

# THE BIBLICAL MEANS OF EDIFICATION

## Discipleship Message #8: A Biblical Philosophy of Edification, Part 1

**We are in the process of developing a biblical philosophy of discipleship—how a disciple is made.**

- We've seen that disciples are made (created) through evangelism and then made (molded, conformed to Christ) through edification.
- Last Sunday, we finished our study of the biblical philosophy of evangelism.
  - ✓ We looked at the *means* of evangelism—the components of the process through which God takes a sinner and makes him a saint.
  - ✓ Then we looked at the *goals* of evangelism—our part in the process of making saints of sinners.

**We are going to continue our study of the biblical philosophy of discipleship by looking at edification.**

- (1Cor 11.1) As we look to Paul the Apostle as our model and example to follow in fulfilling the Great Commission during the Church Age, we can easily see that our mission include more than evangelism.
- (1Cor 1.17) Yes, one main focus of Paul's ministry was intentional evangelism, and we should strive to be like him in this area (which is exactly why we started Harvest Baptist Church).
- (Col 1.27-29) However, Paul also labored and strove (intentionally) to edify believers, to perfect them (help them grow and mature) in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Our mission is to be and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. This includes evangelism: We need to be saved and we should be seeking to save the lost.
2. This include edification: We need to be growing in Christ and helping other believers to do so, also.
  - (Luke 6.40) Evangelism (salvation) is only the first step in the discipleship process because God's goal for all of us that are following the Lord is to conform us to His image—make us like Jesus.

**All this means one thing for us right now: We need to understand how edification (spiritual growth and maturity) happens, and we should understand our part in that process. We need to understand...**

1. The Means of Edification: What are the components of the process of edification?
  - How does God conform us to the image of Christ (how does He perfect/edify us)?
  - This is what we are going to study out this morning.
2. The Goals of Edification: What are our responsibilities in the process of edification?
  - What does God expect of us in the work of edification (in our lives and in the lives of others)?
  - This is what we will take a look at next Sunday.

**There are five *means* of edification—five *components* in the process of spiritual growth in Christ-likeness...**

### **I. Means #1: Identification with Christ – Identify with Christ!**

- A. (Rom 12.1-2) In order for the spiritual transformation (v2) to take place, we must *choose* to present ourselves to God as *His* (a sacrifice of us and our lives to Him, each day).
  1. This passage takes on even more meaning for us if we look at it in its overall context in Romans.
  2. Romans 9-11 are three “parenthetical” chapters that deal with Israel (past, present, and future). Since they are parenthetical, we could read from Romans 8 straight into Romans 12 without losing the context of the Paul's discourse.

3. In practical terms for our study, that means that the transformation Paul mentions in Romans 12.2 is the same transformation we see in Romans 8.29.
  - a) (Rom 8.29) God's ultimate goal for all of us is to conform us into the image of Jesus Christ.
  - b) (Rom 12.1-2) We ought not be conformed to this world, but rather transformed... into what? Into the image of Christ.
  - c) The transformation of Romans 12.2 is the same conforming to the image of Christ we see in Romans 8.29. It's the spiritual growth process of edification—growing in holiness, growing in Christ-likeness.
4. And the importance of this is found in Romans 12.1: In order to be transformed into the image of Christ (in order grow in this process of edification), we need to identify with Christ.
  - a) We need to present ourselves (mind and body) to God and not to the world.
  - b) We need to align ourselves (mind and body, thoughts and behavior) to God, not the world.
  - c) This is part of repentance (when we were saved) but it is also a daily decision we must make.
- B. (Rom 6.11-13) We need to “reckon” ourselves dead to sin but alive to Christ.
  1. This means we need to decide to think of ourselves as not longer “categorized” as part of the world of sin (with all its trappings and distractions).
  2. We need to decide to reckon ourselves as be “categorized” as Christians—we identify with Christ.
- C. (1Cor 6.9-20) This is the whole argument for Paul's exhortation to be holy and live right in order to glorify God.
  1. (1Cor 6.9-12) Don't “categorize” yourself any longer with the world—don't identify yourself anymore with sin and sinners.
  2. Instead: (1Cor 6.15) Think of yourself as a member of the Body of Christ—identify with Christ.
  3. (1Cor 6.20) That identification as a pertaining to Christ is the essential for living right—it is essential for glorifying God with our bodies (our behavior, conduct, what we do).
- D. (Gal 2.19-20) Paul made a conscious decision to identify himself with Christ. He reckoned himself dead to his old way of life and intentionally thought of himself as pertaining to Christ.
  1. We need to consciously and intentionally stop thinking of ourselves as being part of this world so that we avoid being conformed to the behavioral pattern of this world.
  2. Rather, we need to consciously and regularly identify ourselves with Christ (as Christians, followers of Christ) so that we have a mental orientation toward God and not toward this world.
    - a) This way we will be focused on conforming our behavioral pattern (how we live, what we live for, etc.) to God's design in Christ (Rom 12.1-2).
    - b) Side Note: This is why it is important to start your day in the Bible and prayer. Die daily to sin, self, and worldly goals in order to choose to live each day for the Savior.
- E. If we want to grow in Christ (if we want to be edified and conformed to the image of the Savior), we have to identify with Christ. We are Christians—followers of Christ. Reckon that so in your mind.

