

Rooted Simply Word Study: Edification

Definition

Edification (noun): The act of building up—morally, spiritually, or intellectually. In Christian contexts, it refers specifically to strengthening or encouraging someone in their faith and character.

Modern English uses the word to describe:

Instruction that improves the mind or character

Encouragement that strengthens spiritual maturity

Words or actions that build up rather than tear down

Etymology

Latin Roots

From Latin **aedificare** — “to build, construct”

aedes = house, dwelling

facere = to make

So at its core, edification literally means “**to build a house.**”

Old French / Middle English

Old French: *edifier*

Middle English: *edifien*

By the time it enters English, the meaning shifts from physical construction to **moral and spiritual construction.**

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Biblical Background

Greek: οἰκοδομή (oikodomē)**

This is the primary New Testament word translated as *edification* or *building up*.

Root meaning:

oikos = house

domē = building

So again, the imagery is architectural—constructing something strong, stable, and useful.

Verb form: οἰκοδομέω (*oikodomeō*) Meaning: to build, strengthen, restore, or encourage.

Hebrew: בָּנָה (*banah*)**

While the Old Testament doesn't use "edification" as a translation, the Hebrew concept of **building** (*banah*) is often used metaphorically for:

Building a family

Building a nation

Building up someone's courage or faith

This metaphor carries into the New Testament.

Key New Testament Usage

Here are some of the most significant passages where *edification* or *building up* appears (summarized, not quoted):

Romans 14:19

Believers are urged to pursue what leads to peace and mutual edification.

1 Corinthians 14

Paul contrasts tongues and prophecy, emphasizing that spiritual gifts should be used for the **edification of the church**, not self-promotion.

Ephesians 4:11-16

Christ gives leaders and gifts to the church for:

Equipping the saints

Building up the body

Maturing believers

Unifying the church

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Believers are commanded to encourage and build one another up.

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Theological Significance

A. Edification is a communal calling

It's not optional. Scripture presents it as a responsibility every believer carries toward others.

B. Edification is constructive, not corrective alone

It's not merely about pointing out flaws. It's about:

- Strengthening faith
- Encouraging perseverance
- Cultivating Christlike character
- Supporting spiritual growth

C. Edification reflects God's character

God is a builder:

- He builds His church
- He builds His people
- He builds His kingdom

When we edify others, we participate in His work.

D. Edification is Spirit empowered

It's not just positive thinking or moral pep talks. True edification flows from:

Scripture, The Holy Spirit, Love, Truth spoken with grace

Practical Application

Ways believers edify others

- Speaking words of encouragement
- Sharing Scripture
- Praying for and with others
- Using spiritual gifts to serve
- Offering wisdom or counsel
- Demonstrating Christlike love
- Teaching or mentoring
- Living a consistent, faithful example

What edification is NOT

- Flattery
- Enabling harmful behavior
- Avoiding truth to keep peace
- Criticism disguised as "help"

True edification builds, strengthens, and restores.

Summary

Edification is a deeply biblical concept rooted in the imagery of building a house. In Scripture, it refers to the spiritual strengthening of believers and the church. It is both a personal responsibility and a communal practice, empowered by the Holy Spirit and grounded in love and truth. To edify someone is to participate in God's ongoing work of shaping His people into the likeness of Christ.