

Building Up One Another

Message 7: Admonish One Another

Most of us probably know that King David's son, Solomon, became the next king after David. We may forget that a different son, Adonijah, tried to become king before Solomon. He engaged in a conspiracy to have himself made king, but ultimately failed. In the description of those events, we have this verse:

1Ki 1:6 *And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? ...*

This verse implies that David never disciplined Adonijah; he never displeased him—i.e., he ever rebuked him, never caused him any pain, never interfered with him. I.e., he let him do whatever he wanted.

Pr 29:15 *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*

The Bible reveals that David was not a particularly good father. Two of his sons, Adonijah and Absalom, schemed to take the throne. Perhaps some of David's children turned out so badly because David never rebuked them; he tolerated them without correction or interference; he put up with their bad behavior.

We all know that children need verbal rebuke at times. Failure to rebuke one's children is parental neglect.

In Romans 15:14, Paul states that one of the responsibilities church members have is to admonish one another.

Ro 15:14 *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.*

David should have admonished his sons—he should have rebuked them; he should have interfered with them. His failure to do so resulted in great upset for the kingdom. And in the church, we at times need to admonish one another.

We've been considering the "one another" statements in the Bible, and today we're looking at what it means to admonish one another. Since we are supposed to do this, we should understand what it means.

- I. The definition of "admonish" (νουθετέω)
 - A. In a positive sense, the word means "to instruct, counsel, teach, give advice.
 - B. The word seems to pertain to the mind or the thinking.

1. The word literally means “to place into the mind.” We are placing good ideas into the mind of someone else by instruction, teaching, advising, or counseling.
We are challenging what may be wrong ideas in the mind and replacing them with good and true ideas.
2. Col 3:16 tells us to admonish one another “in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” Music is a powerful method of instruction.
3. The word can describe the normal instruction and exhortation process that happens in the life of the church. Various people in the church teach, instruct, give advice, and counsel others. In that sense, we admonish one another almost every Sunday. We help one another through teaching and counseling.
4. So “admonish” is often used in a positive sense—teach, instruct, counsel, advise.

C. But the word also can have a negative sense/tone—rebuke, warn, correct.

1. Admonishment is necessary when someone needs to be warned about a wrong direction in life or wrong beliefs.
*Acts 20:31 ... for three years I did not cease to **warn** everyone night and day with tears.*
*1 Corinthians 4:14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I **warn** you.*
*1 Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn** those who are unruly, ...*
2. The word may describe a particular confrontation that occurs when one Christian approaches another believer about his sin, error, or problem. You want to see the person change something or correct an error, so you admonish him—warn, rebuke, reprove.

D. Actually, all the uses of the word are positive because the instruction, warning, or rebuke is intended to be for the good of the one admonished. We admonish one another for good reasons and with the hope of a good outcome.

- E. If we did not care, we would not admonish. David did not admonish Adonijah, apparently, because he did not care very much about what Adonijah did. He did not interfere with him or cause him any pain. He did not discipline him. Neglect is a sign that you don't care. Those who are indifferent do not admonish. People admonish you because they care about you.

Trans: We are to teach, instruct, advise, counsel, warn, and rebuke one another because we care for one another. If we didn't care, we would not interfere; we would not get involved.

II. The "one another" aspect of admonishment

- A. This verse applies to people in a local church. Admonishing is part of life in the church.
- B. The pastor is responsible to admonish—to teach, instruct, counsel, advise, warn, correct, rebuke. When I do that, I am fulfilling my responsibility. I'm obligated to admonish. Most people expect me to do that.
- C. The people are responsible to admonish. Everyone who is qualified has the right and obligation to admonish one another.
- D. We ought to be instructing, counseling, and giving good advice to one another.
- E. On occasions, it may be necessary to warn, rebuke, or correct one another.
- F. In a certain sense, we have the right to interfere in one another's lives. If we see something wrong, we are obligated to provide correction, advice, or warning.

App: We should not take offense if someone gives us advice, warns, counsels, or corrects us. This kind of thing should be normal in the life of the church.

Illus.: Yesterday working on the storage shed project—we did something incorrectly; we needed correction. Someone who knew what he was doing had to give us some help, counsel, and correction. That was good; we needed it.

III. Requirements for admonishing one another

- A. Paul states that the people of the church are "full of goodness" (μεστοί ἐστε ἀγαθωσύνης).

