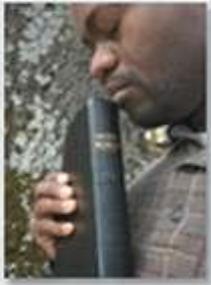


MINISTERS FORUM NEWSLETTER

INFORMATION MINISTERS CAN USE

THE ART OF PASTORAL CORRECTION

Proverbs 27:5; 1 Timothy 5:1; James 4:6; Matthew 18



5. Open rebuke is better than secret love.
6. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.
Prov.27:5

Proverbs 15:12 says,
"Mockers hate to be corrected, so they stay away from the wise."

WHAT'S INSIDE?
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"Where there is no VISION, the people perish"

Greetings Ministers of this Great Gospel thanking God for this a New Year to work with His people. The Book of Proverbs repeatedly stresses the importance of accepting correction and the dangers of rejecting it because it is impossible to become a wise and godly Christ-follower without submitting to correction (**Proverbs 3: 11-12**)

About five years ago I met a member of an Apostolic church who after several years of being in a backslidden state returned to the Lord and according to her is now having a wonderful time in the Lord. She approached me after a seminar session held at the church and shared her story of what she thought was 'unfair' treatment by the pastor. After listening I realized that there were some 'feelings that never died' or forgiven about the situation but she had buried these feelings alive' which was still causing some pain. After the discussion I loaned her a book entitled "Help me heal" which she never return for over a year.

The summary of her story has its roots in the fact that she was, in her opinion, victimized and mistreated by the pastor as a result of the adulterous relationship with a deacon of the church she attended. She was put on the 'back bench' while the deacon continued as if nothing happened. She walked away from the church not to return because she felt the pastor was unfair in his judgment and decision. Recently I was made aware of another story relating to how a pastor corrected/dealt with a situation/administered disciplined. The member came away feeling that rather than having a conversation/discussion about an action taken which he thought was wrong/inappropriate he resorted to malice.

It is a known fact that Shepherding 'sometimes' means loving discipline.¹ And there is always the question/challenge as to how do you correct someone without driving them away? While it is an accepted fact that correction is necessary to the gospel; as leaders it is hard because with good intentions many times things are not necessarily done right. Things are sometimes done in anger and disgust causing departure (from one church to another) or unfortunate separation from God and ultimately the entire church family.

Correction is change made to something or someone in order to correct or improve it, or the action of making such a change.

Correction in the church is never without discomfort. According to one pastor "I can tell you right now the names of two people who no longer call themselves Christians because of my pastoral leadership. In both cases, they left church, probably angry with God and religion to this very day. In both cases, I was confronting a sin in their life and in both cases; I had a lot to learn afterwards." (A.J. Swoboda - posted June 2014). The same is true for any correction of pastors on different matters. Some persons have even said they fear talking to pastors about

¹ A.J. Swoboda | posted June 9, 2014



anything except to commend them and are fearful of the scripture that said "...rebuke not an elder" 1 Timothy 5:1.

Recently I was asked by an Apostolic member to share my interpretation of this very scripture. While it is my view that correction of the saints is important and must be done in accordance with the word of God full of compassion and care in keeping with the will of the Lord, there is always fear and the question - "**How dare you?**". I do believe however, that one should, in both cases (Pastor/member) to be corrected but must never be done in anger and without divine intervention. Pastors (in particular) must also utilize their people skills in correcting.

Research on the scripture

Responding to the explanation of the scripture "...rebuke not an elder": one minister explained that it is acceptable in certain circumstances for a pastor and should be done in a particular manner. He further pointed out that no one including pastors should be confronted in an antagonistic manner. This should be done privately, one on one, to avoid humiliating anyone. The Bible proverb that says "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Prov.27:5) doesn't mean that the rebuke is done out in the open for everyone to see and hear. Following the Matthew 18 biblical model of church discipline, if there is any matter that is of serious concern in the church involving any individual, the persons so designated should first go to that person privately and not bring others in the hopes that the matter can be solved.

Most ministers that I have spoken to see nothing wrong with approaching the pastor privately to tell him that you believe he made a mistake and especially if it's a doctrinal error but even if it's using the wrong would be open to the idea that church members have the obligation to point out to a pastor where he is wrong. No one is above correction because only the Word of God is perfect and no man is nor ever will be (until we are ultimately in the kingdom). Jesus alone was the only Man, the God-Man who never erred. The rest of us have and will because of our fallen nature.

According to Dr. Paul M. Elliott

In Galatians 2:11-14 we see that Peter was publicly corrected by Paul for his public error. Both men were church leaders. Scripture tells us that there are circumstances in which such a rebuke is the Christian's duty before God.

"**Rebuke Not An Elder**" is a passage that is often erroneously used to support the view that a so-called layperson cannot rebuke an elder for doctrinal error. In the Authorized King James Version it reads, "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father..." Three things about this passage that need to be noted are:

1. As always, a single phrase cannot be interpreted out of context. It must be interpreted with regard to the surrounding text, as well as consistently with the rest of Scripture. So we must look at the context of 1 Timothy chapters four and five. The section from 4:12 through 5:16 is, in the main, devoted to instructions on relationships between younger and older people in the church.

2. The feminine form While the word used for "elder" in 1 Timothy 5:1 is the Greek *presbuteros* - the same word that is used to denote the *office* of elder in other passages - the context makes it clear that the usage of *presbuteros* **here does not refer to the office of elder, but to age relationships between younger and older people.** Paul uses *presbuteras* in the very next verse, and the two verses are parallel statements: "Rebuke not a [male] elder (*presbuteros*), but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women (*presbuteras*) as mothers; the younger [women] as sisters, with all purity."

