

Correction From God - Part 1

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I mentioned in a sermon recently about the stages of human life—the things we all go through as human beings. I didn't elaborate on those as it wasn't my point at the time. I was just using it as an example. We don't think about the many factors that affect us from the time we are born until the time we take our last breath. One of those factors is the role of correction in our lives. When we reflect on our human condition, it is easy to see how important—even crucial—correction is in our lives. Take the example of a baby learning to walk. You have that little sponge and at some point, he or she learns to toddle a few steps. They get back up immediately and try it again and pretty soon their little brain makes the connection that it's better to stand up and walk than it is to fall down all the time.

If you think about it, what starts at that point is a form of self-correction. I would say it's a form of auto correction, but that's a feature in software. The fact is, from that point on, correction becomes an integral part of our lives. Think about the human stages that we go through—our parents begin a whole string of corrections just so we survive childhood. “Johnny, don't touch that pan on the stove, it's hot.” I actually did that once when I was about four or five years old and I pulled the pan off the stove, with mom yelling at me all the time—fortunately I didn't get burned. Generally, some of us just learn things the hard way—that's just what happens. We touch the pan anyway. When we are little children, we do things, we repeat things and hopefully there's no permanent damage when we do that. Finally, if we do something painful, we say, “Ouch that hurts, I won't do that again”. So, we kind of self-correct. But, unfortunately for some, that sets a pattern for the rest of their lives. They don't listen to correction so they keep getting hurt or suffer in other ways. People just do that; we've known people like that—in and out of the church actually. I have to include myself in some of that. It seems like the really important things in life I have had to learn the hard way.

That correction process continues throughout our lives. You think of a dying man, someone dying of lung cancer and saying to themselves, “If I hadn't smoked three packs of Camels a day, I might have lived ten years longer”. By the way, that was my brand of choice when I did smoke years ago. Unfiltered too—real men don't use filters; we don't want anything between those carcinogens and us. That brings us to the title for today:

Correction From God - Part 1

It is one of those topics that is kind of organic—it just grows. Once I started looking into it and researching it, even using some old notes I had, it seemed to grow and grow the more I looked at it. Back when I worked for a living, if you foolishly volunteered for something, it was like stepping on a rake. Pretty soon you would have more and more piled on you.

What I'm going to discuss today is the need for correction—for God's correction. We need that. I'm not going to discuss how we receive correction from God; who knows that? It's like saying, "If you do this, then God is going to do that to you". We don't know that. We are all individuals and God works with each one of us in different ways. I'll talk more about that in Part 2.

I am just focused now on the need for correction and whether we are we open to that need for God's correction? What is our attitude towards that correction? I had a friend in the church once who just hated correction; he could not handle it. He would just bristle any time anybody said anything to him. The setting in which I began to see this in my good friend, was at Spokesman's Club. Most of us older people remember what that was. You would give a speech and then have everyone else in the club critique your speech; they would give you feedback. I actually have a picture of a Spokane Spokesman's' Club—forty people were in that Club and some are still around. I'll have to drag that out some time when I'm in Post Falls. Some of those people are probably still alive. So, you give a speech and, in that case, you would have thirty-nine other people critiquing you. Sometimes it would be gentle and kind and sometimes not so gentle and not so kind.

The point is, if you took the correction, you would learn something from that feedback. It was a process which actually worked, if your attitude would let you take it. By the way, he later became an Elder and I don't know if he ever changed his mind on the value of feedback or not; I hope so. He's gone now.

I grew up back in the 1950's and that world had this kind of Pollyannaish viewpoint that science would solve all of our problems; it would take care of everything. The point is that man always tries to solve his own problems. He just won't take correction from God. He won't recognize God as Rick mentioned a little about in his comments—man just won't do it. All these enormous problems we have and still people won't turn to God. Some people will take correction and some people won't. We see this in Matthew 11 in the New Living Version.

Matthew 11:20 *Then Jesus began to denounce the towns where he had done so many of his miracles, because they hadn't repented of their sins and turned to God. (NLT)*

Drop down to verse 25.

