

Teach and Admonish One Another
Colossians 3:15-16

Several weeks into the school year, a mom asked her first grade son, Jacob, what he thought of school now that he was a seasoned pro. "Oh, I love school," he said, "It's great!" Then, after a brief pause, he added, "Well, except for one thing ... I don't really like it when Mrs. Decker tries to teach us stuff."

There are times we all feel like little Jacob. We don't like it when someone tries to teach us stuff. We don't want to be told that we don't know how to do it right. We don't want to be shown to be ignorant and unknowledgeable. Poor little Jacob hasn't figured out yet that that's what school is all about.

As we continue our series of the one another principles in the New Testament we see that teaching people stuff is also part of what the church is about.

Col 3:15-16

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Jesus makes us a part of a community of other believers, he calls us to fellowship together, to worship together, to pray together, to serve together, to preach and teach together, and a big part of the reason for this is so that others in the body can teach us stuff. And this isn't just plain, old, ordinary, everyday stuff. This is amazing stuff; stuff that can change your life, renew your mind, and refill your heart.

Paul calls us to do two important things in this one another statement- teach and admonish. These are two similar ideas that he connects together here. Teaching is simply the idea of instructing. Now the 1st Century idea of teaching was not just a classroom lecture. He's not talking about just book knowledge or head knowledge. This teaching is very practical; to show by example, to pass it in on in life. You could read about fishing by reading a book, and looking at pictures, diagrams and maps, or someone can take you fishing. That's the kind of teaching Paul has in mind here.

I. What it Is...and isn't

Admonish is not a word we use a lot. Admonish means to direct someone's mind toward something that needs corrected. It contains the idea that something isn't right and it needs to be changed. This is where we have a hard time with it. We don't like to be corrected, and many of us don't like correcting others, and those that do, don't usually do it the right way or for the right reasons.

If we are to admonish one another in a godly way, we need to understand two things that admonishment is not.

1. First of all, admonishment is not criticism. We aren't trying to put anyone in their place. We don't admonish to tear down or rip apart. Our purpose is always to build up. Sometimes people will talk about constructive criticism. That's an oxymoron, contradiction in terms like jumbo shrimp or Microsoft works. A critical spirit is never constructive. A critical tone always tears down.

2. Secondly, to admonish is not gossip. In all of the one another passages in the New Testament, you will not find one that says talk about one another. Gossiping about someone is never for their good. It isn't done "in Christian love." The New Testament associates gossip with all manners of behavior that destroy the body such as anger, division, slander, arrogance, and disorder. Proverbs 16:28 tells us, "gossip separates close friends," and Prov. 20:19 says we should avoid those who talk too much.

Here are three things that admonishment should be. Most importantly, it is to be loving. We should never confront a brother or sister in Christ if we are not motivated by love for them. Secondly, to admonish is to confront. It is to go to someone and say this thing isn't right. This needs to change. Not that way, but this way. That brings me to the third thing that admonishing is. To admonish is to be willing to roll up your own sleeves and help your brother or sister get it right. It's willing to get dirty in someone else's mess. Admonishment is more than just saying, "Get your act together. Do the right thing." It is to say, "How can I help? Let me help shoulder the burden. I'll be here until you can make it."

II. Bringing Balance to the Body.

This one another principle provides important balance to the life of the Christian community. So far, we have seen calls to love one another, to live in harmony with one another, to accept one another. On their own, those statements may seem to suggest that we be willing to tolerate anything in the church, just to keep the peace. But does loving and accepting one another mean we just turn a blind eye when a brother or sister in Christ does something wrong. No, this one another principle shows that a part of loving each other, is also confronting each other when necessary.

It's hard to keep those two things in balance. It can be very easy in the name of love to become very tolerant of unbiblical teaching and ideas. It can be very easy in the name of acceptance to become lax in our moral standards, because we don't want to be judgmental. On the other hand, the church can easily go too far the other way. In the name of morality and righteousness we can burden people with all sorts of unbiblical, legalistic rules. In the name of truth, we can be very judgmental of those with differing opinions and personal convictions of

worship.

We need to learn to keep these things in proper balance. That's why we're told in Ephesians to speak the truth in love. That's what it is to teach and admonish one another- to speak the truth in love.

