

Edification in the New Testament

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Overview

This summary reviews all the uses of *oikodomew* (Strong's 3618), *oikodom8* (3619), and *oikodomia* (3620)¹. The word is sometimes understood in the sense of isolated individual improvement. While some texts may be read this way, the overall usage of the word suggests that it should always be understood organically, of incorporating someone into a larger structure.

Argument:

- The overwhelming use of the word family (31x out of 58) is in reference to the construction of a literal building. The semantic presence of *oiko-* as a structure is very strong. With one exception, this is the only sense in which our Saviour uses the word family.
- His one exception is Matt 16:18, with reference to edifying the church. Uses referring explicitly to the church or the body are the second largest single group, and dominate in 1 Cor 14 and Ephesians.
- Four uses refer to one person edifying another. Of these, one is in 1 Cor 14, and should be understood in reference to the focus on the church in that chapter, that is, of building the individual into the body. The other three certainly can be understood that way as well. This conclusion includes 1 Cor 8:10, which by chiasm with 10:15-21 is warning against building a weak believer into the idolatrous cult.
- Twelve are unspecified, but are completely consistent with the organic sense of building an individual into the church.
- The one possible exception is 1 Cor 14:4, speaking of a person edifying himself. Given the heavy use of the conventional use of the word family in the context of 1 Cor 14, this should be taken as an ironic usage. The inappropriateness of this sort of behavior is precisely because edification is a corporate, not an individual, activity.

Literal Construction of a House (31x)

This usage dominates in the earthly teaching of the Lord Jesus. Matt 16:18 is the only metaphorical use on his lips, and it speaks of building the church.

Matthew 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built [3618](#) his house upon a rock:

Matthew 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built [3618](#) his house upon the sand:

Matthew 21:33 ¶ Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built [3618](#) a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

¹ This word appears only in 1 Tim 1:4 TR in the entire Greek Bible, and is not reflected in the majority of MS, which read instead *oikonomia*.

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Matthew 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders [<3618>](#) rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Matthew 23:29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build [<3618>](#) the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

Matthew 26:61 And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build [<3618>](#) it in three days.

Matthew 27:40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest [<3618>](#) *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

Mark 12:1 ¶ And he began to speak unto them by parables. A *certain* man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about *it*, and digged *a place for* the winefat, and built [<3618>](#) a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

Mark 12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders [<3618>](#) rejected is become the head of the corner:

Mark 14:58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build [<3618>](#) another made without hands.

Mark 15:29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest [<3618>](#) *it* in three days,

Luke 4:29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built [<3618>](#), that they might cast him down headlong.

Luke 6:48 He is like a man which built [<3618>](#) an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

Luke 6:49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built [<3618>](#) an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Luke 7:5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built [<3618>](#) us a synagogue.

Luke 11:47 Woe unto you! for ye build [<3618>](#) the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.

Luke 11:48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build [<3618>](#) their sepulchres.

Luke 12:18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build [<3618>](#) greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

Luke 14:28 For which of you, intending to build [<3618>](#) a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it*?

Luke 14:30 Saying, This man began to build [<3618>](#), and was not able to finish.

Luke 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded [<3618>](#);

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Luke 20:17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders [<3618>](#) rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

John 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was [<3618>](#) this temple in building [<3618>](#), and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

Acts 4:11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders [<3618>](#), which is become the head of the corner.

Acts 7:47 But Solomon built [<3618>](#) him an house.

Acts 7:49 Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool: what house will ye build [<3618>](#) me? saith the Lord: or what *is* the place of my rest?

1 Peter 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders [<3618>](#) disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

Matthew 24:1 ¶ And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* for to shew him the buildings [<3619>](#) of the temple.

Mark 13:1 ¶ And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings [<3619>](#) *are here!*

Mark 13:2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings [<3619>](#)? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

2 Corinthians 5:1 ¶ For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building [<3619>](#) of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Application to the Church (10x)

Based on Matt 16:18, this appears to be the basic metaphorical sense, and that in an organic sense (constructing the church as an organism), not distributive ("church" simply as a collective noun in reference to the people who are in it).

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build [<3618>](#) my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 9:31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified [<3618>](#); and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building [<3619>](#).

1 Corinthians 14:4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth [<3618>](#) himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth [<3618>](#) the church.

1 Corinthians 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying [<3619>](#).

1 Corinthians 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying [<3619>](#) of the church.

Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building [<3619>](#) fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

Ephesians 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying [<3619>](#) of the body of Christ:

Ephesians 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying [<3619>](#) of itself in love.

1 Peter 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up [<3618>](#) a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Edifying One Another (4x)

We could understand these as referring to the isolated edification of one individual by another, but that would be distinct from the organic edification of the church, which is the primary sense of the word and with which these are often closely associated (especially the 1 Cor 14 and Eph groups). In fact, all of these can be understood in the organic sense, where the semantic reference to the building is in the “oiko-“ morpheme.

Romans 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify [<3619>](#) another.

1 Corinthians 8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall [<3618>](#) not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened [<3618>](#) to eat those things which are offered to idols; *The organic sense of the word suggests that “emboldened” doesn’t catch the main idea. The point is that the careless conduct of one person encourages the other to be more closely joined to the idol and its worship, “built up” into the idol temple rather than the church. This is in fact the very point that he ends up making on the other side of the chiasm, in 10:15-21.*

1 Corinthians 14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is [<3618>](#) not edified [<3618>](#).

1 Thessalonians 5:11 ¶ Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify [<3618>](#) one another, even as also ye do.

Unspecified (12x)

These can be understood either distributively or organically.

Edification/Destruction Contrast

Galatians 2:18 For if I build [<3618>](#) again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

2 Corinthians 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification [<3619>](#), and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

2 Corinthians 13:10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification [<3619>](#), and not to destruction.

Other Contrast

1 Corinthians 8:1 ¶ Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth [<3618>](#).

1 Corinthians 10:23 ¶ All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify [<3618>](#) not.

1 Timothy 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying [<3620>](#) which is in faith: *so do. This reading appears to be only TR. Disciplined versions of the MT, such as Hodges-Farstad and Robinson-Pierpont, all read oikonomia. Oikonomia appears nowhere else in the Greek Bible.*

Other

Romans 15:2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification [<3619>](#). *Actually, the object of the edification isn't explicit, and could well refer to the church.*

Romans 15:20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build [<3618>](#) upon another man's foundation:

1 Corinthians 14:3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification [<3619>](#), and exhortation, and comfort. *As in Rom 15:2, the object is unspecified.*

1 Corinthians 14:26 ¶ How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying [<3619>](#).

2 Corinthians 12:19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying [<3619>](#). *The plural pronoun makes this ambiguous.*

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying [<3619>](#), that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Edifying Oneself (1x)

There is only one reference to edifying oneself, and it is negative.

1 Corinthians 14:4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth [<3618>](#) himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth [<3618>](#) the church.