from his duty for fear of displeasing them, though he was so careful to make himself easy to them. Therefore he was resolved to be faithful in reproving sin, though he was therein *found to be such as they would not*¹⁹.”²⁰

So the question to ask when measuring edification is: “Am I growing in godly wisdom, piety and holiness?” Or alternatively and more succinctly, “Am I maturing spiritually?” When we ask these questions of what is presented to us, it eliminates the ‘flesh’ and the emotions, and puts it on a Kingdom plain and not a natural/fleshy/emotional plain.

What we usually miss in all this is that edification is 2-way – The godly and good input we receive can only edify us if we let it. We can resist what we hear and we can resent what is done, all leading to our demise via our attitudes and emotions. This is why we are told that some Christians will look to teachers who will ‘tickle their ears’ with nice words²¹.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (AMP) – *For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, And will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions.*

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (PHILLIPS) – *For the time is coming when men will not tolerate wholesome teaching. They will want something to tickle their own fancies, and they will collect teachers who will pander to their own desires. They will no longer listen to the truth, but will wander off after man-made fictions.*

These are the speakers who make their hearers feel good (emotionally) because they aren’t challenged to change or grow. They keep their hearers in their nice tiny comfort zone, rather than stretching them with sound doctrine (Wow! There’s that word ‘doctrine’ again).

REMEMBER: Edification is about maturing spiritually, not about feeling good, comfortable or happy. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, not comfort or happiness.

Edification isn’t even about whether you like your circumstances or not; what you’ve been asked to do; or what’s been said to you. The baseline for the assessment of whether something is edifying is whether or not it brings maturity. Edification therefore includes correcting error and teaching sound doctrine.

Discipline is part of edification. Discipline is approved of and referenced in scripture as the means to keep the saints on-track. We only mature spiritually when we are on the right track, so discipline is edifying if it’s done in the right way – by definition.

For example: Paul and the other apostolic writers of the NT epistles, as well as Jesus, had some harsh words to say to their readers. Paul ‘outed’ some people who were teaching error by naming them in his letters.²² He labelled some false teachers as being “accursed”²³ and he wrote that he wished some of them would emasculate themselves²⁴. Paul even had to threaten some that he would deal with them face-to-face when he came.²⁵ Peter declared death over Ananias and Sapphira for lying to Holy Spirit.²⁶

19 – See 2 Corinthians 12:20

20 – Matthew Henry’s Commentary on 2 Corinthians 12:11–21 (www.biblegateway.com/resources/matthew-henry/2Cor.12.11-2Cor.12.21)

21 – 2 Timothy 4:3-4

22 – 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:9-10

23 – Galatians 1:7-10

24 – Galatians 5:12 (His intent as translated in ERV, CEB, ESV, EXB, GW, ISV)

25 – 2 Corinthians 10:8-11; 13:1-3

26 – Acts 5:1-10

Jesus rebuked some of the churches in his revelatory message to the Apostle John for not kicking out certain people from their community.²⁷ If this expulsion was done today the elder would be castigated for not being edifying – I have experienced this kick-back myself.

Jonathan Welton suffers from the attacks of saints on the blog site because he dares to correct what he believes is error in the church today. He writes:

“As old false teachings are being demolished, there will be those that cling to the sinking ship and are angry at me for telling them to abandon ship.

The group that is the most challenging are the ones that like some of what I say but struggle with other things I say. This love/hate relationship is very challenging to navigate. I want to encourage everyone into truth and freedom, but sometimes people get stuck somewhere. I know I am stuck some places, but I want to keep moving toward more freedom.

One of the other major issues is the idea of “playing nice” for the sake of unity. This idea that Christians shouldn’t argue, shouldn’t declare that false teachings are false, that we shouldn’t suggest that someone is off-base. The reasoning is that “If they are not against us, then they are for us.” (Matthew 12:30)”²⁸

Children are prepared by conscientious parents to be fully functional citizens in their community. This is a process of maturation which can be objected to and resented by the child because they “don’t like it”. Whether the child wants this process or not it will happen. This is because they can’t fit into society as an adult unless they align themselves with the norms or the culture in which they live. If they don’t take on board their parent’s training, life will knock them into shape by itself. However, in any nation a person can ‘drop out’ of society and live as a hermit, a vagrant, homeless or beggar – it’s their choice. The aim of all non-socialist/capitalist nations is for this not to occur as these people become a burden on that society, rather than being productive. Unfortunately in our Western welfare societies it is very easy to ‘drop out’ and this mindset pervades our culture.

This mindset even invades the church. Most Christians refuse to be corrected (just try doing it in love) and many show little or no spiritual maturity because they refuse to be taught by sound doctrinal teaching. Many appear to have ‘dropped out’ of the process of maturity, preferring to ‘feel good’ about where they are at the moment.

In conclusion, all forms of edification should be occurring in a Kingdom Community. This includes the things we all like – love, affection, honour, forgiveness, etc – but also sound doctrine, correction and discipline. Let’s see if we can include the whole gamut of edifying processes in our community.

I’ll finish off with a quote from Jonathan Welton’s heartfelt message again, but this time he’s looking at the need for maturity through sound teaching:

“So here’s where we are at, if you are willing to think, to be challenged, to grow, to argue, to be a mature Christian adult; then continue to enjoy my facebook page. But stop asking me to play nice. I won’t. Jesus didn’t, Paul didn’t and neither should you.”²⁹

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27 – Revelation 2:14, 20

28 – <http://disruptingculture.com/2014/11/13/ignoring-problems-is-not-honor>

29 – <http://disruptingculture.com/2014/11/13/ignoring-problems-is-not-honor>