

“Build up or Tear Down?”

HVBC – 8/27/06

Skit - Have someone bring me a long balloon. The type that is used to make balloon animals & say about you can't blow this up and keep the air in it. It is really hard. I respond that I can. Blow it up in advance so it is stretched. I start blowing and have lots of excitement. The other person is negative about how I started but I can't get it blown all the way up. When I completely blow it up, he laughs and tells me it will not stay blown up because he put a hole in it. I become mad and frustrated. Then a second person comes up. Ties the end of the balloon & suggest that I try to blow it up now. I easily blow it up.

That little corny skit illustrates something that can be so true in life. One person can “let the air out of your balloon” and one person can help make things right. I have witnessed this so many times. It is incredible. I have been in groups that are excited about the possibility of some really big things happening and then one person begins to tell them all the reasons that it can't work.

We need to be realistic about things, but I know my tendency. If I don't want something to work, I think of reasons that it will fail or why it can't be done. Sometimes we go beyond saying it can't be done to poking holes in the plans, wanting to sabotage it.

I had a friend who told me about a significant building program at a church. They got near the end of the plans & one man started raising objections to a significant part of the plans. He was upset about it. The pastor went away for a sabbatical for 2 months. When he returned this man had really gotten things stirred up in the church. He had people convinced that this was a bad plan. They had to make major adjustments to the plan.

The pastor and the man who raised the objections got together one morning for breakfast. There was obviously a lot of tension between them. The church member asked the pastor, “Do you really want to know where you made a mistake?” The pastor responded, “Why yes.” He said, “You didn't include me.”

The man had been included in some of the plans but not at the level that he would have liked to have been included. The plans were not bad, but a person's feelings were hurt, so he brought harm to others.

To me that is a significant story. We can be really negative toward this man, but we need to appreciate his willingness to admit what happened and to tell that to his pastor. That helped restore their relationship and I am sure was helpful to others within the church.

I have also seen those situations that people really want something to happen, but it seems impossible & one person comes along & starts seeing the same details, but sees beyond the obstacles to the solutions.

My message this morning is “Build up or Tear Down?” It takes a lot less effort to tear down something than to build up something. You can think about that in a lot of ways. How long does it take you to put a 500 piece puzzle together? How long will it take you to tear up & put it back in the box? When we have VBS – how much work is it to do all the decorations? How much work is it to tear all the decorations down? Beyond that it takes a lot more thought to put the decorations up or put the puzzle together.

If we are going to tear something down, we must have a reason. There are times that it is best to change directions or go with a new plan, but we are not to tear down, just because we got our feelings hurt.

This morning I want us to think about the power of being positive and building up – personally, toward others, and toward the church or larger groups.

1) Personally

Newseek article on Jan 9 2005 “Researchers at Yale University found that people with an optimistic outlook lived 7 ½ years longer than those with a gloomy view of what lies ahead. In their study, a positive attitude was more important than lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. How could a positive attitude protect our health and extend our life?

A recently published study offers one explanation: People who perceive that they are living in a state of chronic stress have cells that age more rapidly. The difference in the rate of cellular aging was equivalent to shaving a decade off their lives. What does it mean to have a “positive attitude”? The image of a bubbly, fun-loving individual may spring to mind. But such an outgoing, social person may be inclined to engage in riskier behaviors that cause injury and poor health.

Instead, there are several features of a positive attitude that research has found to be associated with healthier aging. If you have a positive attitude, you see relatively few of life’s challenges as overwhelming. You feel in control most of the time. You believe you can strongly influence, if not completely determine, your health”

So we see first of all that there are health benefits from having a positive outlook on life. As I did some research for this sermon, I came across lots of teaching about the power of positive thinking and the difference that positive thinking makes. Many of those articles like the Newsweek article were not from a Christian perspective, it was simply positive thinking.

As Christians, who should be more positive than us? Think about the words to the song HE LIVES “I serve a risen Savior, he’s in the world today, I know that he is living whatever men may say. I see his hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer, and just the time I need Him. He’s always near. He lives. He lives Christ Jesus lives today. He walks with me & talks me along lifes narrow way. He lives. He lives salvation to impart. You ask me how I know He lives: He lives within my heart.

We have a reason to live. We have Jesus. We have purpose & meaning in life. It is really sad that often times people that are not Christians view Christians as being negative. There are things that we are to oppose, but there is a lot more that we are to support. We have so much to be positive about.

Let's look at a few promises from the Bible

Philippians 4:6-7 *6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

We can be positive because God is in our life. We don't have to worry about things. We are to have faith. Part of being negative is a lack of faith and of hope. God gives us both. Philippians 4:19 And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. WOW!!!

Then another favorite passage of mine is:

Romans 8:28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

That is so important to know & believe. That does not mean that everything will be good in your life, but that God can work through everything to bring good. A few years ago there was a young lady that was attending our church from out of state while her son was receiving treatment at Duke. While she was here her mother came up for a visit. Her parents had divorced and her mother had remarried. She and her 2nd husband had two young children. There was a house fire and the woman's husband and two children were killed.

