

THE EDIFICATION COMPLEX OF THE SOUL

I took this doctrine directly out of my study of **Psalm 89**:

It should be pointed out from the very beginning, that this whole concept of a structure being built within our souls as an illustration of spiritual growth comes from R. B. Thieme, Jr., who advanced Christianity in at least 4 fundamental ways: (1) Bob updated Christian vocabulary, which was important, as time and tradition had distorted much of our theological vocabulary; (2) Bob developed a number of new illustrations which clarify, illuminate and explain the Christian life; (3) he taught the mechanics of the Christian life; and (4) the thrust of his ministry was ICE (isagogics, categories and exegesis) teaching (which teaching was the source of the first 3 things).

We are born without a human spirit and separate from God. We have an existing structure. God takes this existing structure, which is often dilapidated and messed up, and rebuilds us from the inside out. We are not pod-people. We do not alter, modify, lose or disguise our personalities. The end result is a structure which reflects God's glory, yet, at the same time, we are who we are (minus our sinful traits while we are in fellowship).

In the New Testament, there are two interesting Greek words: *edify* (which means *to build up, to construct*; found 40 times in the NT) and *edification* (which means *a building up, something which is constructed*; found 18 times in the NT). Paul speaks of *building up* the Corinthian believers in 2Cor. 10:8 12:19 13:10. In Rom. 14:19, we are to pursue that which helps to *build up* one another. Bob Thieme Jr. taught this as a multi-leveled structure which is built within our human soul and spirit.

In this doctrine below, you will actually start at the bottom of the doctrine (the foundation) and work your way up (that is how this doctrine ought to be read). The final result is, we reflect God's glory in our thinking and in our actions (right thinking will result in right action).

The Edification Complex of the Soul

Explanation	The Floors of the Edification Complex
<p>This is the top floor, where we reflect the glory of God through what is in our souls. You were bought with a price, so glorify God in your body (1Cor. 6:20). To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2Thess. 1:11–12). To them [the gentiles to whom God entrusted the responsibilities of this dispensation] God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Col. 1:27–28). My children, I travail until Christ should be formed in you (Gal. 4:19).</p>	<p>Reflecting the glory of God (or, <i>Christ being formed in us</i>)</p>
<p>As we grow spiritually, we become contented with all that God has given us, with our lot in life. We are happy with who we are, where we are, and how God is functioning in our lives. Whether we have a multitude of things or not is not an issue; we are happy and content with what we have. Happiness to the man who finds wisdom and to the man who gains understanding (Prov. 3:13). Happinesses to those who listen to me [Bible doctrine], assembling daily at my gates [the place where Bible doctrine was taught], waiting [mental attitude of eager anticipation] at my doorpost (Prov. 8:34).</p>	<p>+H (happiness, contentment, enjoyment of our lives)</p>

The Edification Complex of the Soul

Explanation	The Floors of the Edification Complex
<p>We then demonstrate love toward all mankind; this is the agape love, where we treat everyone fairly and honestly, without mental attitude sins or feelings of superiority or without a desire for revenge. This is where our spiritual life begins to actually function. Until this point in our growth, we are just growing. We love because He first loved us (1John 4:19).</p>	<p>Functional Virtue (impersonal love toward mankind)</p>
<p>God loves us with a perfect love, which we begin to understand through the teaching of the Word of God. This gives us reason to proceed and function in our Christian lives. Furthermore, we have come to know and have believed this love that God keeps having toward us. God is love. In fact, the one who resides in the sphere of love continues in the [plan of] God, and God [the Holy Spirit] resides in him. By this, love [which motivates us and causes us to function honorably toward others] has been achieved by us (1John 4:16–17a).</p>	<p>Motivational Virtue (personal love toward God)</p>
<p>We begin to focus on Him Who has saved us, rather than upon ourselves, other people or on things (our possessions and the possessions of others). Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2).</p>	<p>Occupation with Christ (which may include a relaxed mental attitude)</p>
<p>We begin to develop grace orientation, also known as true humility. Believers, just like anyone else, can be extremely arrogant. What often happens is, a new believer will cling to many of their views and values from their old manner of life, stop committing a few overt sins, figure out what passes for holy in their church and do that; and they think they are being spiritual. Grace orientation is recognizing Who and What God is and who and what we are, and not confusing the two. We understand that everything we are and everything we have is based upon the grace of God. We understand that our very spiritual growth is completely a grace function and that we can take upon ourselves no merit for our own spiritual growth. But He [God] gives more grace. Therefore He says: God opposes the arrogant and He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).</p>	<p>True Humility (which includes authority orientation and teachability)</p>
<p>All believers grow using a grace system while learning Bible doctrine. This was called gap (grace apparatus for perception) by Bob Thieme Jr. God gives us the ability to understand spiritual information, and this ability is a grace system. We all have it and none of us earn or deserve it. What is required is, first the filling of the Holy Spirit simultaneous with accurate Bible teaching from a pastor-teacher who has a clue as to what he is doing. And we [Paul and other believers with teaching gifts] impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person [the unbeliever] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. For who has knowledge of the mind of the Lord, so as to be his teacher? But we [Paul and other believers with teaching gifts] have the mind of Christ (1Cor. 2:13–14, 16). [So that we—all believers in Jesus Christ] may be able to grasp with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height; to know the surpassing knowledge and love of Christ; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:18–19).</p>	<p>Bible doctrine absorbed into the soul by the function of gap¹</p>

¹ GAP = *grace apparatus for perception*. God has designed the believer so that, no matter what their I.Q. is, they are able to understand the plan of God for their lives through the teaching of Bible doctrine from an ICE pastor (a pastor who teaches using isagogics, categories and exegesis) and that they might reach spiritual maturity just like any other believer. .

