
Gospel Meeting

Pleasant Plains Church, Jackson, TN—Max Dawson

Introduction:

1. Read Acts 9:31. Notice the two words that describe what happened in these churches.
 - a. *Edified* is from a word that means “house builder.” The church was built up, as a house might be.
 - b. *Multiplied* means to increase in number. These churches were growing in strength and number.
2. When we think of growing churches today, what do we think of? We need to think more than numbers.
 - a. I have often heard, “How many did you baptize last year?” I have not often heard, “How much growth took place among your members last year?”
 - b. Not enough attention has been given to the vital work of edification, yet it is intended by God to be the heart of the church’s activity. It is God’s powerful transformer!

The Lesson:

I. Why is edification so neglected?

- A. Because we don’t understand what it is.
 1. Some associate it with boring preaching and dull, dreary Bible classes. It is not that!
 2. It is more than just going through learning exercises. In some churches everybody knows the questions; everybody knows the answers—hardly anybody knows the point!
 3. Edification is more than learning facts. It has to do with growing unto spiritual maturity and completeness, Ephesians 4:11-13. *Edification is the application of Bible truth to my life and circumstances so that I am more like Jesus*. Until you apply the Bible to yourself where you live, no edification takes place. Edification is the process of “becoming,” not only as individuals but as a local church. Every Christian (and every church) is a work in progress.
- B. Because we don’t understand the power generated by edification.
 1. As long as we think edification is just learning Bible facts without the power produced by application, we will not be successful in reaching the lost.
 2. Edification is the prerequisite power to seeking the lost, Acts 9:31; 11:22-24. Edification is not a math term, but it might as well be—both multiplication and addition follow edification!
 3. Why don’t churches grow, when Jesus put such a premium on souls? Maybe it is because we are not built up to be more like Jesus. Edification is a power generator.
- C. Because we don’t understand it is the solution to most of the problems we face.
 1. Have you heard of the Bickering Heights church? Trouble Road? Division Lane?
 2. See what Paul did, 1 Corinthians 3:1-3ff. He applied the principles of Christ to their situation. This is the answer to every church problem: application of truth to our lives. When we see trouble, we blame people, attitudes and ideas. The real blame: We are not built up to be like Jesus.
 3. When people mold their lives after Jesus, will they still fight each other?
 4. This goes beyond church problems. This is the answer to worldliness, no time for prayer and Bible study, etc. We must be conformed to Christ, Romans 8:29.
- D. The power of this church resides in your coming together to do the work of Christ, because your lives have been powerfully transformed to be like that of Christ.

II. What constitutes edification? Here are three elements.

- A. Truth: The *what* we should do. No one is built up by false doctrine. No one becomes more like Christ through error, John 8:31-32. We must be militant in teaching God's truth!
- B. Motivation: The *why* we should do. God tells us why we should do a thing, Revelation 22:14. Heaven and hell are motivational. People who know "why" have reason to act!
- C. Equipping: The *how* we should do, Ephesians 4:12. This is the teaching or training about how to accomplish a thing. It would include instruction on right living. It teaches people how to teach others. It instructs Christians about how to meet the needs of the sick, the weak and the faltering. It puts people to work, not mere programs. *People* are needed to equip the saints.
- D. There may be a fourth element. Or maybe it is the sum of the three. It involves our *interaction with one another*. We need to have a heart for Jesus and for one another, Colossians 3:12-17. There is almost an intangible thing that happens in worship that builds us up as we sing, pray, study and as we just talk to one another. There is camaraderie, a sense of belonging that strengthens us. See Malachi 3:16-17.

III. What can you do to get involved in edification?

- A. Demand quality preaching. That means pointed preaching that applies to the lives of hearers.
 - 1. In the Bible, quality preaching wasn't a rambling on spiritual subjects. It had a goal, aim and purpose, Acts 2:36; 7:51-53. Men understood their condition. They also learned what they must do to get right with God, Acts 2:38-40. What they listened for then we ought to be listening for now.
 - 2. Worship should affect our lives. Ask, "How am I drawn closer to God?" by what we are doing?
- B. Demand quality Bible classes. Don't you want the best for you and your kids?
 - 1. We need to stamp out the consumer mentality that we are here to take whatever the church gives. You are part of the edification process. Get involved.
 - 2. Instead of merely being a consumer, get involved in the manufacturing process.
- C. Demand something of yourself. We are good at making demands of others!
 - 1. It's time we quit thinking it's the work of some organization (separate from me) to edify and build up. I have a responsibility to *myself* and to *my brother*.
 - 2. I am personally accountable to study, examine myself, and apply the Bible to my life, 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Corinthians 13:5. We require so little of ourselves! It is time we took responsibility for our own spiritual growth, Philippians 2:12b.
 - 3. As a church grows there is a tendency to "let the church (organization) do it," and less "I should do it." I am accountable to build others up. We must cultivate a culture of mutual accountability.
 - 4. What do you require of yourself? It is time to say, "I will never be what Jesus wants me to be until I learn of Him. I will never truly be His disciple until I put His word to work in my life."

Conclusion:

- 1. Do you believe God's plan is sufficient to save you and take you to heaven? _____. If so, then let's be about the business of working God's plan. Let us be what Christ wants us to be—like Him!
- 2. Let's do the work. Let's pick up those who are fallen. Let's build up each other. Let's press on to spiritual maturity. This is our work. This is God's powerful transformer!