

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

◆**Intro:** I'm going to tell you two stories of when my sons were young that illustrate the power of words & encouragement in building people up and in tearing them down. The first one happened when my son Josh was 7 and in first grade. Parents were allowed to come eat lunch with their student on occasion and so I went to eat with Josh. I had joked a bit with his class before so they felt free now to goof off at my expense. They began to indicate their first-hand knowledge of my personal hygiene. That is, they suggested that I wore Barney underwear, and they suggested it in very loud voices. Further, they delighted in sneaking past my seat and holding rabbit ears behind my head all the while giggling in hysterical glee. They went on to describe the gruesome entrees that they were sure I ate ("You eat roach whiskers!" (Where do they get this stuff?)), all the while laughing like the creepy little monsters that they were... I can handle a certain amount of intimidation. And these were, after all, foolish little first-graders whom I could reduce to tears in a matter of minutes if I liked. Even so I must tell you I was beginning to feel bad inside and a little jittery. I was wondering how I might curtail the conversation without the spilling of blood.

◆I am happy to tell you that in the end no lives were lost, however that night at dinner when Sandi asked how lunch at school went Josh started to cry. I asked him what was wrong. After several sobs, he blurted out, "They were making fun of you." And then he cried even louder in heaving, heart-wrenching

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

sobs. I guess he had felt it too. In case you never realized it yet, people are spiritual and emotional beings. And we have it within ourselves to empower or destroy each other.

◆1. God is not a tear-you-down type of being. He is the Creator, a builder, who delights in love and wholeness. And **therefore the Church God longs for and that blesses people is one that, like him, encourages and empowers people.**

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

◆You will notice in our text that there is much upbuilding going on in the first Church.

◆v23 This is now Paul's third and final missionary journey. He is returning to the churches he planted because after all, we are meant to grow, and develop. So Paul gets back on the road.

◆v24 Then there's Apollos. First of all he's not sitting on his hands. He knows the Scriptures, he's from Alexandria for goodness sakes! That's Egypt, Alexander the Great built it. It's the second most important city in Roman Empire. That's where the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures was produced some 200 years earlier, enabling the whole empire access to them. It has a university where the well-known Greek philosopher, Philo, worked. And Apollos had apparently made use of that. Apollos is speaking out!

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

Teaching. So he's helping others. This is what God's followers do!

◆v26 But what we really want to look at is Priscilla and Aquila. A missionary couple who once lived in Rome, moved to Corinth and now came to Ephesus with Paul. And what do they do? Seeing that Apollos doesn't know the whole story, though he is "accurate" (25) they quietly take him home and add to his knowledge privately and politely. They see the potential in Apollos, and they're all over empowering him to go on further and be even "more accurate" ("adequately" is a translation of the the same term in v25 with a prefix meaning "more").

◆We don't know just what Apollos knew and didn't know. What he taught about Jesus was accurate (25), but he only knew John's baptism, a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins from God. He probably knew about Jesus' death and resurrection. It was well known by now and the core of the Christian faith. Maybe he didn't know about Pentecost and the pouring out (often called the Baptism) of the Holy Spirit on Christians. This is likely, as Luke records several of these out-pourings in Acts, as if to show us the progressing movement of the Holy Spirit across the nations. Jerusalem disciples (Acts 2), Cornelius' gentile home in Caesarea (Acts 10), and now (Acts 19), there are 12 (!) Ephesian disciples who also experience a Pentecost!

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

◆B. Using one of the bible study application methods we studied last year, lets ask, "Is there an example to follow?" Why yes there is. Priscilla and Aquila are our example. They see someone with potential and do what they can to continue his progress. Folks, you can do that same thing for someone in your world. And Christians are all about empowering people to learn, to develop their God-given gifts, in order to spread God's goodness around the earth! The Christian worldview stands behind the proliferation of universities and schools in Europe (11 & 1200's). Isn't the church you always longed for one that helps you grow, learn, and use the talents God gave you?

◆In the Spring of last year Chris Tomlin decided to empower future worship leaders. So he collaborated with Taylor Guitars and at each concert he called out into the audience "Hey does anyone lead worship, maybe in a youth group, or a high school or college student?" He'd just keep asking questions until eventually there was some youth group jumping up and down pointing at a kid in their group. Chris would then invite him to the stage to play a song with the band, not knowing that the guitar Chris handed them to play was something they were going to go home with! He'd say something like, "When I was your age I had someone who believed in me and prayed over me and encouraged me, so as a way to encourage you and pray a blessing over you as a worship leader I want you to take this guitar home." Of

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

course the place would go nuts! (cf [WorshipMusician.com](http://WorshipMusician.com), Oct.2018) Christ Tomlin was being a Priscilla/Aquila wasn't he?!

◆C. Now in your daily study guide for our 50 Day adventure, you will be looking in to several ideas about being an empowering person. The Action Step for the week is to look for someone you can help along the way to be all they can be. You could take one of several kinds of roles: agent, banker, or coach.

◆You could be someone's **agent**: offer advice, make connections for them. You see their talent or potential so you be the one to encourage someone else to give that person an invite, or share resources that person might not know about.

◆You could be their **banker**: some years ago an nice couple in our former church knew how much I enjoy playing guitar, so for Christmas they gave me a year of guitar lessons! I came to know pretty much everyone at the studio on a personal basis, and over time I shared my faith with them. And actually, the owner became a Christian and joined our church! Maybe you can help bankroll the development of someone who has ability but not the finance for equipment, or tuition.