25) At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.

26) Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way!

27) My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

[We won't revisit that argument again. It pretty much is cleared up in John 14.]

28) *-Then Jesus said, Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. (NLT)*

That's what life does to us. If we are without God, those burdens get heavier and heavier, it even happens when we are part of God's people.

29) *Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (NLT)*

That is rest from a life that has no real lasting answers. The Greek for *rest* just means "inner tranquility" or "peace". Metaphorically, it is like a string that has been stretched and then relaxed.

30) *For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." (NLT)*

That is speaking in comparison of course. The point is that mankind under Satan's influence, would rather suffer curses than take correction from God. If we are not careful that can be us too when you think about it. Proverbs 13 is a simple Proverb.

Proverbs 13:15 *Good understanding giveth favor: but the way of transgressors is hard. (KJV)*

They just won't change no matter what—arrogance and pride get in the way. Back in Proverbs 3:11 and 12, from Young's Literal Translation.

Proverbs 3:11 *My son, do not reject the chastening of Yehovah and do not loathe His correction.*

12) *For whom Yehovah loves, He corrects, even as a father corrects a son with whom he is pleased. (YLT)*

Here we see God as a loving Father who wants to correct us—He has to correct us sometimes. We are called to a narrow path. When we commit ourselves to God, when we start the conversion process, sometimes we get knocked off or wander off that path. Then we need a course correction. So, God will work with us in a way to do that. There is no possible way to describe that for each one of us individually—we just can't because we don't know how He does this.

The other side of that is, most of us would rather skip any correction in this life and just coast into God's Kingdom, without any suffering or trials. That's the way we would rather do it. But getting back to the point, how do we view correction? Do we view it as necessary, as a means of growing spiritually, becoming more like God, becoming more like Jesus Christ? Just like it says in the Proverb, God is a loving Father, just like we are with our children. We correct them when they're growing up. We have raised six of them

and something must have worked because we have a good relationship with all of them. Of course, we lost one daughter. The analogy is obvious between a parent and a father or mother and a child and God and His children—us. If you truly love them like God truly loves us, you will correct your children.

If we understand what the Bible says, it should alter any negative attitudes that we harbor about this thing called correction. We shouldn't resist it, we shouldn't fight it, we should appreciate it—God is helping us by correcting us when we need it. Many times, we do appreciate it. When you think about our conversion, we accepted that correction. That's what repentance is all about. God showed us where we were wrong. Repentance means to turn around and go the other way. We did a 180, spiritually speaking, in our lives.

If we are open to correction and see the need for it, how do we receive it from God? We should appreciate the fact that He is a loving God and He does correct us.

I've broken down Part 1 of this topic into five points.

1. Build a conversational relationship with God?

Why did I put it like that? What I am trying to emphasize is that God is our loving Father and we need to be talking to Him on a regular basis. We need to converse with Him to build a relationship just like we do with anyone. That's how we maintain our friendships; we talk once in a while. We have an example in Matthew 7:21.

Matthew 7:21 *Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (NKJV)*

Our purpose is to do the will of the Father; to do what He wants done. Not a hang dog kind of existence like, God wants me to do this or tells me to do that and I'll just go ahead and do it to get it out of the way. That is not the way we should take correction from God.

When we raised our children, we were disappointed, especially when they got to the teen years and they didn't take correction very well at all. The other side to that is worse if we try to impose our will on the Father. People do that sometimes when they fast. They are trying to cut a deal with God.

22) Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? (NKJV)

This is talking about people who, if you read the whole context, think they have a relationship with Christ and by extension, God the Father.

23) And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; (NKJV)

What does that phrase mean? If you think about God as our loving Father and what He already knows about us—He knows when a sparrow falls from a tree, knows every hair on our head—you have to realize that God knows everything. We can't hide anything from God even though we try to do that. What He is talking about in this phrase is that God knows who you are. He knows exactly when you were born, He knows everything about you in your life. Read Psalm 139 sometime from the New Living Version. It is very interesting. David is saying in that Psalm that God knows everything about him—he knew that. That's that deep relationship that David had with God.