I also want you to notice whose responsibility this is. We are all to teach and admonish one another. This isn't just my job. It's not just the responsibility of the elders or Sunday School teachers. We are all called to teach and admonish one another. That doesn't mean we will all preach, or that we will all teach a Sunday School class or lead a small group, but we all have various ways that we can speak the truth in love to each other.

III. Three Keys to Teaching and Admonishing in Love

Now how are we supposed to do this? How can we teach and admonish one another in way that is actually constructive and loving? Our text gives us three keys to teaching and admonishing in love. Actually, if you look carefully, there are about five of them in our text, but we'll look at the three biggest one's this morning. If you ever get the impression that things in the Bible come in threes. Three keys to this, three principles for that. It's just because it's hard to fit more than three into a sermon. Plus, we preachers are kind of dumb. We can't count much higher than three and can't remember more than that anyway.

1. Prerequisite of Peace

The first key is the prerequisite of peace. Before you ever confront someone to admonish them, there is something that must be in place, and that is peace. Don't believe me? Try teaching or admonishing someone with whom you have a hostile relationship and see how for you get with that. You can only admonish someone in the context of a peaceful, loving fellowship. Look at verse 15 and what it says we should do, before we teach and admonish, *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."*

Admonishment only works when there is a loving relationship. How do you like it when someone tries to correct you, and you know they don't care diddly squat about you? Have you ever had a boss or a supervisor that was always nitpicking your work, and they didn't really care for you? How well did you receive their admonishment? Now how well do you think it will work in the church if there's someone in the church and our relationship with them is bitter, resentful and angry, and we try to admonish them.

The only people that I can do a good job taking correction from, are those that I know love and care for me deeply. Even then, because of my sinful nature, it can still be difficult.

Admonishment needs to come out of an atmosphere of peace and fellowship. It's not a way of winning an argument, of being proven right, or putting someone else in their place.

So before you ever admonish someone ask yourself, "Do I have fellowship with this person? Do I have a loving relationship with them? Have I let the peace of Christ rule in my heart with them? If you can't answer those questions with a certain "yes," then chances are your desire to admonish is coming from the wrong motive, and it won't be constructive. Instead of confronting your brother or sister, you have some other things to work on first. To teach and admonish in love you must have the prerequisite of peace.

2. Priority of the Word

The second key is the priority of the Word. Look what verse 16 says we have to do in order to teach and admonish one another, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*" Admonishing isn't about advancing our own agenda or forcing our own opinion on matters. It must come from the objective standard of God's word. Without God's word our admonishment quickly becomes very subjective and judgmental. It's not about what I think, what I feel, what I want. It's about what God wants and what God says. That's the only standard.

That's how we know when we just accept the other person or confront them. If it's a personal opinion, an individual preference, something that isn't directly taught in Scripture, then we must allow freedom, and accept one another in love. But if it's a clear violation of God's word. If it's a false doctrine or a sinful behavior, then the proper response is to teach and admonish.

Let me assure you that you do not need to have gone to Bible -College to be a Godly teacher in the Kingdom. Harry Ironside was a great pastor and teacher of the Word. He told of visiting with a sick and dying man in the hospital. Though quite weak, this man opened his worn Bible and began explaining the deep truths of God in a way that Ironside had never heard before.

Ironside was so moved by the man's words that he asked him, "Where did you get these things? Could you tell me where I could find a book that would open them up to me? Did you learn them in some seminary or college?"

The sickly man gave an answer that Harry Ironside would never forget, "My dear young man, I learned these things on my knees on the mud floor of a little sod cottage in the north of Ireland. There with my open Bible before me I used to kneel for hours at a time and ask the Spirit of God to reveal Christ to my soul and to open the Word to my heart. He taught me more on my knees on that mud floor than I ever could have learned in all the seminaries or colleges in

the world.”

The word Paul uses for “dwell” here means to feel at home, or to be at home. Is God's Word at home in your life? Is Scripture a resident in your heart, or is it a stranger? Would you have to clean up and invite it over as a guest? In order to ever teach and admonish in love, God's word has to have priority in our lives. It's the only measure, the only standard we can use.

