



WEEK THREE: BUILDING BLOCKS

September 9, 2012

By Josh Miller

Two words we rarely hear together are encouragement and unity, and yet they are closely connected to each other. Understanding this connection affects the way we relate to each other. When we build each other up, those around us are strengthened, the church becomes unified, and ultimately, Jesus is glorified through us. What an opportunity and great responsibility we have as Jesus followers to make sure we are building each other up.

Where Am I Today?

Building each other up through encouragement goes further than just crossing paths and having surface level conversations of "How are you?" and "I hope you have a great day." Take a look at the questions below and discuss where you are today.

- 1) What comes to mind when you think of encouragement? Write down a list of things or maybe even an example.

- 2) Do you see yourself as an encourager?

TRUE RELIGION

WEEK THREE: STUMBLING BLOCKS – STUDY GUIDE

Into the Bible

A general theme across the entire *True Religion* series has been about disputable matters and accommodating each other in our weaknesses. Disputable matters have a way of creeping into our relationships. If we aren't careful, we go from encouraging each other to discouraging each other, which causes division.

3) **Read Romans 15:1-7.**

- a. There are two areas in this passage that tell us where our encouragement is found. What are they?

- b. What is the result when encouragement happens in the church today?

- c. What does Paul, the author of Romans, say will happen through unity?

4) **Read Philippians 2:1-4.** Where does Paul say encouragement is found? List the things that Paul encourages the church in Philippi do in order to complete his joy. Why was this important to being unified?

Jesus' life is the ultimate example for us to follow. One of the greatest methods of encouragement can be found in these next two passages. **Read Matthew 20:26-28 and John 13:12-17.** What did Jesus say He came to model for us? How did Jesus lead by example?

TRUE RELIGION

WEEK THREE: STUMBLING BLOCKS – STUDY GUIDE

- 5) **Read Philemon 1:4-7.** Why does Paul say he has been encouraged? Can you say you love The Cove (the people) as much as Philemon loved his church?

How Does This Apply?

Building each other up is doing what's best for others and not for us, even when it's difficult. Applying what we read takes more than just words. While the word *encouragement* is a noun, it always requires some sort of outward action on our part.

- 6) In the passage in Romans above, Paul talks about building our neighbor up. We also read Jesus' example of washing the disciples' feet. When was the last time you were willing to help another person even though it wasn't glamorous? Share an example of the effect it had on that person.
- 7) We saw above how encouragement can be found through Scripture. Do you enjoy reading the Bible? How are you finding encouragement through reading God's Word?
- 8) Look around at the people in your Life Group. When was the last time you said something encouraging to them? Do you use your Life Group as an opportunity for building each other up?

TRUE RELIGION

WEEK THREE: STUMBLING BLOCKS – STUDY GUIDE

Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

A common mistake we tend to make as Jesus-followers is the thought that we are all alone. The truth is, we aren't alone. It's exactly the opposite. Jesus calls His church to complete the mission He started when He came to Earth. He calls us to do it together and to be united. When unity is achieved, the mission of a church can move forward, and we can build on that. This Digging Deeper section is meant to be an encouragement to you as you look at the similarities of the starting points in Jesus' ministry and the start of the church's mission.

- 9) All four Gospels record the start of Jesus' ministry here on this Earth. **Read each of these verses: Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-23 and John 1:32-35.** How are these verses significant to us?

Do you recognize the unity and encouragement within these verses?

- 10) Now that we've read about the start of Jesus' ministry, let's take a look at the church's start as well. **Read Acts 1:4-5, 7-8.** What did Jesus promise the apostles?

Read Acts 2:1-4. Why is this event so important to the church today, and to you?

How is what you just read an encouragement to you?