Matthew 7 shows that no real relationship had been built—there was no time spent together unburdening themselves to God. We have the blame for that when that does happen. God is very accessible to all of us. Paul talked about that in Acts 17 where he is talking about the Athenians, just as a reference.

Acts 17:27 *so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; (NKJV)*

This is a very familiar scripture which shows that God is there and He wants to talk to us—to listen to us. It's all about a relationship, a conversational relationship, with God. Did you catch that in verse 22 of Matthew 7? It talked about people who give prophecies by the authority of Jesus Christ, but who don't know God. People who cast out demons by the authority of Jesus Christ and God but they don't know God. He didn't know them then or now. There were people who did many wonderful works by the authority of Jesus Christ and God and yet Christ said He never knew them. We know this from our past church history. It is so easy to be preoccupied with activities, programs, works and the focus on all those things, yet forget God. Pretty soon these things become much more important than that relationship we have with God. We don't maintain that relationship. We get carried away with pursuits of every kind, yet Christ never gets to know us while we are involved in these pursuits.

The point is, that if we want a right relationship with God, we have to have the right attitude towards correction from God. We need to establish and maintain very carefully, that relationship we have with Him. We need to invite God into every part of our lives. The rest of Matthew 7:23 says...

23 continued) ... *depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (NKJV)*

“Get away from Me!”. Even in Revelation it says that Christ will spew us out of His mouth. We need to think about that. Some of us talk regularly to God and some don't. It depends on our personality traits, our patterns, sometimes it has to do with the way we were brought up. I've heard of that in the past—our relationship with our human father can affect this. To be honest, I probably don't talk to God as much as I should. Sometimes the best way for God to get my attention is for Him to let me have a trial and then I go to God.

A number of years ago I had a blown disc—actually two—and if that has ever happened to you, you never forget it. On a pain scale of one to ten, you're about a nine all the time. Maybe an eleven or twelve; it just feels like someone has driven a stake into your back. I even went to a surgeon. I was in so much pain I was willing to do almost anything. Fortunately, I had some good advice. I went to a good surgeon and he did an MRI and showed me what was going on. He said that 75% of these will clear themselves up eventually. I didn't like to hear "eventually", but for me it was four months. Four months of excruciating pain from the time you woke up until you went to bed. I was a supervisor at the time and had a crew working for me. Every morning I had to lay out what the crew was going to do for the day and I sat there with sweat streaming down my back, I hurt so bad. My wife remembers I would come home from work and just fall down on the floor or head for a recliner to lay down just to get a little relief, a little pressure off my back. It got my attention. I really prayed about that.

Christ set an example of this very thing in Hebrews 5 when He was suffering to a degree that was far beyond anything that we will ever suffer.

Hebrews 5:7 *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear ... (NKJV)*

He was heard because He talked to His Father about everything; His burdens, His fears—everything.

8) though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (NKJV)

I think sometimes the reason some of us don't go to God and take everything to Him like we should, is we are just a little stubborn. We think we can solve our problems. We love God and we want a relationship with Him, but we are a little, or a lot, stubborn. We just want to cling to our independence. That's our human condition. Remember this scripture and think about Christ's example and put yourself in that situation vicariously. If you knew you were going to get killed, beaten like He was and knew the suffering you were going to have to go through, I bet you would talk to the Father.

The point is, it stands to reason that there are some things God allows us to go through to get our attention. It's a correction to get our attention. Usually I look at this way—I can't speak for everyone, this is just for me—if I go through a trial and learn something out of that, I have to reflect that maybe God did that and it helped me. Especially if you learned a valuable lesson. That's one of the ways that we build and improve our relationship with Him, by taking those things to Him. We get that in the prayer request all the time.

It's interesting to note the context in 1Peter 5. Peter is primarily addressing the shepherds—the Elders—pointing out their most important role of being an example to the flock. Go down to verse 5.

