

## Doctrine of Correction

### Lessons to Learn from Correcting Others

1. One word used for “correct” in the Old Testament is “yacar (yaw-sar’). It means to chastise, literally (with blows) or figuratively (with words); hence. to instruct.
2. It is not intrinsically wrong to correct someone, especially a child in the family.
  - *Proverbs 29:17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*
3. Individuals will avoid submitting themselves for criticism, even when they know they are wrong. This reflective flight from accountability is as old as Adam and Eve.
  - *Genesis 3:9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*
4. When a person is corrected, a negative reaction should be anticipated.
  - Shock. Most people believe they are right in what they say or do, which is why they move forward. *Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*
  - Shame. There is shame in being corrected, and the loss of personal dignity and glory. *Psalms 39:11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.*
  - Anger and Depression. Cain was angry with the Lord after being rebuked. *Genesis 4:5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.* When a person expects praise and is met with censure, it leads to depression, which is anger turned inward, or outward.
  - Pushback. This usually comes in the form of an emotional defense followed by pointing out flaws in the other person. When the church of Corinth received Paul’s pastoral letter, they were incensed and spoke viciously against him.
  - Retaliation. People who think they have been hurt try to hurt someone else. Money is the first form of retaliation, if any is involved, followed by silence, and the severing of the relationship.
5. If God is gracious, and the Holy Spirit is working in the life of a person, their own transgression will bring conviction of wrongdoing and correction.

- *Jeremiah 2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.*
6. The heart of a righteous person longs for the Lord to correct them.
- *Jeremiah 10:24 O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*
7. The Lord has promised to correct His elect people.
- *Jeremiah 30:11 For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.*
  - *Jeremiah 46:28 Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.*
8. What offends us may not offend others, or even the Lord. Care must be taken not to extrapolate one's own preferences onto others, and speak for them when they have not spoken.
9. When correcting someone, several considerations should be involved in the process.
- **Timing.** There is a proper time to do everything in life. *Ecclesiastes 3:1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.*

***Special Note.***

Abraham Lincoln was a master of corrective timing. He would often write out his thoughts, and then pigeon hole them for a while in order to engage in reflective thinking.

- **Teaching.** Correcting a person involves teaching them. What truth is desired to be communicated? What specific instruction is to be given? What is the desired outcome?
- **Target.** There are some individuals who do not want to be instructed, or corrected. They are not emotionally mature enough to be teachable. It is good to know the target of concern, and anticipate how they will receive something which is good for them.
- **Technique.** Depending on the person, an appropriate technique can be decided upon. Some people should be spoken to directly, others respond better to a letter. Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians so that he would not be harsh with them in person. *2 Corinthians 10:10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible. 11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.*

- Touching Base with Others. Before a sensitive communication is sent that is known to have a potential negative reaction, it is good to seek the counsel of others. *Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.*
- Therapeutic. Sometimes a person is corrected, not to help them, but because venting is an acceptable therapy in modern Western culture. People are always encouraged to “talk”, to “express themselves”, to “get something off their chest”. People pride themselves on “speaking their minds”.
- Truth. Biblical judging, Biblical correction involves truth and righteousness. When a motive is ascribed to a person, which that person does not have, then the situation becomes all the more complicated. *John 7:24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

To say, or imply, “I know what is on your heart!” or, “I know why you did what you did!” is inappropriate rhetoric. David experienced this type of insulting language from his brother Eliab.

*1 Samuel 17:28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.*

10. There are other options besides personally correcting a person.

- Prayer. While all matters can be, and should be taken to the Lord, some situations need to be left with Him.
- Patience. Time is a good healer. What is of great concern today, is not so important tomorrow. Passions tend to subside with the passing of time. Many situations do not need an immediate corrective measure to be taken. It is good to be slow to anger. *Psalms 103:8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.*
- Pastoral Counseling. Shepherds have been given to the church to guide individuals, and to help heal wounded spirits.