**Coming Home** June 21, 15

The One Another Commitments

Question: What is the best thing you’ve ever built?

Feedback:

A building project requires commitment if you are going to finish it.

I’ve told you about the house we built in Revelstoke. We hired different trades, but tried to do as much of the work as we could. That said, there were so many things to finish that after a year we got tired of using days off and vacation time to work on the house. And so we took a break and then after some months, we tackled something else. And then we’d take another break before tackling the next thing on the list. And so it went for 9 years. We did finally finish the house - 3 months before we sold it.

This is why in the renovations we’re doing to the house we bought here in Sooke... that I’ve set the goal to be done by this fall. It’s this commitment that keeps me focused and motivated.

In the Bible there are a number of things that God tells us to do regarding the relationship we have with one another. We’ve been studying these one another passages since May and we’ve got just a few more to go before we return to our study in the book of Genesis.

Today we’re going to study just one - one another passages that will require commitment from us if we are to carry them out.

 In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 we read: *Therefore* ***encourage one another and build each other up****...*

The context of this verse is important if we are to understand how to do what this verse tells us to do.

Read verse 1-11.

* the day of the Lord is often spoken of in the Bible as that future moment when Jesus will visibly appear and this present age will come to an end and a new one will begin
* to those who don’t know Jesus - the day of the Lord will be unexpected (like a thief)
* to those who know Jesus - it is a day eagerly anticipated
* these verses draw a contrast between darkness and light
* when it is dark you can’t see things or you can’t see things clearly
* life without God is like being in the dark
* these verses also draw a contrast between being asleep and awake
* when you are asleep you are unaware of what is happening around you
* life without God is like being asleep
* the day of the Lord will impact people differently
* to those of the darkness this day is feared because there will be no escaping from the wrath of God and the destruction that will happen when evil is overcome and eliminated
* to those of the light this day is longed for because it will be the moment when the salvation begun in us is completed
* because Jesus’ followers are people of the light, they are to “put on” the following: faith, love and hope
* to put on these virtues we will need self-control – why?
* belonging to Jesus requires to live differently
* if we only do what we feel like doing, we will never put on these virtues because of the discipline and the effort required
* the strategy of the darkness is to attack the heart and the mind (the breastplate protects the heart, and the helmet protects the head)
* our need to put on these virtues also tells us that they provide the protection we need from the darkness
* being told to “put on” these qualities, means we have a responsibility and a role to play in the working out of our salvation
* the process of our transformation is a joint effort. It is not something we do alone; nor is it something the Spirit of God does for us without our involvement. Philippians 2:12-13 confirms this: *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you.*
* those who follow Jesus live together with him… here on earth; in the life that follows death and in the life that follows Jesus’ return

This is the teaching that leads into the summary statement of verse 11 – to encourage and build each other up. Before we address how we carry out this commitments to one another, we need to be clear on what the Bible means by the word ‘encourage’ and ‘build up.’

###### [Jenn Arman](http://www.projectinspired.com/author/jennarman/) on the website ‘Project Inspired’ writes about what it means to encourage:

*[The] Greek word for “encourage,” parakaleo, appears 105 times in the New Testament… [There is) misunderstanding about what [encouragement] really is. [It] has become confused with complimenting or praising others.*

*While praise can be part of encouragement, it doesn’t cover the full meaning of the word. We often think of encouragement as saying nice things to others to make them feel good about themselves, but this is closer to the definition of a compliment…*

*When the Bible talks about encouragement, it…means that one is calling someone to their side in order to teach, comfort, strengthen or [even gently] push them to act in a certain way.*

**[go down and sit beside someone and speak to them – to teach or to comfort]**

*People who encourage others say with love what a person needs to hear, when they need to hear it–even if it isn’t what the person wants to hear.* Posted on March 28, 2013 at 12:00 pm

What about the word ‘build each other up?’

Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words tells us that the phrase translated ‘build each other up’ is the word ‘oikodomeo,’ which literally means "to build a house."

This word impresses upon us that we have a role to play in one another’s spiritual development. This analogy of building a house, stresses that spiritual growth is the result of deliberate effort, patient labor and that it has a definite goal in mind.

The things talked about in the preceding verses of 1 Thessalonians 5 give to us the reason **WHY** we are to encourage and build each other up, and inform us **HOW** we are to encourage and build each other up.

The spiritual darkness that envelopes this world has a common effect upon people.