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. [Then it gets inclusive] Yes, all of you [there is no preferential status with God] be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*

6) *Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*

7) *casting all your care upon Him ... (NKJV)*

You can't do that in silence. Granted God knows everything going on with us but we need to verbalize it too—vocalize it—take it to God. Someone asked me one time, someone fairly new, how they should pray. Just talk to God. Hopefully they learned that or are learning that. Then it goes on—we won't cover it—but it says if you resist God the adversary is right there waiting. Go down to verse 10.

10) *But may the God of all grace [speaking of the Father], who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus [His Son], after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (NKJV)*

You can't do that by yourself. There is no independent path to salvation. Verse 11 closes it out.

11) *To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)*

Going to the second point. When we start talking to God and building a relationship, we need to ask Him for something.

2. We need to ask Him for a teachable attitude.

If we really want to be corrected by God, we have to approach Him in that way. We have to see the value of that correction. We will have to have a receptive, teachable attitude, no matter what shape or form the correction comes in. I used to make my living as an instructor of adults and I found that most people are receptive, they are teachable. But every once in a while, you run into people, and I have run into a few of them, who are stubborn and bull headed. You couldn't beat a thought into their head with a 2x4. They just won't listen and it comes out in the way they conduct their lives and their behaviors; they don't learn anything. Go over to Ecclesiastes 12; remember Ecclesiastes is to the young, but we are all God's children.

Ecclesiastes 12:12 *And further, my son, be admonished by these [God's Word and instruction]. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh. (NKJV)*

Unfortunately, sometimes that's been taken out of context in the past and it was, "Don't read anyone else's material, just read church material". Even, "Don't get an education, you have to go to the church to get an education; go to the church college". Though

they are all gone now. Even young people use that sometimes. We remember our children asking about what they were learning at school and, what good it was, saying that it was not going to do them any good in their lives. They complained about the mythology and all that they had to learn. But it's just like any kind of education, especially our children's, study habits are learned which will carry them through their lives, no matter what they do. A lot of things we learn in school we won't use. But we do learn those study skills and that's the important part. Most of the time we need to be selective about what we read when it comes to life principles. We should refer everything back to God's Word to see if it fits.

My son has two girls and I had a book—I can't remember the author's name nor the name of the book—about setting boundaries with your teens. I gave my son that book and told him that there were good things in it. It's not gospel—take the good things out of it you can apply because the individual does have a lot of experience with young people and there are some good principles you can use. He took that advice and he's raised a couple of good girls. It's the same with Bible helps. There are so many trinitarian authors out there that you really have to be careful. I think most of you have the smarts to recognize those things when we get to them. The best policy is to compare everything back to the Bible.

Continuing in Ecclesiastes 12.

13) *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.*

14) *For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil. (NKJV)*

So, we should be teachable and just say to God, "I am learning and trying to grasp what You are trying to teach me, I am trying to grasp new things but I want You as a filter and a guide for my life". There are many, many scriptures that say to trust God over everything. Don't put your trust in man, man is no help—that can be true unfortunately. We are also telling God, we want His love, we want His commandments and principles to guide and direct our lives—we really do. We just want God behind everything that we do. This is the kind of attitude and approach we want to have; looking to God and His Word to guide us in our continued study of whatever we read—whatever we are studying.

Isaiah 66—here's an attitude, a familiar scripture—verses 1 and 2. You probably know this one by heart. He is talking about the person that God looks to and what he wants us to do; the type of approach we want to have and apply to everything—a teachable attitude.

Isaiah 66:1 *Thus says the LORD: Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? (NKJV)*

We can't access the spiritual realm.

2) For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," Says the LORD. But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, [the exact opposite of a proud, stubborn spirit] And who trembles at My word. (NKJV)

We want that teachable, humble spirit whenever we talk to God as we tremble at His Word. Those are the most important words for us, what He says and His correction especially. How many times do we read the Bible and get correction from that? A lot. It's really important too. You remember in our past, one of the things that we did, rather than learn from God and be corrected by God, we would have an individual human being as our filter for the things we understood. In some cases that was good, especially when we were new. But the most important thing which superseded that was to look into God's Word and compare it back, and not let that human being be the only filter that we use.

