

“Under Construction”
I Corinthians 3:9-11 & I Thessalonians 5:11-18
February 15, 2015 by Rev. Jo Ramsey



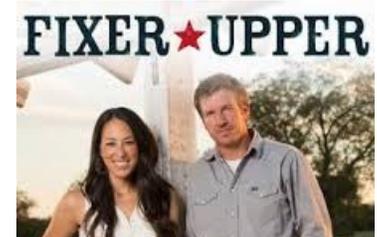
I have a confession to make. I really only watch one channel on the television. I mean I do occasionally watch TLC or the Food Network or a nature program on Discovery Channel or Animal Planet, and we really aren't big tv-watchers..... But, by and large, if I'm watching tv, it's HGTV.



The kids even call it “Mom’s channel.” I get the magazine too. HGTV - Home and Garden Television. It has lots of shows about houses. Design shows. House hunting shows. House selling shows. Shows about flipping houses to sell. Shows about renovation. Shows about restoration.



One of the new shows this season is called Fixer Upper. It's a Texas-based show about a couple who helps families choose between several dilapidated properties. Then, the couple basically renovates the house from top to bottom, inside and out.



The husband, Chip and his crew handle demolition and construction. The wife, Joanna designs everything, choosing colors, furnishings and accessories. The hour long show always ends with what they call the “big reveal.”



The homeowners stand before a life-sized picture of the way the house used to look. Joanna shouts, “Are you ready to see your fixer upper?” Then, Chip and Joanna roll apart the giant image, revealing the new and improved home. Usually, the women squeal, someone cries and everyone hugs. I always like the big reveal, even if I haven't paid much attention to the show.



I like it for a lot of reasons – Mostly, I like to see the change. From dusty, old and unusable to fresh, new and functional. I like to see their vision come to fruition. I like to see how happy the people are. I like that the whole renovation from start to finish lasts about an hour.

I especially like that we didn't have to live through it ourselves. Because we know what it's like – the decisions, the set-backs, the expense, the intrusion, the inconvenience, the not-knowing how it will turn out, more expense and mostly, the waiting. That's the reality of renovation and construction. It isn't easy and it never seems to end. But when it does, at least for us, it's awesome, and it's all worth it.



While the Bible doesn't speak about styles of cabinets or storage solutions, it does have lots to say about buildings, foundations, cornerstones, building up and tearing down. The words for "building" and "to build" appear 247 times in the Bible. God is in the business of building up and tearing down---renovating our spirits, so to speak. We are "under construction."



Over the last few weeks, Pastor James has been preaching about Jesus – One with authority, who has the power to heal. Today is Transfiguration Sunday, the final Sunday before we begin the journey of Lent. On this day we remember that Jesus went up the mountain with three of his disciples and was transfigured – his appearance was changed, his face glowed like the sun, his clothes became white. [10 clouds] Then a cloud covered them and a voice cried out, "This is my beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him."

The transfiguration confirms what we are beginning to understand...

Jesus' authority to preach and power to heal are manifestations of his very identity. He is God's own son. He is the messiah, the Christ, the cornerstone, the sure foundation. He makes all things new. Jesus is at work in us even now.



We know that God has a plan for each one of us. God has designed a future filled with hope for you, and for me. God is busy doing a new thing in us. Imagine yourself as a building, a house -- dilapidated perhaps, run down by life and its trials. Maybe sin has kept you confined, living in just a few small rooms. Maybe it's time to tear a few walls down. Open things up. Start enjoying the view.



Perhaps you're a little outdated. Your beliefs fit the person you were 10 years ago. You need to grow. You need to freshen up your faith.



Or maybe we have places within us that have been neglected, like beautiful woodwork that has been painted over. Maybe you have some talent or gift that God would like to refinish and restore.



But of course, renovation is never simple. Sometimes, when God is at work in us, we find some problems exposed that we didn't even know we had.

Like asbestos or mold or termites we might find behind a wall, we discover a problem we need to deal with. Pride, addiction or perfectionism. Something that should not just be covered with new dry wall.

Worse yet, maybe our foundation is cracked. We need shored up. We need new footings poured. We need reinforced.



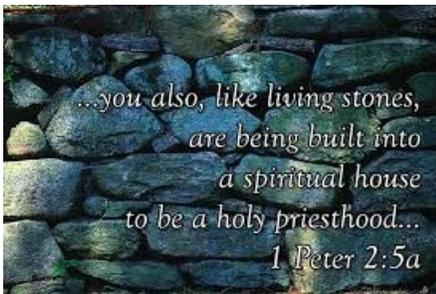
Or maybe you feel like it's time to start over entirely! It is never too late! As J.K. Rowling said, "Rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life."



Your life in God is designed to be beautiful! God is ready to rebuild us – and for you younger ones – he wants to build you from the very beginning! He wants to cleanse us with his forgiveness. He wants to refinish us with mercy. He wants to restore us with his love. He wants to paint our lives with grace. He wants to decorate our lives with his peace.



As much as we know and believe that God is at work in us, making us a new creation, we also sense that he is not finished. He has begun a new work in us and will one day bring it to fruition. But we can only dream of that day, when all will be revealed. For now, we remain 'under construction.'



If we think of ourselves as buildings that God has designed brick by brick, and is renovating even now, we might also think of our church as 'under construction.' Over the last year, East Union has been taking stock of where have we been and where are we now. We've begun to make a realistic assessment of our spiritual house.



Metaphorically speaking, we have some dated decor, some closed off rooms, some areas that are difficult to use. Our spiritual house needs renovations, repairs and restorations just like we ourselves do. Over the coming months, our Strategic Implementation Team and our various task forces will consider God's design for East Union. We think East Union is a great place to grow in God. How can it be even better? You will have the opportunity to be part of those conversations.



Like us, East Union is under construction too. God is at work, doing a new thing among us!

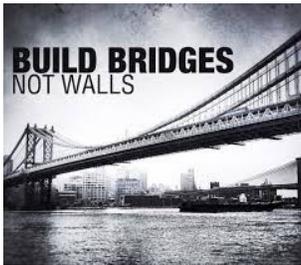
We may not be the designer. We may not be the general contractor. We may not be the foreman. But we are also part of the construction process.



We have the power to build up and tear down---we can build ourselves up or tear ourselves down. We can build the church up or tear the church down. We can build each other up or tear each other down.



Yes, there are times when tearing down is essential to beginning again. Speaking the truth in love is a biblical thing. But criticism, negativity and gossip rarely restore anything. They eat away at us. They weaken our structure. They build dividing walls between us.



Instead, God wants us to build up, edify, encourage one another. He calls us to build bridges between ourselves, not walls. Be patient with one another. Make peace among ourselves. Together, we are building a kingdom of love, a city on a hill.

Our foundation is Christ. Our fortification is his Word. Together, we are strong.

Yes, we are all fixer-uppers. We are all in need of a little renovation.



In the words of a famous song,
Everyone's a bit of a fixer upper
That's what it's all about
Father, sister, brother
We need each other
To raise us up and round us out

Everyone's a bit of a fixer upper
But when push comes to shove
The only fixer upper-fixer
That can fix a fixer upper is
True, True, True, True Love



May you know the true love that is Jesus, the restorer of our souls, who fixes-up us fixer-uppers---you, me, East Union Church and all of the dilapidated, outdated, unsafe, unsound places within us. For now, we are under construction – we see in a mirror dimly, but one day, we shall see face-to-face. And I don't know about you, but I can't wait for the big reveal!

In the name of the Father, son and holy spirit, Amen.