

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Admonishing One Another

by Dan Trygg

“And concerning you, my brothers, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.”

Romans 15:14

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Colossians 3:16

“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

Acts 20:31

“I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”

I Corinthians 4:14

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every person and teaching every person with all wisdom, so that we may present every person mature in Christ.”

Colossians 1:28

“...we ask you, brothers, that you observe the ones diligently-laboring among you, and standing-before you in the Lord and admonishing you, and esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all.”

I Thessalonians 5:12-14

“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. ¹⁵Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

II Thessalonians 3:14-15

One of the greatest criticisms of an interactive meeting is that it can get messy. I have seen it. I have heard the complaints of those who felt virtually attacked by someone else. I have been on the receiving end of some of those tirades. It is no fun. It is uncomfortable, even painful. And, sometimes what people say can get downright ugly, or be uncalled for. They are *way* too harsh or judgmental. **Learning how to speak into one another's lives in ways that are positive and upbuilding is a skill that is often developed and honed through bumbling and awkward attempts.** Of course, some exchanges *are* inappropriate, and the leaders, or others, should intervene. **If the goal is to help every one of us to mature, ...to become self-controlled, loving, emotional-adults who are skilled at speaking the truth in wise, acceptable and effective ways..., we are going to have to have a place to practice. What better place than with a group of people who are all meeting for the same purpose (to follow Christ), and who are all on the same team?** Paul said that the ideal church, ...the fully-functioning, effective Body of believers..., is one where we *all* will speak the truth to one another in love. Do you think that we are only going to recite truths to one another that we *already* know? Are we going to *just* do Bible quizzing? Or do you think that Body-life interaction includes people telling me things *about me* that I *don't* know, or *don't* want to face? Is the church to *hold me accountable*, or even *confront me* about things? **Would you go to church if you knew there were people there who really loved you and accepted you, but who were going to talk to you about how you are doing in your walk with Jesus? What if they were going to point out an area of inconsistency, or an area where you were getting off track? Would you be gracious and grateful, ...or would you be defensive and angry? Well, the NT church was a gathering where people were encouraged to do just that. They were encouraged to be watching out for each other, and speak truth *with large doses of love and grace* into one another's lives.** If you were in sin, or wandering, they were to come to you to try to help you see where you were off, and direct you get back on track. **If you were getting sloppy or were undisciplined, they were to remind you of what a growing walk in the Lord requires.** If you were the one talking too harshly, they were to come to you to help you see your error, and to encourage you to dial things back, or go back to ask forgiveness of those your words may have hurt. **Satan points out our faults to judge and attack us; our brothers and sisters in Christ will point out our faults to help us grow! That's church!**

The topic for today is right in line with this introductory paragraph. **We are called to admonish one another.** I don't know about you, but **I get a little squeamish at even the thought of it.** I don't particularly like confrontation, and I *really* don't like having to do the confronting. **Yet, here it is, one of the many “one-another” acts of service we are to be doing when we meet together. Furthermore, this is a blanket charge, given to *all* of us.** It is not just given to the leaders, or to the mature. It is a responsibility appointed to us all. **We are *all* to learn how to admonish one another.** Having said that, there is need for caution and wisdom. **Being charged to “admonish one another” is *not* meant to be a license to attack one another.** The point is, **we cannot push this aside as a responsibility that does not apply to me.** No. **We are *all* to learn to do this effectively.** We are *not* all skilled or ready to do this effectively, right *now*. That is not an *excuse*; it is a *fact*! We must proceed with great caution and self-examination, because the goal is to build one another up through our admonishment, ...not rip someone apart!

We should stop and more clearly define “What does it *mean* to ‘admonish’ someone?” We have been talking about admonishing as though it were equivalent to confronting someone, or correcting them. **The word in**