3. The Privilege of Praise

The third key to teaching and admonishing in love might come as a bit of a surprise, and it is the privilege of praise. One of the main ways that any of us, that all of us can play a role in teaching and admonishing one another is to, *“sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”* We don't usually associate music and singing with teaching, but Paul says that our corporate worship has an incredible impact on the fellowship of believers.

Normally, when we sing in church, we see all of our singing as being directed toward God. These ideas are seen in the words we use like praise and worship. We are praising God. We are worshipping God. God certainly is the primary audience when we sing, but he is not the only audience. We also sing for each other. By singing you are helping your brothers and sisters in Christ. You don't have to teach a class, offer a meditation, or preach a sermon to speak the truth to others. All you have to do is sing in church. Paul says in Ephesians 5:19, “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

We should not underestimate the power of corporate worship to motivate, encourage and inspire people to godliness. Music and song have incredible power. Jim Serian, a worship minister, tells of the time when the women's ministry in his church wanted to announce a new project they had undertaken for the church.

When the President of the Women's Ministry came up to announce a new project, all the members of the group were to literally march up from so the congregation could see the earnestness of their endeavor.

Since he was the worship minister, Jim felt it would be appropriate if he played some marching music as the ladies marched down the center aisle. He started playing the children's chorus “The Lord's Army.” He sang the words in his mind as he played. However, instead of being inspired to march with enthusiasm, the ladies were very hurt and offended.

Instead of hearing the stirring words of the children's worship song, they instead heard the original words that went with the tune, “The old gray mare ain't what she used to be, ain't what she used to be, ain't what she used to be.” Jim was so flustered, he fled the auditorium.

Music has the power to touch us deeply. My life has been changed by the right song at the right time. I think of singing Amazing Grace a cappella with 50,000 men at a Promise Keepers rally. I think of hearing U2 close out their concert with Psalm 40. I think of a time I was very discouraged in the ministry when I was serving in Kansas, and I was unsure if I wanted to continue in the ministry. Then I heard Rich Mullins sing these lines:

*Well the moon moved past Nebraska
And spilled laughter on them cold Dakota Hills
And angels danced on Jacob's stairs
Yeah, they danced on Jacob's stairs
There is this silence in the Badlands
And over Kansas the whole universe was stilled
By the whisper of a prayer
The whisper of a prayer*

*And the single hawk bursts into flight
And in the east the whole horizon is in flames
I feel thunder in the sky
I see the sky about to rain
And I hear the prairies calling out Your name*

Suddenly, I was just impacted with the reality that God was in control. Right where I was, it was all in his hands. Tears flowed down my eyes, my heart melted, and I found the courage to continue because of a song. I've had entire bad weeks turned around, just because God used Wes and Kim and Tim to sing just the right song on Sunday morning.

How about you? How has God used music to change your life? This is one of the reasons why when we come to church we need to sing and worship with all of hearts. First of all, because God deserves your best. He is worthy you coming and giving it all. Secondly, you need to sing with all your heart, because all your brothers and sisters in Christ need it. We need it because of all the crud in our lives we've had in the last week. We need it because we've got difficult decisions to make. We need it because we're hurting on the inside. We need it because we're struggling with sin.

Church is not a spectator sport. It's not a concert. Our worship leaders aren't just on the stage. All of you are worship leaders. Those of you that come and sing with passion aren't just praising God, you are lifting up your brother and sister in Christ. You are blessing and ministering to the church. Worship isn't just vertical. It's horizontal.

When you stand there with your mouth closed, or just half-heartedly mumble the words, not

only are you dishonoring God and depriving yourself of fully encountering him, but you could actually be hurting your brother or sister in Christ. There are people here each and every week that spiritually, emotionally, mentally need to hear full-throated, full-hearted praise and worship of God. When you sing with all of your heart you are making yourself a vehicle for God to use to touch other people's lives. Let God work through you.

We need each other. I need you. You need me. We all need each other. I can't be all that God wants me to be without my brothers and sisters in Christ. We can be together what we never could be apart.

Eccl. 4:9-12 says,

*Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their work:
If one falls down,
his friend can help him up.
But pity the man who falls
and has no one to help him up!
Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

Thousands of years ago, Cain asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper." Throughout the New Testament, the one another passages answer with a resounding "yes." I am my brother's keeper. I am my sister's keeper.