Look at v.6 again – it puts and keeps people spiritually asleep.

I said it earlier, but let me say it again.

When you are asleep you are not aware of what is going on around you.

Those who live without God are spiritually asleep in the sense that they are not aware of God or the danger they are in if Jesus were to return today.

But when a person responds to God and comes to Jesus, one of the things that happens is that they are spiritually awakened – they now see the realities that before they had not noticed.

**Why** are the followers of Jesus to encourage and build each other up?

Because Jesus could return to the earth at any moment.

The closing book of the New Testament records these words spoken by Jesus:

**Yes, I am coming soon!** Revelation 22:20.

In the time when the New Testament was written, those believers were convinced that Jesus would return at any moment. And every generation since then, has thought the same.

The fact that Jesus hasn’t yet returned doesn’t mean he isn’t coming soon.

Look at what Peter moved by the Spirit of God wrote in his second letter, 3:3-9.

*Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.* *4They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”*

*5But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*

*8But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

What does this passage tell us about God?

He is the Creator.

This explains why he is also the Judge.

He lives outside of time.

He is a being of integrity - he keeps his word.

Because of his compassion, he is patient.

He does not want anyone to perish.

He wants everyone to come to their senses and center their lives in him.

Jesus’ delay in returning to earth is humanity’s opportunity.

If you don’t know Jesus, there is still time for you to change your destiny.

And those who know Jesus, we are to encourage one another, by reminding one another that life as it now is will not continue indefinitely. Jesus is coming soon!

When any of us faces challenging circumstances; or relationships; or health or financial issues – we are to help each other remember that these things are temporary.

There is an expiry date on them.

Knowing and reminding one another often that Jesus is coming soon, is meant to stir fresh courage in us so that we do not give up or give in; but continue to live as sons and daughters of the light.

What about the how? According to 1 Thessalonians 5, how do we build each other up?

By reminding one another of who we are in Jesus – we are the people of the light.

In the letter to the church at Colossae, the significance of being people of the light is elaborated upon – look at Colossians 1:10-13:

…*live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way:*

*bearing fruit in every good work,*

*growing in the knowledge of God,*

*being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and*

*giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified youto share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*

*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness*

*and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves…*

Why do those who follow Jesus live to please him?

Why do they do good things?

Why do they study the Bible?

Why do they learn habits that invite God to show his power in them?

Why do they hang on so tight to their faith in God?

Why are they grateful and thankful to God?

Because…they have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God; the kingdom of light.

We help to build each other up by reminding one another of **WHO** and **WHOSE** we are.

Following Jesus gives to us a new identity.

When we receive and believe in Jesus the Spirit of God births in us a new nature.

What we are helping to build up in one another is a new character that is consistent and in line with the new person we’ve become.

I don’t know if you’ve ever considered that not only will we give an account to Jesus of what we’ve done in our own lives, but we’ll also give an account of the kind of community we were and what we did as a church.

The second and the third chapter of the book of Revelation record the results of Jesus evaluation of 7 different churches. We learn from this that it matters to Jesus how we live together as a church.

We are to be a community that speaks, stirs up, helps and enables one another in cultivating a character that exudes faith, hope and love. And we do this, always mindful of the fact that Jesus is coming soon.

Do you see why this kind of investment into one another’s lives, requires an upfront and an ongoing commitment to one another?

It’s one of the reasons why we practice membership here.

Yes, the Society’s Act requires it.

But we practice the commitment of membership because we take seriously our responsibility to one another.

This is who we are.

A people who encourage and build one another up.

**The Blessing**

1 Thessalonians 5:23: *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

BibleStudyTools.com says: The generic meaning of sanctification is "the state of proper functioning." To sanctify someone or something is to set that person or thing apart for the use intended by its designer.

A pen is "sanctified" when used to write. Eyeglasses are "sanctified" when used to improve sight. In the Bible, things are sanctified when they are used for the purpose God intends.

A human being is sanctified, therefore, when they live according to God's design and purpose.

The Greek word translated "sanctification" is ‘hagiasmos.’ It means "holiness." When God sanctifies a person, his work of salvation in them, makes them to be who God always intended humans to be.

Don’t miss the phrase…through and through. God’s work of salvation in his people will be completed at the return of Jesus. We will be saved - spirit, soul and body.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to **love one another** . . . ([Romans 13:8](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%2013.8))

**Be devoted to one another** in brotherly love. ([Romans 12:10a](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom.%2012.10a))