1. What kind of people admonish one another? People who are “full of goodness.” Good people do this.
2. When someone at church wants to instruct us or give us advice, it’s usually out of the goodness of their heart.

E.g., A & P with Apollos—they instructed him because they wanted him to understand the Gospel better. They wanted something good for Apollos.

3. Likewise, if someone at church warns us, counsels us, or rebukes us, it’s most likely that he is seeking our best interests. We should view that kind of admonishment in a positive light.

Illus.: When you correct or instruct your children, what is your intent? It’s usually good; you have their best interests in mind; you are doing it for their benefit.

E.g., warning about a hot stove or electrical outlets

If you didn’t care, you would not do it; you would neglect them.

4. It’s usually a good idea to listen to advice, counsel, or rebuke from others who are giving it to you. They are trying to help you in some way. They see something in your life that needs to be fixed, and they are trying to help you fix it. Cf. Gal 6:1

Illus.: Sadly, in my experience, some people don’t want the help. I’ve offered admonition, advice, counsel, and rebuke, and often people simply do not listen. They don’t want the advice, and they refuse to heed the warning or rebuke.

When your pastor suggests some advice or counsel, when he corrects or rebukes you, you ought to listen. Same with a deacon, SS teacher, older person in the church, or almost any other member of the church. Listen to those who are trying to help you in this way. It’s good that they are helping you, even if it causes temporary pain.

If they didn’t care about you, they would not interfere; they would leave you alone.

The first qualification is that we are filled with goodness; we are trying to do something good and we have good intentions.

- B. “filled with knowledge”

There are several senses in which admonishment requires knowledge.

1. Knowledge of God's word: Admonishment must be based upon God's specific commands. Always have chapter and verse support for any advice, counsel, or correction.

We are giving biblical, spiritual advice and counsel.

2. Knowledge of the facts of the case/situation/people involved: Before trying to give advice or correcting anyone, make sure you have all the correct information. Perhaps your information is mere rumor or hearsay. Don't proceed until you are sure you understand the circumstances.

You can do a lot of damage and cause a lot of harm if you intrude into a situation you do not understand.

When you have a good heart and all the knowledge necessary to speak truth into the situation, then maybe you are ...

C. "able to admonish one another" – let's focus on the "able" part of this.

1. The word "able" (δυνάμενοι) is based on the root word for "power." It means "having power, having ability."
2. Paul gives permission here for good hearted, knowledgeable people of the church to admonish one another. Qualified people have the right to admonish us—i.e., to instruct, warn, counsel, or rebuke. They have that ability and right.

We accept correction, counsel, warning, and rebuke from good hearted people who know what they are talking about and who want the best for us.

3. Another qualification is sincerity. We must not be hypocritical in finding fault with others when we are guilty of the same failure.

One of the first things to do before confronting anyone else is to make sure that you have removed the "beam" from your own eye before dealing with the "speck" in someone else's eye (Mt 7:3-5).

It is appropriate to deal with the speck in someone else's eye, but not if we have a beam in our own eye. Correct yourself before you try correcting anyone else.

4. And a rebuke or correction is most effective when it comes from someone who cares about you. Most of us don't pay much attention to a rebuke or advice from someone who does not even know us very well. But when it's a friend who we know loves us and has our best interests at heart, then it has much more impact.

Proverbs 27:6 *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, ...*

5. A confrontation is not for retribution or revenge; it's always for the benefit of the one being warned or rebuked.
6. Admonishment must be done with pure motives and proper goals

1 Corinthians 4:14 *I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.*

There should be only one basic objective when we admonish others: to help them become more mature followers of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:28 *We preach [Christ], warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

Is everybody qualified to admonish one another? Do all Christian have permission to do this?

If the qualities he mentions here are true in your case—you are part of the church, you are filled with goodness and knowledge, you have the right motives and reasons—then in some respects, yes, this seems to apply to you. Paul says that the people were able to admonish one another.

Sadly, some people do not really have these characteristics. They are not full of goodness and knowledge. They don't have the right motives and goals. They are perhaps insincere or maybe hypocritical. Those kind of people have no business admonishing anyone else. They should get the log out of their own eye before dealing with the speck in someone else's eye.

Everyone should seek to be mature enough in the faith to admonish a fellow believer when necessary. We should be living the kind of life that others would accept admonishment from us.