◆Or you could be a **coach**: that's where you have a skill that you pass on to someone else. There's a young person who is interested in computers and you've built your own.

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

He'd like to do it, and you could walk him through it! Or you're good with mechanics and you show a friend how to change his oil, or brakes himself. What are you good at? Who can you help learn it?

◆ Bear this important truth in mind, folks: *maturity, or learning, or development are not automatic!* We learn from each other. And we learn from opportunity! Charles Simpson in *Pastoral Renewal* writes: I met a young man not long ago who dives for exotic fish for aquariums. He said one of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark. He explained that if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium. Sharks can be 6" long and fully [functioning]. Yet if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of 8'!

◆ Guess what? There is a lot in the world that confines us and limits our potential. Sin. Hurt. Misinformation. Tragedy. Pain. Family dysfunction. In God's kind of church people seek each other benefit and health. Make the tank bigger for someone!

◆ Ok. Now I'd like to focus in on one particular habit or disposition that I believe is desperately necessary for empowering others. You'll ponder several things in your guide this week that lead to empowerment of others. Encouragement can come in many forms. Here are some just to whet the appetite:

◆ Delighting in someone empowers them.

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

◆ Giving responsibility to someone...

◆ Accompanying someone...

◆ Befriending someone...

◆ But the one I want to dwell on briefly is affirmation.

◆

◆ **2. God's kind of Church is in the balcony, that is, it is an affirming place.**

◆ Affirmation is a form of encouragement. It includes cheering on. It requires positive communication mostly in the form of words. Words are very important. Why because there is no shortage of toxic words, of criticism, of evaluation that find one does not measure up. No shortage there. We say plenty of "No"s in a day, but when things go well, instead of shouting "yes" many are merely silent.

◆ Joyce Landorf in her book *Balcony People speaks of two general types of people in our lives: balcony people and basement people.*

◆ Balcony People are those folk who generally cheer us on, build us up, affirm, or compliment us, and see even small accomplishments on our part as noteworthy. They are builders of men and women. They are in the balcony clapping for us! They are pulling us up! The Christians in Ephesus were balcony people! Reread v27! They encouraged Apollos and wrote him a letter of recommendation!

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

- ◆ Basement people, on the other hand are...the folks that are pulling us down. They are calling from below, criticizing. They see even the smallest flaw and feel obligated to "help" you with it. They even tell themselves that what they do is loving. Basement people have squinting eyes. They are usually trying to hold you back.
- ◆ Now some of us grew up in basement families. It's not unusual. We live in a fallen world. Other's of us grew up in a balcony family. But which one you are is not necessarily dependent on this. Balcony people can come from basement families, and basement people can grow up in balcony families. You and I have to decide what we're going to be to those around us. Are you a balcony person to your spouse? If they are eager to hear what you have to say, that might be who you are. Are you a balcony person to your kids? This doesn't mean anything goes but it does mean that you are their cheerleader. You are the one speaking life into their soul.
- ◆ B. Here are a few ideas about being a balcony person.
  - ◆ 1) Ban labeling and name-calling. That's right, just don't do it. Things like, "You're just like...(insert name of someone they are sure to dislike.)" - need to be off limits. Labels like, "You know what you are? You're a \_\_\_\_." just don't help anyone either. Own your own hurt. If they have been rude and hurt your feelings, use "I" messages. "I feel really offended." is better than "You're being a jerk."

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

◆2) Eliminate exaggerations. You know. Things like, “you always” and “you never”. After all these are the kind of things basement people say to us that are toxic to our inner confidence. When people keep telling you how bad off you are you begin to believe it. They begin to believe it in themselves. This is not what God does, so it is not fitting for his church.

◆3) Overbalance criticism with compliments. In a sinful world damage happens quicker than healing. A follower of Jesus wants to bring healing. Toby Mac put it well in his song...

Though it's crazy, amazing  
We can turn a heart through the words we say.  
Mountains crumble with every syllable.  
Hope can live or die

So speak life, speak life.  
To the deadest darkest night.  
Speak life, speak life.  
When the sun won't shine and you don't know why.  
Look into the eyes of the broken-hearted;  
Watch them come alive as soon as you speak hope,  
You speak love, you speak...  
You speak life, you speak life.

◆Become an expert at tirelessly repeating all that is praise-worthy. Lengthen joy by observing out loud what ever is good!

◆**Conclusion:** now for my second personal story from our boys childhood. It was a pinewood derby race. Ben, then 10 years old and in 4th grade, had entered a car. Ben's a reserved fellow. His

## ***BALCONY PEOPLE, ACTS 18:24-28***

The Church You've Always Longed For #4

expressions do not reveal what's on his inside. Ben won the 4th grade race and received the trophy. I was at a loss to know how he felt about it. He almost appeared embarrassed. But sitting on the bed that night his faced beamed! "Did you hear all the guys cheering for me? They were going "Ben, Ben, Ben!"

◆The power of affirmation! Hebrews chapter 12 in the Bible tells us that in heaven there is a grandstand of balcony people, Christians who have gone before us -cheering us on.

◆God's love is the reason Jesus Christ entered our world! He left the balcony of heaven to descend into the basement of hell and rise again to life as the ultimate affirmation of our value to him! Surely the Church we've always longed for needs to imitate him is speaking life from the balcony! Are you awed by his love for you? Go and be a balcony person to someone!