

Recommended Reading: *A Time To Build*

Gary W. Summers

One of the most practical and scriptural volumes ever written about building up the Lord's church is this latest lectureship volume from the Bellview Church of Christ: *A Time To Build*. It is not just a book on evangelism, although one on that topic is always timely. It instead takes a holistic approach to building up the body of Christ.

The book contains 30 chapters, consisting of 431 pages, and begins with, "A Mind to Build." This attitude is much better than "the status quo" thinking that often characterizes many congregations. Successful building incorporates at the outset attitudes that will bring forth fruit. Next, brethren must realize: "It is Time to Build." The writer of this chapter correctly says:

There has never been a greater need to do so than today as we are completing the first decade of the twenty-first century! Sin is having a field day both in and out of the church of my Lord! (14).

Reasons are provided to support the assertions given in the above quote. A poem by J. T. Marlin, titled, "Wreckers" (26) explains why we never get off the ground in building.

"Principles of Building" follows. The perspective of this chapter is to view the church as one would a physical building. Given consideration are the architect, the price for the building, the foundation, the crew, and the building materials. Problems dealt with physical buildings are also found in the church: moisture problems, atmosphere problems, communication, and patience. Both this chapter and the preceding one emphasize the two passages that deal with conflict resolution in the church (Mat. 5:23-24; 18:15-17). The former passage says that if a person knows that someone has something against him, he should go to that brother. The latter passage charges the offended brother to go to the one who wronged him.

"Building While Battling" is patterned after the time of Nehemiah when God's people followed precisely that course of action. One of the subheadings is both amusing and true: "If You are God's Builder, Trouble Knows Where to Find You" (43). The material here is both realistic and encouraging to those trying diligently to do the Lord's will.

Another dose of realism is found in "Tearing Down to Build Up," as God charged His faithful prophet Jeremiah (1:9-10). Seven specific areas are listed, in which there needs to be some tearing down to build properly; these are followed by further suggestions.

"Building All Things According to the Pattern" is crucial if anything is to be constructed properly. The writer of this chapter came out of a denomination; thus, the pattern is of great importance to him (as it should be to all). He presents a biblical study of the word *pattern*, exhorts brethren to follow that pattern, and then sets forth some current departures from that pattern, including the unity meeting that some apostate brethren had with members of the Christian Church at last year's North American Christian Convention (83-86).

"Building on the Proper Foundation" accents many fundamental teachings in the New Testament and is followed by "Building Better Homes." As the reader might expect, the writer talks about the home in general, marriage, parents, children, and grandchildren. The

reader will particularly want to find out about ODD (106). “Building Better Young People” expands on the previous material, discussing the qualities that are so much needed in young people.

The tenth chapter takes us back to the body of Christ: “Building the Church (Spiritually and Numerically).” Amidst other good information, the penman discusses four “Pseudo” means of trying to bring about church growth (137-42).

In “Building World Evangelism” the writer covers quite a bit of territory, including: “Trials in Mission Work,” “Campaigns,” and “The Cost of Evangelism.” The next two chapters are devoted to something that cannot be overlooked: “Building Peace Among Brethren” and “Building Unity in the Church.” The first of these deals with the scriptural basis for unity, which must be considered first and foremost. The latter one mentions a few works that many brethren do not feel comfortable having fellowship with. The reader is exhorted:

Brethren, we can build unity in the church by encouraging the faithful. May we thoroughly investigate that in which we intend to invest the Lord’s money, so as to insure just that (170).

“Building Better Bible Schools” covers four important aspects of a congregation’s education program. It examines the purpose for having a Bible school and sets forth the qualifications for a teacher, including a sample questionnaire that may be used to make sure that teachers are qualified to teach either young people or adults (200-206). Choosing decent Bible school materials has often proved to be a nightmare for many education directors. A sample of a Bible lesson used by all the classes in a congregation is included in the book (196-200). These will soon be available on a DVD or in printed form. Another section of this chapter shows how a computer flash card system can be used to make sure that students are remembering the material and not forgetting all that they have studied (183-95). This material is very practical and may be of interest to several congregations.

“Building Better Bible Students” and “Building Your Personal Library” are related topics with more excellent and practical advice. The former chapter include three prerequisites for building better Bible students (210-212), which is followed by suggesting adequate preparations be made. The “library” chapter gives advice for keeping the cost of books low and lists several reference works that are helpful to the Bible student—by category. A serious student will profit from the list of books published here (225-30).

The next four chapters deal with building better worship. The first of these defines worship and lists six things that pertain to God’s love of us. If we understand the nature of God, then we can better understand how we ought to worship Him. “Building a Better Prayer Life” should be of interest to all Christians, and the acronym, A-C-T-S is handy for one’s own use or to be able to explain to others (249). “Building Better Singing” contains an examination of what was practiced in both the Old and the New Testaments, but one of the greatest values is encouraging brethren to sing “in truth,” as well as “in spirit.” Many songbooks contain verses written by those spiritually in error, and various songs contain concepts that are not taught in the Scriptures. Some errors brought to light are found in songs such as, “Just a Little Talk With Jesus,” “He Lives,” “Jesus is Coming Soon,” and various others (272-77).

“Building Better Givers” rounds off this section; the author is not afraid to say that this topic is often much neglected. The writer uses humor to make some very sharp points, by which many could profit.

The next five chapters deal with leadership: the first of these defines the work of elders; the second considers both the qualifications and the work of deacons. The one on preachers gives some practical suggestions of ways to improve. Particularly of interest were these two sentences:

This preacher graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching and two universities before really understanding why some brethren do not listen. A man can know the Book and quote it all day long and still not be an effective preacher (323).

“Building Churches that are Concerned about Preachers” is a topic that one does not hear much about, but it is one that a few congregations need. “Building Tomorrow’s Leaders” is always of vital interest. The biggest mistake that the church could make would be in failing to train men to be elders, deacons, teachers, and servants. A variety of suggestions is provided for helping congregations carry out this important endeavor.

“Building Better Attitudes” is something we all can use perennially, and the author specifically looks at how to develop better attitudes toward God, toward our brethren, and toward the lost. “Building Better Members” has an intriguing section: “We Are Made Better Through God’s Recipe for Victory”; fourteen aspects of victory are presented (376-77). Eight points about Jesus are offered from Isaiah 53 (379-82).

One thing no congregation should be without can be found in “Building Better Love One for Another.” Few are those who do not know this principle, but many have difficulty applying it. This chapter can help rekindle the kind of love that ought to characterize every church of Christ.

Another topic that often goes neglected in many congregations is taken up in “Building Better Discipline.” The writer encourages both preventive and corrective discipline and sets forth the reasons that the Scriptures give for doing so.

The final chapter is anything but a disappointment: the book is capped off with material we need for “Building Courage.” After scriptural examples of courage are listed, there is an important section on “What Courage is Not” (429-30).

As the reader has seen by this time, this book is well-rounded—in terms of setting forth what it means to be a Christian and a builder. The wealth of material far exceeds the price of \$15 (plus postage and handling); it may be ordered from the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526. Their telephone number is (850) 455-7595.

3671 Oak Vista Lane; Winter Park, FL 32792