



Abundant Living Ministries

Encouraging Christian Living since 1978

May 2023

I've been writing about some "one-another" instructions in scripture. In my March letter, I listed a number of "pleasant" one-anothers... *Carry each other's burdens; Encourage one another; Serve one another in love; Be kind and compassionate*, etc...

Last month, I shifted to more-challenging one-another scriptures... *Don't grumble against each other; Teach and admonish one another; Spur one another on to good works*. And then I listed a challenging set: *Reprove, Exhort, Rebuke*.

Ouch - It doesn't seem very appealing to be on the receiving end of a rebuke... Does anybody really enjoy that?

Actually, I'm not certain a rebuke or reproof is designed to feel pleasant although it will hopefully have significant benefit. After all, if rebuke is instructed in scripture, there will be positive result when properly given.

So I ask, "What might a properly-administered rebuke look like?" As printed in my last letter, we learn in 2 Timothy 4 that we should "reprove, rebuke, and exhort *with complete patience and teaching*." That seems to soften the tone of a rebuke. But I also read in Titus 2 that we should "exhort and rebuke *with all authority*." And in 1 Timothy 5, we are told that "those who persist in sin should be *rebuked in the presence of all*." (That sound embarrassing!)

Giving AND receiving a rebuke sounds like a challenging assignment! In our current culture, it seems we have developed "thin skin" and are not very receptive to spiritual correction from a fellow believer. Is it possibly because, in our current culture, we are inclined to think that "my truth" or my opinion is just as valid as anybody else's? Is it possible that, even among believers, we are rejecting the idea of *absolute truth*? Are we failing to recognize that MY opinions, MY values, even MY CONSCIENCE mean nothing if in contradiction to HIS truth... The ABSOLUTE truth?

I recognize more and more that God's ways are ALWAYS the best! His instructions are ALWAYS for our benefit... here on earth and in preparation for eternity.

Should I not be grateful for a brother who, if he sees me persisting in sin, loves me enough to patiently but boldly exhort and/or rebuke me? I should only love him for it. In fact, it is explained in Proverb 9:8 that we should not bother reproving a scoffer... He will only hate me for it; but a wise man will love the one who reprooves him.

May we learn to lovingly, humbly, and boldly give and receive helpful reproof and rebuke.

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)

Open Arms Childbirth Class

Four Thursday evenings

June 29, July 13, 20, and 27, 2023

Class begins at 7:00 pm

Covering the important information offered in a hospital course, *Open Arms* adds a distinctively-Christian perspective.

You will enjoy meeting other expectant couples as you prepare for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course.

Register by contacting the ALM office.



From Me to Thee

Question: My teenager recently complained angrily, "I wish we lived in a bigger house! And I don't know why I can't have a horse and take riding lessons!" This, in spite of the fact that we live in a lovely home on several beautifully-landscaped acres. Our daughter has her own phone, TV, personal computer, and what seems, to me, to be a gigantic wardrobe. Any suggestions for helping my child be less "me-centered?"

Response: Instead of caving in to your daughter's demands, how about suggesting she participate in a missions trip? That is a great way to help young people get the focus off themselves and onto serving others. Your child may very well return, a different person... a young adult with a passion for the lost and the suffering of the world.

Sadly, many Christian families are so trapped by their hectic schedules and financial concerns, they have little global vision. They expect the world to revolve around themselves. **Deciding to make Christian missions a priority, is one big step in moving our families from SELF-centeredness to OTHERS-focused!**



Consider some of the common excuses for not getting involved in missions:

We can't afford to support missionaries financially. Then pray for them! And write letters of encouragement to them! (Colossians 1:9 & 10)

We're too busy! Ask yourself, "Who led me to Christ? And who led that person to the Lord, and who led that one?" Ultimately you will discover that you are a Christian today because someone took the message of Jesus beyond their own community. Too busy? Take a hatchet to your schedule and make the time for missions (Acts 26:19 & 20).

Reaching the world just seems like an unrealistic and unattainable goal. Remember that nothing is impossi-

ble with God (Luke 1:37)! Just begin with one small, practical step... any progress is better than none!

Passport to Personal Involvement:

- Ask your pastor to suggest a missionary family that would appreciate your financial support. Start giving regularly to them.
- Offer to host a missionary speaker in your home the next time he/she visits your church.
- Agree as a family to sacrifice something you were all wanting and instead give to a missionary cause.
- Post pictures of missionaries on the refrigerator. Better yet, use the pictures as screen savers on your electronic devices. Take turns praying for them at mealtimes.
- Choose twelve missionaries or mission organizations... one for each month of the year. During the month, write a letter to that family or ministry. Encourage your children to write personally to missionary kids.
- Read missionary newsletters to your family. Circle prayer requests and post the letters on a bulletin board.
- Read good missionary biographies aloud to the family... e.g. David Livingston, Mary Slessor, Adoniram Judson, Amy Carmichael.
- Use your family vacation for a short-term missions trip. Or take a Saturday to volunteer at an inner-city shelter or "soup kitchen" for the homeless. Describing poverty to your children is one thing... but seeing it for themselves will help them develop true compassion for others.

God's call for Christian families is to "make disciples, going *into all the world*." As C.S. Lewis said, "We may be content to remain what we call 'ordinary people' but God is determined to carry out a quite different plan. To shrink back from His plan is not humility; it is laziness and cowardice. To submit to it is ... obedience."

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