



# Light from the Word

## Walking in Submission to Correction

*“He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.”<sup>1</sup>*

When done biblically, submission to correction is one of the sincerest proofs of our love for our brother or sister. It is one of the ways God demonstrates His love for us, *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”<sup>2</sup>* He does this that we might be more fruitful in this life<sup>3</sup> and that we receive the gift of eternal life in the end: *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”<sup>4</sup>* Likewise, we ought to love our brother or sister enough to give and receive correction, *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”<sup>5</sup>*

Correction can come in the form of advice, warning, admonition, or even a mild rebuke. However, the goal of correction must always be spiritual restoration. When done according to the scriptures, both parties will benefit from giving and receiving correction. Chastening will likely feel somewhat uncomfortable for all concerned, but it is for our benefit. *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”<sup>6</sup>* Submitting to correction requires a truly humble attitude, much grace, and a Christ-like love one for another, *“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”<sup>7</sup>*

Since correction can create a potentially sensitive situation, effective communication is vital. The prophet Isaiah instructs us how God gives us both our tongue and our ears to speak and to hear as one

who is “learned” (taught or disciplined). *“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.”<sup>8</sup>*

For correction to be successful, one must never be judgmental or give it in anger or harshness: *“O LORD, correct me, but with judgment (fairness and justice); not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”<sup>9</sup>* Sharing our concerns with others indiscriminately or spreading gossip will poison the biblical process of correction: *“Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another.”<sup>10</sup>* *“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”<sup>10</sup>* Correction done anonymously, with a note for example, is ineffective and unscriptural. Doing so removes the potential for apologizing or offering an explanation—and it eliminates accountability on the part of the one attempting the correction. When we are aware of our duty and purposely avoid it, we could be guilty of the sin of omission, *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”<sup>11</sup>*

Before offering advice or correction to our brother or sister, we should examine our own motives and assumptions carefully and sincerely.<sup>12</sup> We can easily misunderstand the true nature of a situation. For example, the Jews criticized Peter after he preached to Cornelius, the Roman centurion. Peter patiently rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and the Jews realized their presumption and acknowledged, *“God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”<sup>13</sup>* In another instance, Joseph and Mary became very anxious when they missed Jesus after leaving Jerusalem. In her haste, Mary

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admonished Jesus when they finally found Him in the temple, “and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.<sup>14</sup>” Jesus reminded them whose Son He really was, “How is it that ye sought me? wist (knew) ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?<sup>15</sup>” Jesus subjected Himself to Joseph and Mary, even though He knew they did not fully understand His words. As a result, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.<sup>16</sup>”

When we receive correction, humility and submission on our part is necessary in order for it to be effective. The Biblical instruction is clear: “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth

the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.<sup>17</sup>” If the matter seems inconsequential to us, or even a little foolish, we do well to consider the danger of self-deception. “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.<sup>18</sup>” Receiving correction can be difficult, especially if we were not aware of our error. We must be honest with ourselves and willing to do a humble self-examination, “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.<sup>19</sup>”

Justifying our actions based on comparison to others is unwise and dangerous, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.<sup>20</sup>” Popular opinion or numbers alone do not determine what is right, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.<sup>21</sup>” The Holy Scriptures

remain our sole source of truth: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.<sup>22</sup>”

(Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 15:32

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 12:6

<sup>3</sup> John 15:2

<sup>4</sup> Rev. 21:7

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 4:11

<sup>6</sup> Heb. 12:11

<sup>7</sup> Lev. 19:17-18

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 50:4-5

<sup>9</sup> Jer. 10:24

<sup>10</sup> Prov. 25:9, 18:8

<sup>11</sup> James 4:17

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 18:15-17

<sup>13</sup> Acts 11:18

<sup>14</sup> Luke 2:48

<sup>15</sup> Luke 2:49

<sup>16</sup> Luke 2:52

<sup>17</sup> 1 Pet. 5:5

<sup>18</sup> 1 Cor. 3:18

<sup>19</sup> Lam. 3:40

<sup>20</sup> 2 Cor. 10:12

<sup>21</sup> Exod. 23:2

<sup>22</sup> 2 Tim. 3:16-17

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate...”

1 Timothy 6:17, 18