



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...” 2 Peter 1:21

Are You Building Up or Breaking Down? By Alex Hale

When Christians learn to love each other as Christ loved the church, that leads to the building up of the church. This in turn blesses others (Ephesians 4:11-16). However, when a church is made up of people who are stubborn and selfish and fight, or a group of people who attend with another but do not share a fellowship with one another, the church is not blessed. In addition, people in the world have no interest in that kind of church – they simply pass on by.

Within a church, a spirit of unity must be nurtured and maintained (Ephesians 4:3). Unfortunately, there are those who “sow dissension” (Proverbs 6:16-19). People who sow dissension destroy friendships, marriages, and churches.

What motivates people to sow dissension?

Selfishness. Many people come into the church expecting the congregation to entertain them, to serve them, to meet their needs. When the church does not meet their needs (or more often, when the church does not suit their tastes), they complain and gossip and slander. Other people selfishly refuse to listen to others, asserting that it is their way or the highway.

In the church, relationships must not be self-centered, but other-centered. Paul Powell has written, “The purpose of the church is not just mutual enjoyment, but also mutual enrichment for spiritual development.” In a biological family we work to help each other grow to physical and emotional maturity. The same should be true in a healthy

spiritual family. We work to help others. We see this reflected in the many “one another” commands of the New Testament. God intends the church to be a selfless place – a place where we focus on others. When churches get this, they enjoy a blessed fellowship. However, when Christians are self-centered, dissension is often the result.

Unrealistic expectations. Many people expect a church to be full of people who are easy to be with and who agree with them on everything. When that does not happen, some leave and continue their fruitless search for the perfect church. Others stay and attack the imperfections they perceive with gossip, slander, grumbling, or complaining. Still others do some of both – they leave, but at the same time try to continue their verbal attacks.

We need to be realistic in our expectations of people. Have you ever shopped at an “as is” store, or looked at an “as is” rack? You know that the inventory in that store or on that clothing rack is slightly irregular. It is expected that you will find flaws – a stain that will not come out, a zipper that will not zip, a button that will not button. That is why the items are so cheap, right?

What does that have to do with the church? John Ortberg writes, “When you deal with human beings – even Christians – you have come to the ‘as is’ corner of the universe because all of us are ‘slightly irregular.’ There are flaws in all of us ... So when you find them – and you will find them – don’t be surprised. But remember, if you want to enter into a relationship with a fellow human being, there’s only one way to do so – ‘as is.’”



CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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When We Meet

Sunday

Bible Classes – 9:00 am

Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper

Norman Kemper

Our Preacher

Alex Hale