Matthew 7 is about judging. A lot of times people read it and get upset. They seem to approach it with some preconceived notions about what these verses mean and somehow have a resistance to this particular section. They automatically throw up a defense mechanism and somehow assume that when you quote this, you can't be discerning. In other words, you can't think for yourself and decide on something with God's help. But these verses don't say that at all—it's not what it means. Christ is just saying how to approach people. As we learn more about how to love God we need to learn and grow and relate to each other spiritually. Frankly, as we look around the churches of God, we don't see a lot of progress in dealing with each other across organizational boundaries in a loving way. We just aren't very good at that. We have a tough time putting these scriptures into practice. You think about that, if we are getting the bride ready and we can't even get along—we are supposed to be kings and priests and we can't even get along.

We have to learn to deal with people. I tell my wife this all the time, sometimes she asks why people do this or that—people are people, you are always going to have people problems, people attitudes, people approaches and we have to learn to deal with the differences because we have differences in abundance. Matthew 7:1, I'll use the Amplified for this.

Matthew 7:1 *Do not judge and criticize and condemn [others unfairly with an attitude of self-righteous superiority as though assuming the office of a judge], so that you will not be judged [unfairly]. (AMP)*

That's what *judge* means in the Greek—"to distinguish or to arrive at an opinion about something"—and that's usually, unfortunately in an unfavorable sense, to criticize. Think of church gossip. People don't gossip a whole lot about things they like about people. Going on to verse 2, still from the Amplified.

2) *-For just as you [hypocritically] judge others [when you are sinful and unrepentant], so will you be judged; and in accordance with your standard of measure [used to pass out judgment], judgment will be measured to you. (AMP)*

Kind of like saying, what goes around, comes around. Let's go to verse 3 and I'll revert to the New King James.

3) *And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?*

4) *Or how can you say to your brother, Let me remove the speck from your eye; and look, a plank is in your own eye?*

5) *Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. (NKJV)*

None of this means we have to stop discerning things—it doesn't say that. It says—and we should learn the lessons of what it really says—when you do see something or know something about someone, what really matters to God is what you're going to do with it and how you're going to handle it. The lesson there is, if someone wants to be critical of you, don't do the same thing back. Break the cycle of that criticism that goes back and forth. It's easy to get drawn into the bitterness of the past. You can get sucked into that and it becomes a thing to relive. It's all based on criticism. Sometimes people will take the approach that everything in the past was bad—we know that's not true. It is better to take the lessons from the past and just move on. God doesn't want us to dwell on that. It's over with.

Our responsibility is to practice the true judgment we can. That's what Christ wants us to do, I think. We won't do it perfectly but that's what our goal should be—to do these things and apply these principles. When you think about it, we should tend to err on the side of mercy rather than on the side of meanness. Most of the time we really don't have enough information to really make a true judgment anyway. God knows everything. I was talking about this recently with someone—someone here—about how funny it is that we deeply appreciate God's mercy towards us—the way He deals with us but we are really not very quick to extend that generous mercy to other people. It's a whole lot easier to be nasty and gossipy towards other people. Whether consciously or subconsciously, when we try to judge others, we are thinking we can correct them. But that's God's job and responsibility, not ours. We are doing that on what we perceive we see in them when we are supposedly making that judgment.

I think that psychologists call that transference, where what we personally mean by correction we tend to transfer to other people and the blame to someone else. The whole point is we must learn from these things and have the right attitude asking God for a humble, teachable attitude. Here are a couple of quick reference scriptures.

Romans 12:3 *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (NKJV)*

1 Corinthians 10:12 *Therefore let him who thinks he stands [better be careful, nobody has all the answers] take heed lest he fall. (NKJV)*

We should always ask God for a teachable attitude because we want correction from Him in our lives—not everyone else's.

