

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry 3: Moving Into a Ministry Lifestyle
Week 4 – Loving One Another: Encouragement & Admonition

Introduction

One key area of ministry uniformity (see Week #3) is loving one another.

(Jn. 13:34,35) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

In the epistles, the apostles explain practically what this looks like in the context of Christian community in a series of **“one another” commands**. You can see several of these in Paul’s letter to the Roman Christians:

- 12:10
- 12:16
- 14:19
- 15:7

In this class, we will consider two of the most important “one another” commands—encourage one another and admonish one another. These are key parts of the “nuts and bolts” of being a good home group worker.

Encouragement and Admonition

(1 Thess. 5:14*) And we urge you, brethren, *admonish* the unruly, *encourage* the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.

These two “one another’s” recognize two key needs of all Christians, and each seeks to meet those needs by communicating a key portion of God's truth in love (Eph. 4:15).

	Our Problem	God's Remedy	Definition
ENCOURAGEMENT	We are weak and live in a broken and hostile world	Strengthens us by communicating God's promises from the Bible.	Communication of God's truth in love in ways that strengthen us to go on following God's will.
ADMONITION	We are sinful and prone to self-deception, and live in a world designed to seduce us from God.	Corrects us by communicating God's imperatives/commands.	Moral correction through verbal confrontation which is motivated by love.

Encourage one another

Parakaleo comes from the root *kaleo* ("to call") and the preposition *para* ("around"). Thus, the word means "to call alongside, i.e., to give aid. In the New Testament, it is also translated "appeal," "exhort," "console," "comfort," "help(er)," "entreat," "urge."

Four Types of Encouragement:

1. *Expressing belief in one's position and potential in Christ.*

Affirmation of position:

(1 Cor. 1:2-9) . . . to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who shall also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Affirmation of potential:

John 1:42. When Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

2. *Recognizing significant steps of faith.*

(1 Thes. 1:2-8) 2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, 4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; 5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. 6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.

How is this different from flattery or manipulation?

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3. *Communicating God's faithfulness to the fallen and hurting.*

(Gal. 6:2) Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

(1 Thess. 4:14,18) - For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus . . . Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Do you tend to simply give truth without expressing empathy or do you tend to empathize, but never get around to reminding people of what God says (indicatives)? Identify your tendency and correct for it.

4. *Exhorting Christians to go on following Christ despite fear and pain.*

(Heb. 12:1,11-13) Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us . . . All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. **12** Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

(Gal. 6:9,10) And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. **10** So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

(1 Peter 5:9,10) But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. **10** And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

How to Become an Effective Encourager

- *Be willing to receive encouragement.*

Qualification: Those who are quick to demand that others make them feel loved should not abuse this principle.

- *Take creative initiative.*

(Heb. 10:24,25*) Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **25** not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Edification goals for home group:

With spouse/close friends/disciples:

- *Become a good listener.*

(James 1:19) This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger . . .

- *Use God's Word.*

(Rom. 15:4) For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

(Titus 1:9) holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Qualification: This does not mean that we just quote scripture.

- *Practice, practice, practice!!!*

Resist these three common lies:

- "He will get a big head."
- "I still see some problems, so I'll wait until he gets it all right."
- "Since it doesn't feel natural, it is inauthentic. I'll wait until it feels natural."

Joseph from Cyprus became so effective at encouraging others that he acquired the nickname Barnabas – “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). Ask God to help you acquire the same reputation for the sake of his church!

Admonish one another

The most common Greek word for admonition, *noutheteo*, from the noun "mind" (*nous*) and the verb "put"/"place" (*tithemi*) means "to place upon the mind." This word and its synonyms are also translated "instruct," "convict," "correct," "reprove," "warn," "refute," "expose," and "rebuke."

All Christians—not just the leadership—can admonish one another, because all Christians have access to the needed spiritual resources through Christ.

(Rom. 15:14*) And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.

- "Goodness"
- "Knowledge"

Why Admonition Is Unpopular

- *Cultural Pressure:*
- *Past Experience:*
- *Temperamental Weakness:*

Receiving Admonition

- *Value friends who care enough to reprove you!* It is not possible to mature deeply without receiving admonition! Solomon makes this point over and over to those who want to be wise and spiritually successful.

(Prov 10:17) - He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who forsakes reproof goes astray.

(Prov 12:1) - Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.

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

(Prov 15:5) - A fool rejects his father's discipline, but he who regards reproof is prudent.