The Edification Complex of the Soul

Explanation	The Floors of the Edification Complex
<p>God has given every Church Age believer the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit must function in our lives in order for us to grow spiritually. This requires what is termed <i>the rebound technique</i>, which is simply naming your sins to God. Be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18b). If we acknowledge our sins, then He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9).</p>	<p>Filling of the Holy Spirit</p>
<p>The foundation for the edification complex structure is Jesus Christ. No man can build upon a foundation other than Him. An unbeliever cannot build an edification complex in his soul. The best that he can do is to line up his thinking with divine establishment laws. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1Cor. 3:10–11).</p>	<p>Jesus Christ (salvation by faith in Him)</p>

Most of the time, the edification complex is presented as having 6 floors (throughout its various incarnations). We need to first have a foundation (which has always been assumed, but not stated as one of the floors) and we need to see this from God's perspective, which means that, the completion of the edification complex glorifies God, which is our overall purpose on this earth. We do not do much by way of glorifying God as baby believers.

This spiritual growth does not just automatically happen. We grow in grace and knowledge of His Word. It is a grace system and it takes time for this to occur. A child does not develop automatically completely on his own. A child needs physical nourishment and mental stimulation. As we have found with wild children, you can feed a child and keep him or her locked in a closet, and they will *never* be able to overcome the lack of mental and emotional growth from their formative years. They will never develop a vocabulary of over a few words, if this part of the brain is not stimulated and they will never develop emotionally either.

We have parents today who do little or nothing to encourage the mental and emotional growth of their child. I have been in homes where there is not one book, not one magazine, and often, not even a coloring book. A child in some homes can go from age zero to age 5 before they are consistently exposed to the printed word (except on the back of cereal boxes). Such a child may observe hundreds of implied sex scenes from tv and video as they grow up, and yet struggle with reading, because their parents do nothing to encourage them to read.

The believer can be the same way. If the believer is not filled with the Holy Spirit regularly and exposed to Bible teaching daily, their spiritual growth will be stunted as well. Their entire spiritual life will be devoted to sanding off the rough edges of their personality and hiding their sins as best as possible.

I should point out that, even though I have given you the basics for the edification complex structure here, I have not actually justified it by the Scriptures (apart from the word used here).

The basic structure of this was taken from a little handout from Bible Doctrine Cassettes (now defunct, I assume), which are from Bob Thieme Jr.'s class notes. Some of the translations have come from R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Christian Integrity*; ©1984 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; several pages.

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While working on the doctrine above, I thought, at some point in the future, someone may want to redo this doctrine and show the man-ward (the soul) and the God-ward side (the spirit) of the edification complex. With this in mind, let me offer another approach to the edification complex: we have a soul, which governs our interaction with mankind (without a soul, we would kill those we do not like and we would have sex with those to whom we are attracted—hell, for all I know, some of you may think of that approach to life as being pretty rational). We also have a human spirit, which is where we store doctrinal norms and standards, a divine frame of reference, and those things which we learn about God. This governs our relationship before God.

As before, these are floors built upon a foundation, and should be read from the bottom to the top.

The God-ward and Man-ward Sides of the Edification Complex

God-ward Side	Man-ward Side
Reflecting the glory of God (or, <i>Christ formed in us</i>—in the continuous sense, this phrase describes the building of the edification complex; in the completed sense, we are speaking of the top floor of the complex)	+H (happiness, contentment, enjoyment of our lives); friendships where there is no jealousy or inordinate competition; a marriage which fulfills the commands of Eph. 5:22–25 automatically and without an attitude
Motivational Virtue (personal love toward God)	Functional Virtue (impersonal love toward mankind)
Occupation with Christ (God, God’s plan, viewing life from the viewpoint of eternity)	A relaxed mental attitude
True Humility (which includes grace orientation and teachability)	Authority Orientation; life without an attitude
Bible doctrine absorbed into the soul by the function of gap² (Eph. 3:18–19).	
Filling of the Holy Spirit	
The Foundation: Jesus Christ (salvation by faith in Him)	

This approach was something which I put together in a few minutes. It may require some tweaking. The foundation and the bottom two floors are foundational. You cannot build such a structure of the soul apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit and the daily intake of Bible doctrine.

Quite obviously, we fail at every level. We may reach maturity in this life, and then, one day, our boss ticks us off, and we tell everyone we know what an SOB he is, and email everyone that we don’t know and inform them of the same. That would reflect failure on every level of the edification complex.

Jesus Christ perfectly moved to spiritual maturity as He began growing physically, and never failed at any point at any time. We possess the same spiritual assets which our Lord possessed, along with the completed canon of Scripture.

² GAP = *grace apparatus for perception*. God has designed the believer so that, no matter what their I.Q. is, they are able to understand the plan of God for their lives through the teaching of Bible doctrine from an ICE pastor (a pastor who teaches using isagogics, categories and exegesis) and that they might reach spiritual maturity just like any other believer. GAP is another doctrine originally developed by R. B. Thieme, Jr.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

There are a lot of things which can be still worked on with the edification complex. What about the effect that certain sins have on one's spiritual growth? What about gaps in one's knowledge of God and God's plan? What about the interaction of scar tissue and spiritual growth?