

Flint Hills Bible Church
Biblical Soul Care Sunday School
Responding to Reproof Chapter 7—Resolving Conflict

Objectives:

1. To love reproof and to understand the necessity of reproof in our sanctification.
2. To love the one who reproves/rebukes and hold up as vital the ministry of reproof, correcting and instructing in righteousness.

Reflection Questions:

- A. What comes to your mind when you think of a brother or sister who speaks correction or reproof into your life?
- B. How do you tend to react to reproof?
- C. Do you love and appreciate (even thank) your reprovers? Or view them with contempt or scorn?
- D. What do the Scriptures call the one who embraces and loves rebuke?

What about the one who rejects reproof/correction?

- E. How highly do you value the ministry of reproof in your life?

Introduction: Laodicean church in Revelation 3:15-19

¹⁵ I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. ¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

The Lukewarm church had deceived itself into believing that it was rich when, in fact, it was poor. It had grown self-sufficient (“I...have need of nothing,” it said). It was in need of being convinced and convicted of its sin because it did not know that it was “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”

The Laodicean Church did not realize either the extent to which it was sinning or the degree to which it needed to change. As sinful men and women, we do not always realize the extent to which we are sinning. Neither do we always realize the extent to which we must change. So God sends others to help us comprehend these things. p170

3 Sinful/foolish Responses to Reproof:

1. Spurn reproof

Proverbs 1:30 *They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof.*

“many foolish individuals not only despise reproof, they also despise the reproof.”
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Proverbs 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Proverbs 15:12 *A scoffer does not like to be reproofed; he will not go to the wise.*

2. Forsake reproof

Proverbs 10:17 *Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.*

The general attitude of someone who has forsaken reproof is typically that of prideful rejection: “I don’t want to have anything to do with being corrected anymore.”

3. Hates reproof

Proverbs 15:10— *There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.*

Proverbs 12:1—“*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.*”

Six Unbiblical but all-to-common Approaches to Reproof

1. Assuming that, since your reprovee has his own personal deficiencies, God will not use him to point out your deficiencies.

Examples: Isaiah 9 and 10; 1 Kings 13

You may not use character flaws in your reprovee's life as an excuse for despising, rejecting, or hating reproof. p174

2. Thinking that if your reprovee has a poor attitude when he reproves you, you don't have to listen.

Example: 2 Samuel 16:5-8

You must learn to look beyond the reprovee's attitude and determine from Scripture whether the reproof is legitimate. The basic issue is that God may be sovereignly using the rebuke (poor attitude notwithstanding) to drive you back to His Word.

3. Viewing the reproof as too small a concern. Some of the most intense conflicts occur over the most seemingly inconsequential matters.

God is concerned with how we handle the little things: *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is the least is unjust also in much"* (Luke 16:10). Therefore you should consider not the smallness of the offense but its sinfulness. If what you are being reproved for is a transgression of God's law, regardless of how small it is, the reproof is valid. You cannot rightly overlook it on the basis of relative insignificance. p176

4. Failing to focus on the attitude to which your reprovee is reacting.

For all of Job's critical analysis of what the Lord was doing to him, he failed to see (as Elihu ultimately explained) that his self-justifying attitude was the real problem.

Job 32:1-2 ¹So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. ² Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, burned with anger. He burned with anger at Job because he justified himself rather than God.

When a wise person is reproved for things he has said or done, he will examine his life and will look beyond the surface problem to determine whether there are underlying habit patterns or attitudes that ought to be replaced with biblical ones. Sadly, this concept is perhaps practiced least often in the home, between husband and wife and between parent and child. p177

5. Justifying (excusing) your behavior. One of the most important tasks as a biblical counselor is to identify and correct the many excuses that counselees offer to justify their irresponsible, unbiblical behavior. Can you name some common excuses and then identify an appropriate remedial comeback? What kind of excuses do you use when people attempt to convict you of sin? Perhaps there were extenuating circumstances, perhaps you had a “logical reason” for your sin, perhaps someone provoked you, but your reprover will likely not be interested in understanding these things until after you’ve acknowledged your own culpability. These “reasons” will be seen as “excuses” until you fully take the hit for your sin.

6. Resorting to an instinctive act of revenge.

Some of the most common retaliatory responses to being reproved: p180

- Pouting (allowing your hurt feelings to prevent you from responding properly)
- Giving your reprove “the silent treatment”
- Reminding your reprover that he is not perfect either
- Blame-shifting (blaming your reprove for provoking you into a sinful response)
- Blowing up (yelling, screaming, stomping, and so on)
- Threatening (blackmailing your reprover into “dropping the charges” by means of fear and intimidation)
- Throwing a temper tantrum
- Other _____

Righteous Responses to Reproof

1. Turn (repent) at reproof.

Psalm 141:5 Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him reprove me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it.

2. Regard reproof.

Proverbs 13:18 Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored.

3. Listening to (hearing).

Proverbs 15:31 He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof is listening to (or hearing). He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.

Hearing reproof involves not only attending to what is being said but also intending to obey or heed what is being said. Here are some suggestions to improve your hearing:

a. Thank God. 1 Thess. 5:18 *In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

b. Ask yourself, “*What is my reprovener really saying to me?*” This is the biblical alternative to sinful response number four. *Rebuke is more effective for a wise man than a hundred blows to a fool* (Proverbs 17:10).

c. Thank your reprovener for his reproof (or at least for his willingness to reprove you).

Prov. 9:8 Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.

Proverbs 25:12 Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuke to an obedient ear.

d. *Ask yourself, “What message might God be trying to get through to me?”* If your focus is on the attitude of the one who reproves you, you may miss any truth that is apparent in the reproof. If you prayerfully look beyond your reprovener’s bad attitude and ask God to show you from Scripture whether or not the reproof is valid, you may walk away with new insight into how you can become more Christ like.

Lamentations 3:37 Who is he who speaks, and it comes to pass, when the Lord has not commanded it?

e. *If the reproof is legitimate, take steps to correct the problem.* At this point, your responsibility is to implement whatever scriptural solutions are necessary to bring about biblical change.

James 1:22 Having heard it, you must become a “doer of the Word”.

Ephesians 4:22-24 You must also make it your goal (through the enabling of the Holy Spirit) to practice the right that you have not done, so that doing right becomes “second nature” for you.

f. If you have sinned against someone, seek his forgiveness.

g. If you are convinced from Scripture that you have not sinned as the reproof has claimed, wait until your reprovener knows that you have spent some time thinking it through, then consider explaining your viewpoint to him in a reasonable fashion.

Summary: Now that you have some guiding principles for receiving reproof, what will you do with them? Could it be that, by virtue of reading this, you have been convicted of not

following these precepts in your dealings with others? If so, do not act like the proverbial fool whose chief characteristic is to not listen to instruction.

Rather, make a commitment to prayerfully change your habitual miscommunication skills by practicing these biblical communication skills until you are able to speak them fluently. And, if you are not sure how to evaluate yourself, why not ask those who are closest to you to help you to evaluate how you typically respond to correction or reproof? Ask them if you are more like the wise person who welcomes it or like the fool who despises it. Consider asking them to review this chapter with you in order to help you understand exactly where you do and do not respond biblically when reproofed. p187