(Prov 15:32,33) - He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor comes humility.

(Prov 17:10) - A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.

(Prov 27:5,6) - Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

(Prov 29:1) - A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

(Eccles. 7:5) - It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools.

In healthy close Christian relationships, there is *mutual* freedom and openness in this area. Consider the following questions as you review your own Christian friendships:

- *Do they know they have the "green light" to admonish you?*
- *Do they feel the freedom to raise questions about issues that are not black and white?*
- *Do they feel the freedom to lovingly kid you about your weak areas and besetting sins?*

- *Be suspicious of fleshly defensiveness on your part.* We should be willing to receive and profit from correction that comes to us in imperfect ways through fallen people. If you are only willing to receive correction directly from God (via Word, personal conviction), you will miss out on much sanctification.
- *Focus on the content of the admonition.* Specifically, you should ask yourself two questions: "Do I recognize this action or attitude in my life?" and "Does the Bible speak of it as wrong?"

Giving Admonition

1. *People are more receptive to admonition from one who is generally encouraging.*

Qualification: This principle should not prevent us from admonishing people whom we don't know well and/or haven't been encouraging recently.

2. *It requires wisdom and discernment.* Because of the complexity of human situations, it is impossible to prescribe a formula for when admonition is appropriate. Before admonishing someone, it is important to *prayerfully* ask ourselves questions like these:

- *Are you honestly committed to seeking his/her good (Matt. 18:12-15)?*
- *Does the Bible clearly describe this issue as sin?*

- *Do you know for a fact that the person did what you think or is it hearsay?*
- *Do you tend to be overly critical or overly soft in your dealings with others?*

Caution: We should be especially careful about judging motives of others when their actions are not clearly wrong (1 Cor. 4:5).

- *Is the person already aware of this issue and working on it?*
- *How serious is the issue?*
- *What is his/her role in the church?*

Consider asking the advice of other experienced Christian workers.

3. *It should normally begin one-on-one and in private (Matt. 18:15).*

Qualification: Public offenses should normally be corrected publicly.

4. *It should be specific and direct.*

5. *It should appeal to scripture.*

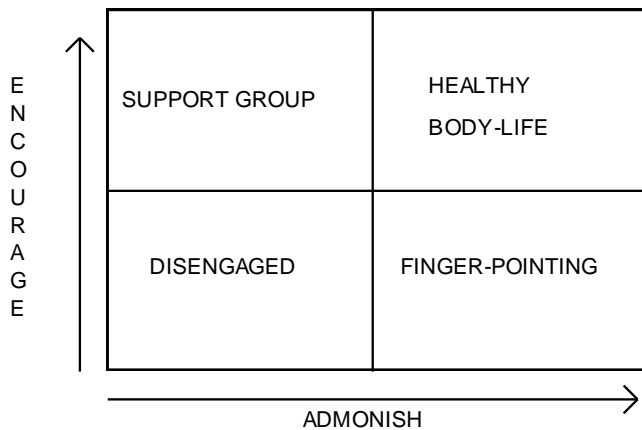
6. *Be patient rather than insisting on immediate response.*

7. *It should be practical and constructive when possible (Gal. 6:2).*

Qualification: There are times when we must address issues without having any constructive practical help to offer.

Assessing Relationships & Groups (OPTIONAL)

Now that we've studied encouragement and admonition, consider some of your key Christian relationships in light of these two ways of "one another's." Where would they fall in the chart below? What can *you* do to improve them?



"DISENGAGED"

"FINGER-POINTING"

"SUPPORT GROUP"

HEALTHY BODY-LIFE

NOTE: In serious situations you can "go over the head" of your leaders. Every home group has a staff consultant that can be approached for advice if there is not resolution on the home group level. We also have a Grievance Board if needed.

Memory Verses

Rom. 15:14* - All Christians have the responsibility to admonish one another. Goodness (love) and (biblical) knowledge are the two keys to effective admonition.

1 Thess. 5:14* - All Christians should practice encouragement and admonition as appropriate.

Heb. 10:24,25* - Effective encouragement requires prayerful forethought. We should come together with other Christians willing and ready to encourage them.

Assignment

EVANGELISM PASSAGES: Provide a one or two sentence description of the key meaning of each of these verses as they apply to evangelism: 1 Cor. 3:6,7; John 12:32,16:8; Col. 4:2-4; Luke 15:3-10; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:11,18-20