3. Study and meditate on the written Word of God.

In the past, the traditional approach to receive correction and instruction from God's Word had to be through God's government on earth. I had a good friend—a minister—one time who said that's how he would relate when he recommended someone for an ordination. His measuring stick was how loyal they were to the corporation—to the government. He said he later came to see that was the wrong approach and stopped doing that. It was the wrong focus. I'm not saying that God's government or organizational structure is the wrong concept, but back then God was not the focal point.

Our focus should be on getting correction from God, specifically. That can be through a minister or pastor—of course it can—but they are only servants and helpers to help and guide us. That's what their main job should be. Sometimes it's a minister's responsibility to go to someone and say something to them about something. Isaiah 8:20, tells us how people that should be teaching us God's word.

Isaiah 8:20 *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (NKJV)*

We gain a lot from the law of God, we gain from the testimony of the writers, the prophets of the Old Testament and we can see God's handiwork in those writings. We see there was a purpose for God's law which was given through Moses. The prophecies were given through John's visions, the writings were inspired as well. The point being when we study and meditate on the written word, we are talking about the law, the testimony and the prophecies and the writings. Just a reference scripture, 1 Corinthians 10:11—very familiar.

1 Corinthians 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (NKJV)*

So, we learn from those examples—we should learn from those examples. We would rather not repeat the hard lessons. You think of Hebrews 11—not that those folks deserved what happened to them, some of those stories are pretty grim—but you can see if you are looking for it, that God was working with them to help them be people of faith. When you think about Bible study topics, they are endless. You could take all the characters in your Bible—I have a couple of books, very thick—they are just about the individuals; the men, women, even the children. We also study to rightly divide the word

of truth; we look at the holy scriptures. Revelation says, blessed is he who reads the prophecies of this book. We read those prophecies. It says you will be blessed if you read those prophecies. We aren't really blessed if we make private interpretations of those prophecies which people have a tendency to do. You ever notice with prophecies, we have prophetic ministries and healing ministries and I lump those two together, but they are often used to gain a following. When it comes to religion, people really do have itching ears; they want to hear new things. That's just the way people are, that's the way we are. I think it's even worse the longer we've been around.

We should search the scriptures for understanding. John 5 says if we believe in Moses' writing, we should believe in Christ's writing; they work together, they are never at odds with each other. It plainly says that in John 5:46-47

John 5:46 *For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.*

47) *But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"* (NKJV)

The point is, which one are you going to put more emphasis on? Moses or Jesus Christ? Obviously on Jesus Christ's writings, which are His words. Back in verse 39 of John 5.

John 5:39 *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.* (NKJV)

Hopefully we all understand that Moses' word was the foundation to understand Christ's words. But they will always confirm and complement, not oppose each other, it just doesn't work that way.

The Bible can also be a two-edged sword. It can put us in our place and that can be good; it's not wrong to be corrected by the word of God. I hope that we are, many times. In fact, we would rather be corrected that way instead of some of the other possibilities that could happen. God will help us in any way that He can. If you want correction from God, study the written word of God, remember to study for inspiration, hope, comfort and there's also times when we study God's word for correction. Paul wrote to Timothy about studying God's word and what the attitude and approach should be.

2 Timothy 3:15 *... and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures [speaking to Timothy], which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

16) *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ...* (NKJV)

It says that very plainly; that's the written Word of God.

4. Listen to the spoken word of God.

Referring back to my career as an instructor, I know people learn in different ways. Some people learn by reading, some learn by listening. I've known people that use an electronic Bible. We even bought a Kindle for an elderly lady who had a hard time reading. In a sense they are listening and a narrated Bible is fine. I've even been to places in the past which have readings before services like they used to do in the synagogues. There was a messianic Jewish element at one Feast site we went to many years ago. Sometimes people get to a certain age and it's just easier to listen than to struggle with trying to read. My wife is having that problem with her eyes. I know enough about instructing, to know that the more parts of your brain that you can engage when you are reading or learning, the more you are going to pick up from that reading or learning. We even had one elderly man who used DVD's and CD's for Bible study and that's fine as well. Whatever works, but it needs to be effective. In Ezekiel 33 we can see something. The point I'm trying to make is use whatever engages your brain. We do that visually and audibly.