Greek, as in English, has a range of meanings. The Greek word literally means to “place in the mind”. This can refer to everything from instruction, reminding, warning, to out-and-out confronting. Interestingly, the English word came from Latin and French. It is from the root “moneo”, which means “make known, warn or advise”. Our words for “mind”, “remind” come from this same stem, as does also the word “premonition” which means “know ahead of time”. The prefix “ad” means “to apply to” or “place alongside”, which makes the “knowledge, warning or advice” more personal. So to “admonish” someone would mean to “bring knowledge, advice or warning to someone”. It could be as simple as reminding them of something, or advising them of something they may need guidance in. Another word from the same Latin stem is “monitor”. Someone who “monitors” is someone who watches over a situation, and offers advice, guidance or direction to those who may need it. When I was in 8th grade, I was asked to be a hall monitor for a parents’ night at my junior high school. I wasn’t there to police their behavior. I was there to offer guidance and help to those who were trying to find their way to a classroom. I think this offers a great parallel to the meaning of the Greek term. **To “admonish” does not have to be an angry, authoritarian role. It can be a very humble service that we give to others who would benefit from our advice or input.**

We see this more tender side of the word in Acts 20:31. Paul *reminded* the Ephesians of his ministry among them. **He was warning them of the fact that there were spiritual distractions and dangers out there that could render their faith ineffective, or even bring them to ruin. He brought to their minds how for the entire three years he was among them he was daily pointing this out to them, even with tears.** I just used four of the different definitions. “Remind”, “warn”, “brought to their minds”, “pointing this out to them” all could be definitions of the Greek word. None of them sounded harsh, did they? **The reference to his tears testifies to his great love for them, and the seriousness of his admonitions.** They sound more tender and soft, than hard and rebuking.

From I Corinthians 4:14, we see that **Paul clearly understood the difference between shaming someone by harsh rebuke and accusation, and the healthy purpose of admonishing.** In this context, he does use sarcasm to show them their error, by contrasting their false understanding with the examples of the lives of the apostles. **Having made his point, he softens his tone by saying that they are like beloved children to him.** Thus, he felt it necessary to warn them of their erroneous perceptions, and direct them back into the healthy pathway. This is consistent with Paul’s description of his ministry in Colossians 1:28. **He was advising every person, and instructing every person with all the skill he had, so that he could present every person mature in Christ.** We need that. **We need people in our lives who will remind and warn us of the dangers and distractions that can keep us from maturity.** These are very real. A regular part of Paul’s apostolic ministry was to warn and remind people of these subtle traps.

Having seen Paul’s example, and understanding his rationale, it is only natural that **if we cared about one another, we too would speak up to remind and point out the snares and obstacles to growth we see in one another’s lives.** In I Thessalonians 5:12-14, Paul encourages us to *observe* those who are working hard among us to help us grow. **Note the example of their lives, and their admonishments of us,** and value them highly. **Then, he hands off the responsibility to us! He tells us to “rebuke the unruly” or “admonish the idle”, or “remind the ones who have no order or structure in their lives”.** Wow! Just think how different each of those sounds! The last translation gets at the underlying problem. They have no pattern for living. **The essence of being a disciple is that we are choosing to order our lives to pursue Christ. The Greek word implies having a strategy or plan for growth, and doing it! A disciple without discipline is not going anywhere.** Nothing changes if nothing changes. God said, “...to the one who *orders his way aright* I will show the salvation of God” (Psa. 50:23). Jesus said to people who professed to believe in Him, “If you *continue in My word*, you are genuine disciples of Mine, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (Jn. 8:31,32). Jesus Himself felt it necessary to lead a life of discipline, rising early to get some time alone with His Father (Mk. 1:35). **By telling us to admonish those who are without structure and focus, Paul does two things: (1.) he reminds us, again, concerning how important this is; and, (2.) he calls all of us to watch out for each other in this area.** Remember, when the church met, each person was to come with something to share (I Cor. 14:28). This is reflected in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”. **If you are not investing in learning and seeking, is it surprising if you have nothing to share? How can we remind or point out fresh insights to our brothers and sisters, if we don’t put in some time to grow? Failing to plan is planning to fail, in our spiritual walk.** Of course, the best plans will take us nowhere, if we don’t walk them out.

In Romans 15:14, how could Paul be “convinced that they were filled with goodness, having been filled with all knowledge, ones being able to admonish one another”? This does not mean that they had arrived, or were complete in themselves. This verse is sandwiched between the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the previous verse, and the fact that Paul was boldly writing to *remind them* of things he was to pass on to them. So, perfectionism is not in Paul’s thinking. Rather, **it is the Spirit who makes us capable of effective ministry** (II Cor. 3:5,6). **Since He is in us, we also have the capacity for the good-will and insight to speak effectively into one another’s lives.**