

## “How to Be a Healthy Church”

Romans 14:12-19

- I. Love is attractive.
  - A. When a church loves it attracts people like a magnet.
    - 1) You hear comments like this – “I couldn’t believe how welcoming and caring people were.”
    - 2) When a church doesn’t love you hear comments like this – “It felt cold.” “No one spoke to me.”
    - 3) Like the old song says, they’ll know we are Christians by our love – or not.
  - B. In Romans 14, Paul talks about this thing.
    - 1) [Read Romans 14:12-19]
    - 2) Building each other up is the secret to being a family that doesn’t fall apart.
    - 3) Concentrate on two things.
      - a) What ever makes for peace.
      - b) Whatever leads to mutual edification.
  - C. Paul goes on to explain what he means by these two things in the previous eight verses. Let’s take a look:
- II. Build each other up ... by being intentional about unity.
  - A. Verse 13 puts it this way, “<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.
  - B. We build unity by ... committing ourselves to building one another up.
    - 1) Can you imagine what would happen if a small group of people truly committed themselves to building one another up?
      - a) What if just 5 people committed themselves to writing one note of encouragement each week?
      - b) What kind of impact do you think that would have on the life of our church?
    - 2) I think it would greatly encourage others and that’s what Paul wants us to do!
      - a) Life’s tough enough without even the people from your church tearing you down.
      - b) Instead the church should be an army of encouragers!
    - 3) It takes true commitment and dedication to be an encourager of others.
  - C. We build unity by ... remembering that every person has value.
    - 1) If we remember that all parts of the Body are important then committing to encouraging gets easier.
    - 2) You may think they are childish, immature, or disagreeable.
      - a) Jesus thinks they’re valuable enough to die for.
      - b) And they’re valuable enough to you to encourage.
    - 3) There are no unimportant believers in the Kingdom of God.
      - a) Instead of paying attention to the things that annoy us we need to stay focused on their importance to God.
      - b) We don’t have the right to hurt people that Christ died for.
- III. Build each other up ... by being certain of your influence.

- A. Verse 15-16 says, “<sup>15</sup> If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.”
  - B. We’re certain of our influence when ... we realize what’s truly important.
    - 1) People watch people. In fact, its one of my favorite things to do.
      - a) [It’s why I like the mall!]
      - b) I see people all the time sweating the small stuff.
    - 2) The truly important things of faith are internal not external.
      - a) Food and drink aren’t that big a deal.
      - b) Unity and peace with your brothers and sisters in Christ are big deals.
    - 3) When churches experience a loss of unity it’s often because they lose sight of what’s really important.
      - a) Church split over trivial things.
      - b) The color of the carpet, the artwork on the walls.
      - c) Paul is warning us of that danger.
    - 4) When someone sees the church for the first time they should see righteousness, peace, joy and grace. The important stuff.
  - C. We’re certain of our influence ... when we limit ourselves so that others can grow.
    - 1) In Romans 14:20-21 it says, “<sup>20</sup> Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. <sup>21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.”
    - 2) People are watching you!
      - a) They see in you what they hope to be.
      - b) You may kick yourself, but they’re building your pedestal.
    - 3) You are an example to someone!
      - a) It may be hard for you to imagine, but someone’s watching.
      - b) And by your example you exert tremendous influence over their spiritual growth – for good or ill.
    - 4) Sometimes using our influence means saying “follow me.”
      - a) Other times it means saying “stop! You don’t want to take that road.”
      - b) And sometimes it means telling ourselves, “I’m not going to do that because I don’t want to cause a problem for someone else”
      - c) Your influence can have a profound effect on our church family.
- IV. Build each other up ... by being aware of what makes us grow.
- A. Verse 17-18 says, “<sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, <sup>18</sup> because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.”
  - B. What makes us grow ... is grace and forgiveness.
    - 1) When someone stumbles we don’t offer them criticism and rebuke.
    - 2) When someone struggles we encourage and support, we don’t gossip.
    - 3) Romans 14:22 says, “<sup>22</sup> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.”
  - C. What makes us grow ... is acceptance.
    - 1) That means not forcing our opinions on anyone else.

- 2) That means being patient with one another's faults.
- V. The result of living this way is a church that glorifies God.
- A. God is glorified because unity brings glory to God.
    - 1) When we are divided, the cause of Christ suffers.
    - 2) When we are united, it bears loud testimony to the world.
  - B. Verse 19 puts it well.
    - 1) "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."
    - 2) It's going to take effort, but its effort well spent.
  - C. Because an encouraging church, a unified church, a church full of peace – that's a church I want to be a part of.
    - 1) That's a church that's full of joy, peace, and power.
    - 2) That's a church that pleases God.