Ezekiel 33:30 *As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.* (NKJV)

Outwardly they want to hear but when you look at the context, there is an entertainment factor. That was then, this is now.

31) *So, they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them* [that sounds familiar]; (NKJV)

The point being, we want to listen, we want to put it into practice, we want to learn corrective things. Most often there is something in a message for everyone. One time, when looking at this, I thought of an example from our past. We used to go between churches when everything was falling apart. Sometimes we would have Sabbath services in our home. We would have maybe another couple or two. We had one man who was hypercritical of every message he ever heard. So, I got to the point where, when I opened services with prayer, I would add in there for him to keep his comments to himself because he just put a big downer on everyone. I teased him one time and said, "You have never met a minister who you didn't dislike". He put ministers in the same category as politicians. Looking back, maybe he was onto something. If our approach is simply to listen, there's usually something there for us. Maybe it's encouragement, maybe it's comfort and maybe even something that corrects. Many times, that may not even be in the speaker's intent to do that. How many times can you hear a sermon and think, I just thought about that. I was thinking along those lines this past week or maybe this past month or studying that and here the guy is talking about it.

31 continued) *... for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.* (NKJV)

That's talking about people who are not really interested in what God has to say.

32) *Indeed, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.* (NKJV)

Sometimes we have to decide what the speaker's real intent is. Sometimes we can hear a really inspiring sermon—some men are riveting speakers. We have to ask ourselves, was there really something there that makes me closer to God, makes me closer to Jesus Christ or was it merely a platform for somebody. The point is, if we are really listening, we will get something out of it, even correction and that's what we are looking for.

There's another approach in Romans 10 to the way we listen. All these points add up. What is our point when we are looking at the written word, or what is our point when we are listening to God's Word?

Romans 10:15 *And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written [he's quoting Isaiah 52:7]: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"* (NKJV)

The most helpful messages are the ones that give us hope, comfort and encouragement. That's what we should be looking for. One time—I'll refer to a gentleman who has passed on—who relished the horrible things of scriptures and prophecy. He couldn't wait for the Great Tribulation. He was hoping for that. Career wise, he was very intelligent and had a high IQ but he basically checked out of society. He didn't become a hermit, but he almost did. He lived on that doom and gloom; it's what he thrived on. There's a place to talk about that but we shouldn't look for that in a message specifically. Yes, prophecy says that there are bad things which are going to happen but what we should focus on is beyond all those bad things. We should think about the wonderful World Tomorrow, about God's Kingdom and that should be our governing approach. The overall conclusion from a message should be and hopefully will be one of encouragement.

Continuing in verse 16....

16) *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, LORD, [he's quoting Isaiah 53] who has believed our report?"*

17) *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (NKJV)

You can warn people about having more faith, you can inspire people to have more faith—the fruit of God's Spirit—but the best way to do that is to talk about that and look for that and actually want that. We think about all the promises God holds out for us. We can have faith in those promises. If we look to the power of God, who He is, what He is doing, we can have strong faith. Notice that it says faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Revelation 1:3 can be a reference scripture.

Revelation 1:3 *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*
(NKJV)

Prophecy says that there are bad things going to happen, but the larger scope is what lies beyond those prophecies. When you think about that, maybe the Tribulation in itself is a massive correction for mankind. God doesn't stop there; it doesn't stop with those really horrible, doom and gloom things.

Last point and this might be a bit of a delicate one.

5. Watch the word of God in people.

There are examples good and bad, all over the place. In Matthew 5, Christ tells us metaphorically how our example should be and what we present to the world.

