

# "Earn the Right to Be Heard"

By Allan Pole



Theme: Love offers gracious words of correction.

Text: Colossians 3:16

Here's a thought: Someone who gives you permission to share your impressions and concerns is a much more receptive listener than the person you face in a "showdown".

These errors come from church bulletins:

To those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

The Reverend Merriweather spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience.

Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our church and community.

The eighth graders will be presenting Shakespeare's Hamlet in the church basement on Friday at 7:00 p.m. The congregation is invited to attend this tragedy.

During the absence of our pastor we enjoyed the rare privilege of hearing a good sermon when J.F. Scubbs supplied our pulpit.

The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind, and they can be seen in the church basement Friday afternoon.

This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. White to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

Don't let worry kill you off. Let the church help.

All of these mistakes would have been avoided if someone would have proofread and corrected the bulletins before they were printed.

Correction is mentioned in Colossians 3:16 as a part of godly relationships:  
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. NIV

The words "admonish, reprove, rebuke, and exhort" are used over 100 times in the Bible. Followers of Jesus are called upon to confront! However, you must earn the right to be heard.

Your credibility to speak out hinges upon your:

## **Soul**



If you want to be used by the Lord to bring change to others, let the change begin with you. In Matthew 7:3-5 Jesus asks:

3 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. NIV

Some interpret Jesus to say here that you ought not to remove the speck from your brother's eye, that you ought not to say anything to someone who sins and you ought to mind your own business. Jesus did not say that. He reminded you to check your own soul first and to see what is happening there before you look at correcting another.

Before you address the problem in another person ask yourself, "Is this a problem that I have in my own life?"

Rather than allowing the word to dwell in them abundantly or richly, many unfortunately have the word dwelling in them poorly; it has no power over them. Your soul prospers when you are full of the Scriptures and of the grace of Christ.

One day a fine teacher was telling her young class the story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha. She carefully explained how Mary and Martha had hurried

to clean the house and cook a special meal. Then she paused and asked, "What would you do if Jesus were going to visit your house today?"

One little girl quickly responded, "I'd put the Bible on the table!"

Are the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit welcome in your soul? Are you reading, studying, memorizing and meditating upon His Word? Are you allowing God and His Word to shape the way you think, speak and act? Who has more influence on you - the word of Christ or the Internet, television, radio, family and friends?

Your credibility to speak out hinges upon your:  
Soul

## **Mouth**



Your mouth was given to you by God as a powerful vehicle to voice your praises to Him. Let wisdom, singing praises to God and an attitude of gratitude dominate your words. Let your mouth be filled with psalms (Scripture songs), hymns (musical compositions written by Christians to exalt the Lord) and spiritual songs (melodies and words given to you by the Holy Spirit).

In Luke 6:43-45 Jesus explains:

43 No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. 45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. NIV

As your soul draws close to God, He will speak through you. The power of healing and encouraging words can change lives. Such words are free from jealousy or ambition, words that convey the message "I believe in you." Confrontation is also a form of encouragement. When you correct another person properly you can help them become stronger.

Some people seem to have the gift of criticism. If you are known as a person who has a bad attitude or who complains a lot, you will lack credibility when you must speak out on an issue.

What characterizes your speech? Are you known as one who builds up or tears down? Listen to yourself this week - do you aim to bring out the best in people or do you have a knack for stirring up the worst in them?

Your credibility to speak out hinges upon your:

Soul

Mouth

**Stand**



I am concerned about the North American church and the people within. We have grown too tolerant of sin and ignorant of what hills the Bible calls us to defend vigorously in the moral battle around us. It takes a strong knowledge of God, His Word and our culture to discern where the lines should be drawn.

Peter Drucker, internationally known author and business consultant, predicted churches will be strong when they:

- 1) Emphasize what they really believe
- 2) Do not apologize
- 3) Give people a choice, and
- 4) Expect people to change.

I fear that we have erected unnecessary barriers for our rapidly changing culture in Canada, taking a stand on issues that are of little consequence. As a result, we have turned people off to our faith when we have only propagated our own tastes and preferences.

How many church fights have erupted across our continent over the colour of the carpet in the sanctuary?

A person who likes to correct others on matters that don't really matter has an ego problem. This person feels better about himself when he can correct someone else.

Choose your battles wisely. If it is consequential, deal with it. If it is not, let it go. When the Bible is clear on an issue, a stand should be taken. Such an occasion is an opportunity to teach and admonish.

To admonish is to warn, to instruct or to discipline in some cases. The same word is translated as "warn" in 1 Thessalonians 5:14:

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. NIV

Truth and love are intertwined in Jesus' teaching. We need to rid ourselves of misconceptions about truth and love. One misconception is that truth is hard and love is soft. Love does not shrink from the truth, smooth over injustice, or compromise with oppression. Another misconception to shed is that love means being polite or nice. Real love involves a deeper commitment to reach out to reconcile and restore. To speak the truth in love is to leave the one you admonish some space, some room for change.

Confrontation is one of the most difficult elements of relationships. It is a scary proposition because the outcome depends largely on the will of the one confronted. Yet it's essential if you and those you care about are to realize their fullest potential. Consider these tips for admonishing:

Avoid avoidance. Ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away rarely, if ever, works. We avoid confrontation because we fear being seen as the "bad guy."

Focus on prevention. Confronting "minor" attitudes and behaviours before they become crises will help people keep on track spiritually and prevent later disasters.

Ask permission. Someone who gives you permission to share your impressions and concerns is a much more receptive listener than the person you face in a "showdown".

Build on strengths. Show people where they're doing well and are on target, as well as pointing out areas that need work. Otherwise, they'll become discouraged, thinking you see only the negatives.

Instill hope. Take a long look at the bright future Jesus Christ has for people. You'll have less trouble pointing out the obstacles that stand in their way, and then you can help them to move toward that future.

The difference between a pat on the back and a kick in the pants is only nineteen inches.

Wrap truth in mercy. Your motive for correcting people must not be that you're disgusted that they've gone astray, but that you see the good things that can happen if they get back on track.

Fruitful confrontation requires gentleness and humility. It will never be easy, but if you develop the skills and courage to do it well, you will see people's lives

transformed. You are on the right track when you admonish if your goal is to gain a better understanding, a positive change and a growing relationship.

Former automobile executive, Lee Iacocca, wrote of the man who changed his life:

Charlie Beachem could be a tough boss when he thought the situation called for it. At a dinner celebrating my election to the Presidency of Ford in 1970 I finally got up the nerve to tell Charlie publicly what I thought of him. "There will never be another Charlie Beachem," I said. "He has a special niche in my heart, and sometimes I think he was carving it out by hand. He was not only a mentor, he was more than that. He was my tormentor, but I love him."

I love my wife, Brenda, and I know she loves me. Brenda is my biggest fan - she encourages me and believes in me. Brenda is also my sharpest critic. She tells me when I am out to lunch and when I need to adjust my ways. Her encouragement and criticism have made me a better person and have made our home a better place to be.

A ship was travelling across the Mediterranean, and one of the passengers cut a hole through the side of the ship. The sailors came and demanded to know what he was doing.

"What difference does it make to you?" he asked. "The hole's under my own bunk!"

How open are you to correction? Are you in the process of sorting out what issues are worth confronting? Are you giving yourself to helping people grow and change?

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Love offers gracious words of correction.