3. The word translated "rebuke" is *epiplusso*, which means "to chastise with words." It is used only in this verse in the New Testament. The contrasting word translated "intreat" is *parakaleo*, which means, literally, "to take someone aside and admonish him with all due respect." First Timothy 5:1 is not a prohibition against rebuking someone who holds the *office* of elder. In context, the sum of the phrase, "rebuke not an elder," is this: Respect for age must govern the way in which a younger person approaches an older person when it is apparent that the older person has sinned. Take him aside and first attempt to deal with the matter privately, but always with the respect that an older person is due from a younger.



No one is above Correction

No one in the church is above correction. The person who refuses to be corrected loses an opportunity to grow. On the other hand it is felt that the person who

accepts correction is predisposed to making fewer mistakes in the future because they are usually more diligent in carefully examining whether their thoughts/actions are aligned to Scriptures, doctrinal teachings and beliefs. James writes that God “opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

The Apostle Peter says essentially the same thing in 1 Peter 5:5 that; pastors or church leaders like deacons, elders and even Sunday school teachers who are too proud to receive correction and who are also arrogant in their correcting others should be mindful that the sword cuts both ways. It applies to the person correcting, as well as, to the person who is being corrected. It behoves us therefore to be humble than to have God do it for you.

The ART of Pastoral Correction

As mentioned earlier, *Pastoral correction* must not be done in anger and without divine intervention. Pastors (in particular) must utilize their people skills to lovingly correct and by extension Counsel the one being corrected. Below is a SUMMARY of research findings of pastors views of some of the things to be considered in the process and are presented for your assessment and ‘correctness’ for use in your ministry and as approved by your organization (if you are a part of one) within the context of scriptures.

- a. Matters relating to church operation/issues and does not have legal implications the Elders 1st have a responsibility to investigate the credibility of the witnesses and/or claims. In the case of a Pastor - If the witnesses and information are deemed to be credible, then the witnesses with one or more ministers should go to the Pastor in private; in the case of a member then the pastor should intervene.
- b. Both parties involved should be given the opportunity to explain. If **Repentance** or **Resolution** is achieved then the issue should be closed (assuming no legal or governmental issues need to be addressed).
- c. If the behavior continues or if it is injuring the church or work of God, then matter should be discussed with the body (public).

Note: If matters reported involve any form of abuse involving children IT IS A LEGAL MATTER and must be reported. According to the Child Care & Protection Act if “you suspect” it must be reported for the authorities to do the investigation – no investigation must be done by the church before reporting

- d. If the ultimate goal of church discipline is **Restoration**,



We must agree on restoring trust; some form of confidential restoration and restraint who which may be time-bound;

- We need to establish guidelines across the ministries.
- Making individuals accountable (Paul made himself accountable - 2 Cor. 9).
- Work with individuals at restoring spiritual capacity to function; bearing in mind that the

goal of discipline is (1) reconciliation - 1 Jn 1:9); (2) correction - 1 Cor. 5); restoration - Gal.6:1). The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us and GRACE teaches us to deny ungodliness; ungodliness, which is the basic problem that led up to the sin.

The **ART in correction** is tied to the achievement of the goal of restoration and it must be that matters are dealt with in love and mercy; although accountability is essential and fundamental. **Correction must be done wisely.** Some issues are not worth dealing with. Paul writes (2:23), "But refuses foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels." He is talking about those who were getting into fruitless doctrinal controversies in the church. Perhaps the best commentary on our text is 1Timothy 1:3-7:

Determine what is your goal in this issue? Do you just want to argue and prove that you're right, or are you concerned about godliness and love? Quarreling or winning an argument does not lead anyone to Christ nor does it build up your brother in true godliness. If you must correct, your aim should be to help your brother grow in the Lord. Correction must be done wisely.

When you offer correction, emphasize that obedience to God's Word is the only path to blessing. I often ask, "You want God's blessing in your life, don't you? You can't ask God to bless your life when you are living in violation of His Word." Your correction must offer constructive help that shows the other person practically how to live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. As the one offering correction, you are subject to the same biblical standards. So you should be able to point to your life as an example and show the one in sin how to apply the Bible in daily life. Thus correction must be done wisely and in love. It must be based on and in accordance with God's Word of truth.

Conclusion

It is a known fact that it's not usually a pleasant activity to correct or be corrected but must be done privately at first whether it be a Pastor, Elder, Deacon, Sunday School Teacher, a Board Member, Church Secretary and/or a church member . If the Pastor or Church leader or member still refuses to see their error, there may be the need for the matter to be brought up with someone else and then the team goes together to speak with those involved. Hopefully, it will not require going as far as the Matthew 18 biblical model for church discipline, but if it's necessary, it must be done for the *best interests of the church*.

*Correction is a sign of God's love. This is also true in leadership because as leaders it is your job to shape those under your leadership as this is the only way to help them fully develop their gifts and, more important bring them to the point of maximizing their god-given potential. Pray that today we all have the courage to discipline those under our leadership and to submit to correction from those over us. Besides, Christ will hold us accountable for how His church (not ours) functions. In fact, we will all have to give an account for ourselves before Christ someday and will be held responsible for those we don't correct when we know they are wrong. The Proverb is true, "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (Proverbs 27:5). **Grace & Peace be unto you all.***