## II. **Means #2: Knowledge of the Bible – Learn the Bible!**

- A. (Luke 6.40) The process of growing in Christ-likeness is the process of growing in “perfection.”
  1. (Eph 4.11-13) The edification process is called the “perfecting of the saints” because the saints are being conformed to the image of Christ, the Perfect Man.
  2. How does God perfect the saints? The principal tool for this work is the Scripture.
- B. (Col 1.27-28) Without learning the Bible (without teaching and preaching from God's Word), there is no perfecting in the saint. Therefore, until we are perfect, we ought to be learning more of the Bible.

- C. (2Tim 3.16-17) In order to be “perfect” (v17), we need to learn “doctrine” (v16, first in the list!).
1. If we want to live in a way that pleases and glorifies God, we need to know *what* pleases and glorifies God. Where do we find that? Where do we learn what pleases and glorifies God? Scripture!
  2. (2Tim 3.15) If we want to lead others to salvation and sanctification in Christ, we need to *know* the Bible in order to teach it to them (the Gospel for their salvation and the rest for the sanctification).
- D. We should *never* despise or speak negatively about learning more of the Bible. We should *never* stop growing in knowledge. We should *always* strive to learn more, as much as we can.

### III. **Means #3: Obedience to the Bible – Obey the Bible!**

- A. (2Tim 3.16-17) “Doctrine” is only the *first* step in the perfecting process (essential, yes, but not alone).
1. Doctrine, teaching, and knowledge are worthless unless we intentionally choose to obey what we are learning. The most sound counsel for anyone is this: Read the Bible and obey what it says!
    - a) Doctrine: What's right.
    - b) Reproof: What's wrong (in your life).
    - c) Correction: How to make what's wrong right.
    - d) Instruction: How to keep it right (how to walk in the narrow path of righteousness).
  2. Learn the Bible, yes (learn a lot)! But, obey what you are learning.
- B. (Luke 6.46-49) We need to *both* “hear” (learn) and “do” (obey) the Word of the Lord we follow.
- C. (1Cor 8.1) Knowledge alone puffs up, but knowledge coupled with charity (obedience to the knowledge) results in edification.
- D. (Heb 5.11-14) Spiritual maturity comes “by reason of *use*” (by the application of the Scripture we are perfected, not by the learning alone). Learn as much Bible as you can, but obey what you're learning.

