

Taming Our Tongues: How to be a "People Builder"

Romans 14:19

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Introduction:

- I. Long after we depart this life our presence still lingers. Through associations and achievements others will have cause to reflect about our lives. This brings us to a very interesting question ... "What is the one trait for which you will be remembered?"
 1. Napoleon had his Waterloo; Stalin his purge of the people he hated; Hitler had his death camps. The infamous always provokes ill-feelings and tragic sorrow.
 2. A. Lincoln left a life that was sacrificed for freedom. He and all others who leave a noble thought remind us that goodness is amplified in death.
 3. The text urges us to leave a lasting legacy of nobility – to be forever remembered as a "people-builder." It is one of the greatest needs of society.

- II. Several years ago Anne Murray's hit single, "A little good news" reminded us about the tragic negativism surrounding us. "I rolled out this morning the kids had the morning news show on; Bryant Gumble was talkin about the fighting in Lebanon; Some Senator was squawking bout the bad economy, it's gonna get worse you see, we need a change in policy ... we sure could use a little good news today."

- III. Of all the vocations essential to a true quality of living, the most needed and most neglected is the "People-Builder."
 1. Encouragement is a fundamental need for all of us. We need regular reminders that we are important and loved.
 2. "Like a vitamin that our body must have but cannot manufacture for itself, encouragement is something others must provide for us."
 3. "Authentic encouragement" – to affirm one's noble qualities and acts; to deal honestly with counterproductive ideas and behavior; to love unconditionally through it all.
 4. Look at the great need and the pressing duty to become a "People-builder" using authentic encouragement.

Body:

- I. *You need to become a People-builder because of the discouraging world in which we live.*
 - A. The contemporary values say with slick persuasion – "You are valuable ONLY IF you are attractive, wealthy, athletic, smart, young, powerful, and sexy."
 1. And amazingly – NO ONE feels qualified! Even the "cover girls" pronounce themselves as "flawed." Most see themselves as "Second rate" or "average"!
 2. "One of our greatest statesmen was ridiculed by the press of his day because of his accent and his looks: 'a slang-whanging stump speaker ... a horried-looking wrench ... the leanest, lankest, most ungainly mass of legs and arms and hatchet face ever strung on a frame.' Such were some of the editorial comments in 1860 on one Abraham Lincoln."

B. Every day you and all you associate with are told how bade they are – too frizzy, too wrinkled, too grey, too common. You need to be an influence that is totally different! (Matthew 5:13).

II. *You need to be a People-builder because God is such!*

A. God is a God of encouragement and affirmation – He encourages us to achieve and excel (2 Corinthians 1:21). Every time God communicated with man it was for the purpose of encouraging man to achieve great goals by using his abilities and reason (Romans 12:1,2). God is always encouraging us – "Go ahead! YOU can do it!" (Revelation 2:10).

B. Matthew 5:48 – As His children we ought to imitate the great encouragement of others.

III. *You need to be a People-builder because it is the church's business.*

God's way of encouragement has changed. Once He talked directly with those He needed to encourage. But now He uses the Bible and His Church. He has delegated the duty of encouragement to the Church. Christian encouragement is a front-line defense against sin. In the Church we should find People-builders who see the best in us and expect the best from us. Two key New Testament words describe this duty.

A. EDIFICATION

1. The Greek is literally "to build up a house."
2. We are all building a house (in a figurative sense) as we obey God (Matthew 7:24,25; Ephesians 2:19-22). This process is not to be done in isolation. It is as if we are having a community-wide "house raising" for each member!
3. Some texts ...
 - a. Romans 15:1-3 – We edify by being gentle with weak ones.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 8:1,2 – We edify with a sensitive love and not arrogance.
 - c. Colossians 1:28 – We edify to attain a goal – "maturity."
4. Being a People-builder through edification requires patience, graciousness, and love. It is no small duty and should never be ignored.

B. EXHORTATION

1. The Greek is literally "comfort; entreat; encourage." The idea is calling someone to your side and giving them needed assistance.
2. Acts 4:36 – Barnabas was like this. He would come alongside a discouraged or weak brother and help them (Hebrews 3:13).
3. The process of exhortation is illustrated in the work of the Holy Spirit (John 14-16).
 - a. "Spirit of Truth" (14:17). A true exhorter will be honest with another and point them to God's Truth that sets all free.
 - b. Remind of teaching (14:26). A true exhorter points to Christ as the greatest hope possible.
 - c. Provide the peace of God (14:27). The true exhorter does not offer solutions of this life but points to the solutions found in God's forgiveness.
 - d. Be with us forever (14:16-18). A true exhorter will never forsake another (Proverbs 18:24).

IV. *You need to be a People-builder in the assemblies.*

- A. The assemblies are not the only place you should do this, but it is in the assemblies that special attention should be paid to building up one another (Hebrews 10:25).

- B. We assemble to worship God and to give and get encouragement from God's Truth and our brethren.
 - 1. These are choice opportunities to encourage (Hebrews 10:24).
 - 2. When we miss assemblies we forsake God and forsake our brethren's needs as well as our own.
 - 3. Some say, "I just don't get the encouragement I need when I go." I'm sure all present have felt that way at times, but such is missing the point in Hebrews 10:24-25. The real issue is "Are YOU coming and are YOU offering the encouragement that another needs?"

Conclusion:

- I. We focus on a great responsibility – we must encourage; we must become People-builders! Some find it easier to use critical words rather than encouraging words. In fact, some have forgotten how to be encouragers. Listen to some practical hints.
 - 1. BE SPECIFIC (Ephesians 1:15, 16; Colossians 1:3-8)
 - 2. NEVER MANIPULATE With AFFIRMATION
 - 3. BE CLEAR
 - 4. WRITE SHORT NOTES

- II. A Christian suffered a nervous breakdown. Nothing could lift him out of his depression. One day a friend suggested this therapy: Identify some person who has had a positive impact upon your life and write them a simple thank you note. The mere thought of a school teacher who early in his life had instilled in him a love for learning. He wrote to her and expressed his thankfulness. Some time later a letter arrived from the teacher, long since retired: "You have warmed my old heart. I have taught school for 50 years. Yours is the 1st letter of thanks I ever received from a student and I shall cherish it until I die." The Christian went on to write some 500 such letters of thanks; his "encouragement-therapy" played a major role in working his way back from a crippling despondency.

- III. When we talk about "taming our tongue" we ought to conclude that the best way of showing this is done is by becoming a "People-builder." Such will never gossip, backbite, or slander. Such will avoid profanity. Such will cause us to control angry impulses. I hope you will leave here determined to become a great "People-builder" in this congregation! There will be a wonderful residual benefit – it will build you up as well. It will develop within you a keen eye for the true, noble, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Read Romans 14:19.