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# Words of Truth

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## Some Have To See Themselves In The Mirror

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Before I even get into the matter I want to teach in this article, I want to make some things ABUNDANTLY clear (cf. II Corinthians 3:12). I hate that I have to do this, but clarity is certainly a priority in teaching (I Corinthians 14:7-9). Our first point is that there is NEVER a reason for us not to withdraw ourselves from every Christian who walks disorderly and will not repent (Matthew 18:15-17, II Thessalonians 3:6, and II Thessalonians 3:14-15). In connection with this, we cannot use the fact that we're to be longsuffering as an excuse not to withdraw ourselves from the disorderly. God is longsuffering (Psalms 86:15 and II Peter 3:9). Yet, if you sin right now, that sin separates you from Him (Isaiah 59:1-3) until you confess (Psalms 32:5 and I John 1:9) and repent of that sin (Luke 13:3-5). Certainly, we realize that we cannot be more longsuffering than God (Ephesians 5:1)!

As a second point, what we are going to address in this lesson does not remove the fact that we are expected to rebuke those who sin (Proverbs 27:5-6, Luke 17:3-4, and I Timothy 5:20). We cannot think that rebuking someone is enough though. As we've already noted, if someone refuses to repent we cannot continue in a relationship with him or her (I Corinthians 5:1-11). The Lord gives us a good standard to follow on this point. The Lord tells us that we do not need to admonish someone continually, using that as an excuse to continue a relationship with he or she. Notice what God says: *"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself"* (Titus 3:9-11).

Having made these things clear, let's move forward with a thought that can help us as we try to teach people. We know that we should not waste our time in teaching people who do not want to be taught (Proverbs 23:9, Matthew 7:6, Matthew 10:14, and Acts 13:45-46). Yet, we also want to be sure that we are properly separating those who do not want to be taught from those who just need more time to consider the truth. We know that not all people "get it" right away (Luke 22:31-32). We know that we have to be longsuffering with such individuals (II Timothy 4:2). That is, while our relationship with that person may be distant, we still have to continue to teach that person.

For me, there have been times in my life when I did not see things right away. Spiritually speaking, I have erred and needed time to study things through. When I was involved in what is called "liberalism", I thought that I had the truth. I was self-deceived (Galatians 6:3). While no one was trying to teach me at that time, I do not think I would have learned much anyway. I thought I had the answers (Proverbs 21:2). The same thing happened to me in a physical manner. While the two are not equal illustrations, the point comes to the same end. When I was unhealthy in the flesh I didn't see myself that way. Loved ones did not either. It was not until I took a long, honest look in the mirror that I realized I was in bad shape. When I was in error, it was the same thing. I needed to take a long,

honest look in the spiritual mirror of the Scriptures to see the truth and make changes (James 1:21-25). Brethren, some people need time to see themselves in the mirror (spiritually speaking) before they're going to change from their erring ways.

### **A Look In The Mirror**

I made reference to the Apostle Peter in this article when I cited Luke 22:31-32 as an example. Peter is a good example in talking about someone who needs time to see him or herself for what they are. Remember, Peter was one who would speak boldly and confidently while being in complete ignorance (Matthew 16:21-23). Notice this example of Peter needing to see himself: *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples... Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly"* (Matthew 26:26-35 and Matthew 26:69-75).

If it were up to some people I've known, Peter would never have grown to be the man he later became. Peter became the man that stood and preached the truth in the faces of the enemy (Acts 2:14-39, Acts 3:14-19, Acts 5:17-42, etc.). Peter later became an elder in the Lord's church (I Peter 5:1-3). So, what made Peter someone who deserved time to learn opposed to one who needs withdrawn from and avoided? Peter was willing to receive rebuke (Galatians 2:11-17) and as we've seen, he obviously was more than willing to make corrections. He just needed time to look in the mirror!

### **Conclusion**

Helping people to see the truth is our expected work as Christians (Colossians 1:26-28). We have to remember that, while we are expected to help people see their errors, they also need the time to see those errors for themselves. This process is known as self-examination (II Corinthians 13:5). People need some time to think on their ways before they turn to the Lord (Psalms 119:59). We certainly don't want to count on tomorrow when souls are at stake (Isaiah 62:6 and James 4:13-16). Yet, if tomorrow does come we must allow people the time to look in the mirror (II Timothy 2:24-26)!