She came to church one Sunday and afterwards I talked to her for a while. It was the first or one of the first times she had been in church since the accident. She was really struggling. I think coming to Hope Valley that Sunday was her first Sunday back in church. It was a significant service for her.

After the service I talked to her for while and I shared this verse. Even in the midst of her great pain we talked about how if she turns this pain to God, God can bring good from it. . She has really worked to grow through her experiences. She has gotten a pilot's license and has been on various mission trips. I think she has even flown some on the mission work. She emailed me this past week & told me of her plans to get married.

When you get in bad situations, it is hard to see that any good can ever come from it or that any good can ever be in your life.

Matthew 19:26 *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

You can also think about Joseph in the Old Testament & how his brother's sold him in to slavery, but God kept working in his life.

Genesis 37:19-22 *19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father.*

The enemy may be speaking to people behind the scenes about destroying our dreams, but God is speaking to people behind the scenes to aid in facilitating and fulfilling our dreams.

God has a plan for your life, but so does the devil. Learn the difference!
It's not what you know, but who you know that counts & the main one to know is God.

So let's be positive about ourselves. Dream. See that God can do great things in your life. When you are down about yourself, you are down about God's creation. When you don't believe that you can achieve and God is wanting to do something great through you, then you are really doubting God. God created you & when God calls you, He knows what you can do in and through His power.

Pause & think – Don't worry – trust God. With God all things are possible. God made me. God can use me in great ways. When I dream, the devils wants to destroy my dream, but God wants to fulfill it.

Wants we are more positive about ourselves it is easier to be more positive about others. Most people that are negative toward others are more negative toward themselves.

2) Positive Toward Others

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

It is important to build others up. There are enough people that are working to tear people down. Build your family members up. Build up people you work with and people at church.

Some people are natural at building others up, but for some of us it is not our nature to praise or condemn and for some it is your nature to tear down.

Take time think about it and consciously make an effort to build others up.
I want you to think – who is someone that really needs my encouragement. How can I build them up?

Who is someone that I have perhaps torn down? How can I make things better?

Let me share a story that I hope can help you when you feel an urge to be negative toward another person.

A girl named Sally related an experience she had in a Bible class taught by Professor Smith. He was known for elaborate object lessons. One day, Sally walked into the classroom and knew they were in for a fun day. On the wall was a big target; on a table were many darts. The professor told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked or someone who had made them angry in the past. Sally's friend drew a girl who had stolen her boyfriend. Another drew a picture of his little brother. Sally drew a former friend, with a great deal of detail, even drawing pimples on the face. Sally was pleased with the effect she achieved.

The class lined up and began throwing darts. Some threw with such force that the target ripped apart. Sally looked forward to her turn, but was disappointed when the teacher said they were out of time.

As she sat down, thinking about how angry she was because she did not have a chance to throw at her target, the professor began removing the target from the wall. Underneath was a picture of Jesus.

A hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled picture of Jesus. Holes and jagged marks covered His face and His eyes. Smith said only these words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

No other words were necessary—the tear-filled eyes of each student focused only on the picture of Christ.

When we hurt others we ultimately are hurting Christ. Let's build each other up.

3) Build up the Church

I Corinthians 14:12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

We are to have a positive outlook personally & be positive toward others & we are also to build up the church. When I recently attended the **Willow Creek Leadership Summit**, I was really motivated by Patrick Lencioni. He is a business leader and consultant who focuses on conflicts & turf wars. His goal is to help build an organization around a common purpose.

He asked us to think about what is the most pressing things within our church to work on over a short period of time. It could be 3 months – 12 months and then look at how to achieve that and encourage every group within the church to focus on that objective.

There are lots of things that we could focus on, but **what I believe it the most important right now is morale.** That is not something I typically think of, but I believe that we need to work to build the morale of the church.

Our morale is not bad, but it could be much better. When I look at our church, I see so many things that are going really well: personnel team is moving forward in hiring a minister of music & worship, in 2 weeks – Denton Lotz, 3 weeks SS round up – Bill Cox & High Steppin, in Nov. Bart Campolo. VBS this past summer was awesome. Our church has great ministries & programs – SS, youth, missions and there are some areas that we have identified that could be better and we are working to make them better.

I can get excited about things, but then some body may say something negative & I can get discouraged. With all the positive things going on right now in our church, we need to do all we can to build on it, to pray for the church, to use our gifts, to get involved, to invite people to join us.

When we see things that are not what they could be – let's work to make it better. It is always a lot easier to tear down than to build up. What can you do to build up our church? What can you do to help build the morale & to bring greater excitement? Have you done things that have been hurtful? How can you make it better?

Conclusion

It is like the balloon. It is easy to discourage someone & poke a hole in something that someone is doing, but it also can be easy to find a solution to make things better. As Christians, we should be positive about ourselves, about others & about the church (Big C & little c).