

# Words of Truth

## Are You Approachable?

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One of the greatest blessings we have in our brethren is that we are supposed to be looking out for each other's spiritual well-being (Ezekiel 3:17-19, Galatians 6:1-2, I Thessalonians 5:14, and Jude 21-23). It is great to know that we have brethren that will come seek us out to bring us back to the flock of God if we err (II Samuel 12:1-7, Luke 15:1-10, and Galatians 2:11-17). Our brethren are supposed to strongly encourage us to do what is right in the sight of God (Acts 14:22, Acts 15:32, and II Timothy 4:2). In fact, one of the purposes we assemble together is to provoke one another to good works and to exhort one another (Hebrews 10:24-25). Such is the reason why we need to be doing all we can to assemble together as often as possible (cf. Hebrews 3:13).

Since we know we are to exhort one another and look out for each other's soul, we have to ask ourselves if we're willing to accept these facts when we're on the receiving end. I have known many so-called "brethren" that would agree to all that we've studied so far in this article. That is UNTIL it is time to talk to that individual about something they've done wrong or are not doing at all. So, from this point forward, let each of us use this article as a time to reflect on ourselves rather than others. Don't sit back and think of all the people you know that are not approachable. This is a study of self-examination (Ezekiel 18:27-28, Haggai 1:5, and II Corinthians 13:5). Let me reiterate that it is easy to excuse ourselves or even lower the bar of expectation if we just think about the errors of others (Exodus 32:22-24). Therefore, ask yourself the questions of this article and make sure you are right. We have to correct ourselves before we can ever help others (Matthew 7:1-5). Therefore, consider whether or not someone could approach you and discuss a matter with you without you trying to deter him or her.

### Can Those Who Have An Issue With You Talk With You?

When there is a fault between brethren we are commanded to resolve those matters (Matthew 18:15-17). When one brother or sister in Christ sins against another repentance must occur for that individual to be forgiven of that sin (Luke 17:3-4). If the sin is not necessarily between two individual brethren, a Christian in error is still a Christian in need of restoration (James 5:19-20). When Simon, who prior to his conversion practiced sorcery (Acts 8:9-13), erred from the faith Peter sharply rebuked this babe in Christ to see him restored (Acts 8:14-24). What if you were Simon? Would you have accepted Peter's words of admonishment or would you have offered up excuses for what you did?

King David had taken Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite into his bed of adultery. David then made sure that Uriah would be put to death so that he could attempt to conceal his errors (II Samuel 11:1-27). Nathan had to approach the king and correct him strongly for his error. In fact, Nathan had to bring David the news that God would take the child of David and Bathsheba because of David's transgressions (II Samuel 12:1-15). Would you have accepted this correction or would you

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have attacked Nathan for trying to set you on the right course?

Like Simon and David, many of us have had times in our spiritual lives where we've erred and needed strong words to set us on the right course. Some take these words and are thankful that they've been corrected. Others, for reasons like pride (Daniel 5:17-28, Hosea 7:10, and James 4:6) and/or self-deception (Psalms 10:4-6, Proverbs 16:18, and I Corinthians 10:12), are not so open to correction. Some even begin hating the messenger (Galatians 4:16). Therefore, we have to go a bit deeper into our self-examinations on this matter. We have to ask ourselves if we want our brethren to help us if we err.

### **Do You Want To Be Corrected When You've Erred?**

Approaching a brother or sister in Christ, when they are in sin, is not an easy thing to do. At such a time, you know that a brother or sister in Christ is lost (Romans 6:23). When we have to be involved in the restoration of a Christian to God it is hard to know what the ultimate outcome will be. This is made even more challenging when said brother or sister in Christ is known to be defensive rather than reflective (cf. Jeremiah 5:3 and Luke 10:25-29). What we all need to realize is, being corrected is part of our lives as Christians. We have to learn to love the fact that we can be corrected.

I remember a time where there were two "brethren" that needed spiritual help. They had taken trips and worshipped with a known false group of "Christians". Instead of hearing the word of God and realizing that their being approached was in concern for their souls, they rebelled and left the sound congregation wherein they were members. Their excuses were out of self-righteousness (Romans 10:1-3), ignorance (Matthew 22:29), and an unwillingness to receive correction (II Chronicles 30:8). These folks likely sound horrible to all of us. Yet, some who would judge these individuals as rebellious folks display the same mindset (Romans 2:1-3). So, before reading further, once again remember that this article is about self-examination (Psalms 119:59 and Lamentations 3:40).

Notice what these few Scriptures say about correction: *"My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction... Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee... Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish... Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die... Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge... But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth... All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works"* (Proverbs 3:11, Proverbs 9:8, Proverbs 12:1, Proverbs 15:10, Proverbs 19:25, Jeremiah 7:28, II Timothy 3:16-17).

### **Conclusion**

Are you an approachable person? Will you take the words of a concerned brother or sister in Christ and examine them rather than respond with excuses? We would all do well to learn to listen and think before responding at such times (James 1:18-25). In conclusion, let's consider these two Scriptures very carefully: *"He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth... The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding"* (Proverbs 10:17 and Proverbs 15:31-32).