Matthew 5:14 *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

15) *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

16) *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* (NKJV)

We always want to do everything to God's glory; to the Father's and to Jesus Christ's; everything to Their glory. Matthew 8—I'm just using these as a couple of Bible examples of good and bad examples. This is a real-life example.

Matthew 8:5 *Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him,*

6) *saying, Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."*

7) *And Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him."*

8) *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.*

9) *For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it."*

10) *When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!*
(NKJV)

What was the centurion's example? He recognized the greatest authority of all—he saw that and understood that, just from Christ's example. Matthew 15, gives us another real-life example.

Matthew 15:22 *And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."*

23) *But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, Send her away, for she cries out after us."* (NKJV)

She's bothering us; she's a pest.

24) *But He answered and said, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

25) *Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me!"*

26) *But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.*

27) *And she said, Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."*

28) *Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."* And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (NKJV)

Her example? She recognized the true source of healing power. Matthew 23 is a bad example. This should have been a good example; these were religious leaders but it wasn't, instead it was a terrible example.

Matthew 23:1 *Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,*

2) *saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.*

3) *Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. (NKJV)*

In other words, they had heard God's Word all their lives. They were the great scholars and yet they created and chose their own religious system. Some things never change.

4) *For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

5) *But all their works they do to be seen by men [that's a perfect example, perception is everything. I've seen plenty of that in and out of the church.]. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

6) *They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues,*

7) *greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi.*

8) *But you, do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.*

9) *Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*

10) *And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.*

11) *But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.*

12) *And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, [people exalt themselves, always people with an agenda to promote themselves] and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (NKJV)*

Then there is the exact opposite. It continues and goes through eight woes; dropping down to verse 27.

27) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28) Even so you also outwardly [by your terrible example, we could add] appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (NKJV)

A couple of good examples and one really bad one. Then we have Paul, who said "Imitate me as I also imitate Christ". He told that to the Corinthians, to the Philippians. He said "Join me, following my example and note those who so walk as you have done with us for a pattern". In other words, good examples to follow. In Philippians 2:15. We find the whole reason we should use what God gives us by way of correction and live God's way of life. He wants us to be examples ourselves.

Philippians 2:15 ... *that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world ... (NKJV)*

We read that earlier. We can be a light to the world.

God has an ultimate purpose for the guidance and correction He gives to us. Back to Philippians 1:6. We have heard this many times.

Philippians 1:6 ... *being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (NKJV)*

Finally, in Hebrews 12 and the Amplified Version, beginning in verse 5, wraps up this whole thing of discipline and correction for us.

Hebrews 12:5 *and you have forgotten the divine word of encouragement which is addressed to you as sons, My son, do not make light of the discipline of the Lord,*

And do not lose heart and give up when you are corrected by Him;

6) For the Lord disciplines and corrects those whom He loves, And He punishes every son whom He receives and welcomes [to His heart].” (AMP)

For our good; it's always for our good.

7) You must submit to [correction for the purpose of] discipline; God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8) Now if you are exempt from correction and without discipline, in which all [of God's children] share, then you are illegitimate children and not sons [at all]. (AMP)

He's quoting Proverbs 3:11-12

9) *Moreover, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we submitted and respected them [for training us]; shall we not much more willingly submit to the Father of spirits, and live [by learning from His discipline]?*

10) *For our earthly fathers disciplined us for only a short time as seemed best to them; but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.*
(AMP)

The ultimate purpose.

11) *For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems sad and painful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness [right standing with God and a lifestyle and attitude that seeks conformity to God's will and purpose].* (AMP)

We have this by having that right approach to our need for God's correction. We have to be teachable; we have to be malleable in God's Hand. We have the scripture about the potter and the clay. We have to yield to that and to God. He knows which way to manipulate us and mold us into what we should be.

To summarize the five points which we have covered.

1. *Build a conversational relationship with God—talk to God.*
2. *Ask God for a teachable attitude.*
3. *Study and meditate on the written Word of God.*
4. *Listen to the spoken Word of God.*
5. *Watch the Word of God in people, we can learn a lot from people's example.*