IV. The proper process for admonishing one another

- A. The process may be an ongoing part of the teaching ministry of the church. Remember that the word can mean “instruct.”

Acts 20:31 ... remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

That does not mean that Paul was rebuking everyone every day; he was instructing them, giving them advice and counsel, teaching them.

So the admonishing process includes regular instruction at church. One of the reasons we go to church is to receive instruction, advice, and good counsel. We ought to be instructing, advising, and counseling one another regularly. Virtually every Sunday, we may be involved in this kind of admonition.

Many of my messages are a form of admonishment – advice, counsel, warning, instruction, rebuke.

- B. But the occasional part of the process, where we have to rebuke or correct someone, is a bit different. We are typically not doing that every time we meet together for church. We do that rarely, only occasionally.

1. If we need to rebuke someone, we normally do it individually and privately. In most cases, especially if the sin is not yet publicly known, the confrontation should be carried out in private.
2. But if the private rebuke fails, then we have to involve others (Mt 18:15-17; 1 Tim 5:20). At some point, we may have to bring the matter before the entire church body. And in rare cases, the church has to put the offender out of the assembly.
3. The goal is to keep things private. If the offender responds appropriately, then it remains private and no one else even suspects that there was a problem.

- C. Evaluate your own attitudes and spiritual condition.

1. Can I say my own life is “full of goodness”? That is, am I living a holy and righteous life before God? If I am deliberately violating Scripture, I am not in a position to admonish others. I must first deal with sin in my own life before I am ready to deal with sin in someone else’s life.

2. Do I really know what the Bible teaches about the particular issue at hand? I must have a good grasp on what the Bible teaches in a particular area before I proceed.
3. Can I admonish an erring brother while reflecting deep love and concern? Or do I come across with a harsh manner and appear to be angry?

2 Timothy 2:24–25 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth

V. Dangers to avoid in the admonition process

- A. I mentioned last week (receive/accept one another) that an error to avoid is judgmentalism. We should avoid an overly-harsh, ungracious, fault-finding attitude toward others. We should give others the benefit of the doubt and think the best of others when possible. We usually do not know the motivations of the heart, so we should not assume that we know why people are doing various things.

We judge on external behavior, not internal thoughts.

- B. We must avoid a vengeful, bitter attitude toward others. It's easy to rebuke people when you are angry at them. But we don't admonish others because we are angry; we admonish others because we want them to do better, to fix a problem, to restore them to the right place. We do not rebuke or warn in anger but in love.
- C. A third error would be to try to correct or rebuke a person over minor matters of personal conviction. Cf. Rom 14—eating food offered to idols. We must allow people to be fully persuaded in their own minds regarding secondary issues of the Christian life. We don't need to impose our own personal convictions on others.

We rebuke and warn people over clear areas of sin or failure. We warn others like we would warn someone of imminent danger—they are heading the wrong direction, making bad decisions, and the future looks bleak if they don't change their ways. We admonish when people have violated clear biblical norms, e.g.,....

Galatians 5:19–21 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; ...*

Colossians 3:5–8 *... fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ... anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.*

Hebrews 3:12 *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;*

When we see evidence that someone is clearly behaving sinfully, that's when we admonish/warn/correct. When people are behaving in those ways, we are obligated to get involved and provide advice, correction, warning, and rebuke.

Our intent in all of this is to help people grow spiritually. We are trying to rescue a fellow believer who is on a dangerous path.

The people of the church are responsible to admonish one another. In most cases, that calls for instruction, advice, and counseling. But in some cases, hopefully rare cases, it calls for warning, correction, and rebuke. It's never pleasant to rebuke others because of their sin, but it is at times necessary.

The goal in admonishing others is their good. We want to see others overcome their problems and sins. We want to help the person correct a problem or avoid a disaster. The goal is always to help, not to punish or shame.

Before we take it on ourselves to admonish anyone, we should evaluate whether we meet these requirements – we are filled with goodness, understand the situation, have the right motives and goals, and can get involved without anger or revenge.

King David failed to admonish his wayward son, Adonijah, and that created further problems. In fact, Adonijah's bad behavior cost him his life. A little instruction, advice, and rebuke from David might have prevented a whole series of problems.

Likewise, good advice, counsel, warning and even rebuke help us stay on the right track and avoid many problems. We should be thankful for those who offer us good advice, counsel, correction, warning, and rebuke.