### IV. **Means #4: Suffering – Endure Suffering!**

- A. Even though we may not like it, God has established suffering as a means of making us grow in Christ.
1. (2Cor 4.16-17) The affliction we experience in this world work for us greater and greater glory.
  2. (2Cor 3.17-18) That greater and greater glory is the work of the Spirit conforming us to the image Christ “from glory to glory” (a little bit more each time we go through difficulties).
  3. Without the “light affliction” of the suffering we endure in this world, we would not grow in Christ. The process of edification (spiritual maturation) *requires* affliction and difficulties.
- B. (Php 3.10) If we want to be conformed to Christ, we need to be ready to experience the fellowship of his sufferings.
1. (Heb 5.8-9) If Christ learned obedience... and if Christ was made perfect through sufferings... why do we think it a strange thing if we experience the same thing?
  2. (1Pet 2.21) If we follow Christ, we will follow His steps in suffering in this life in this world.
- C. That's why Paul taught consistently that in order to enter the Kingdom of God, we *must* endure affliction, tribulation, suffering, and difficulties.
1. (Acts 14.21-22) We “must” enter into the Kingdom of God through *much* tribulation because that's how God designed it. Enduring suffering is one of the means God established for our growth.
  2. (Php 1.29-30) If you believe in Christ (if you are saved), you will suffer for His sake (His glory).
  3. (1Thes 3.3-4) If you are a Christian, just expect it: You will suffer, you will experience affliction.
- D. (Heb 2.10) If Christ was made perfect through sufferings, don't expect anything less as a Christian.

## V. **Means #5: An Exchanged Life – Live an Exchanged Live**

- A. The above four means will have no genuine effect in our lives if there is no consistency.
1. (Gal 2.20) The exchanged life is the disciple dying to self in order to live for his Master.
  2. (1Cor 15.31) This conscious, intentional exchange of life must be a daily experience or else spiritual growth will stagnate.
- B. (1Jn 2.6) The spiritual growth process is a process of exchanging our way of living for Christ's.
1. We identify with Him—we categorize ourselves as Christians, not as members of this world.
  2. Then we learn our Master's Word in order to obey it and follow His instructions.
  3. He will test our resolve and solidify new ways of thinking and living through suffering/affliction.
  4. But if, after all that, we turn back to our old ways of living, we'll have to go through the whole process again. There must be an exchange of life—a consistent living out of the new life in Christ.
- C. (Eph 4.22-24) This is what discipleship is all about: Putting off the old life and exchanging it for the new life in Christ (a life lived according to our Master's desires—according to His Word).
1. (Luke 9.62) If there is no consistency in our “exchanged life,” we have not yet been perfected—we have not yet been made “fit” for the Kingdom of God.
  2. And that means we need more identification with Christ, more teaching, more obedience, and more affliction so that we can be made fit.
  3. (1Cor 15.1-2) This consistent walk (consistency over your life of living this exchanged life) is one of the marks of a true conversion. You “keep in memory” the things you have been taught.
  4. (2Tim 4.10 cf. Jam 4.4; Rom 5.10) Those who turn back to the world when affliction come (those who do not live the exchanged life with consistency) are likely in need of a true conversion.
    - a) We all stumble and fall. We all go through season in our walk with Christ.
    - b) But, when we evaluate our lives in light of these five means of growth, we ought to be able to see some sort of consistency in spiritual growth, because that is God's plan for all of us.
    - c) And, just to remind ourselves, this is one of the main reasons why we started Harvest Baptist Church: So we can grow and so we can grow in consistency in the exchanged life.

### **There are five means of edification—five components in the process of spiritual growth in Christ-likeness:**

1. Means #1: Identification with Christ – Identify with Christ!
2. Means #2: Knowledge of the Bible – Learn the Bible!
3. Means #3: Obedience to the Bible – Obey the Bible!
4. Means #4: Suffering – Endure Suffering!
5. Means #5: An Exchanged Life – Live an Exchanged Life

### **How are you doing in this process? How are you doing in helping others to grow in this process?**

- Next week we are going to talk about what our specific part is in this process of edification.
- But for right now, just take each one of the five means and ask yourself...
  1. Have I identified with Christ and do I (consciously and intentionally) identify with Christ daily?
  2. Am I learning the Bible... intentionally, consistently, and systematically?
  3. Am I obeying the Bible... intentionally applying what I know?
  4. Am I enduring suffering (trials, difficulties) or have I quit because the going got tough?
  5. Am I living an exchanged life (consistently living according to the principles of Scripture) or am I inconsistent in my walk with the Lord?

- You will probably find that *one* of these elements stands out more than the others. Focus on that one: pray about it and see if there is something simple and practical that you can do to work on it.
- Next week we'll take a look at the goals we have in edification and that should give us an even more practical view of what God expects of us in growing in Christ and helping others do the same.