

Give and Receive Spiritual Correction

Pacific Heart Attitudes - part 7

October 20, 2019

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17

DAY 1: What is Spiritual Correction?

1. When you think of Spiritual Correction what thoughts come to mind?

A good working definition for spiritual correction is: to give a corrective evaluation of another person and their service to the Lord with the intent of helping that person grow in faithfulness to God.

2. Is this the way you have experienced giving or receiving spiritual correction?

A lot of times we have other motivations for correcting people that do not come from a loving place.

Some people give criticism inspired by the sinful flesh: *1 Corinthians 3:3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?*

3. Have you ever given or received advice out of selfish desires instead of biblical wisdom?

Some people give spiritual correction but lack spiritual wisdom: *James 3:14-16 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*

4. Do you have an example of this?

Sometimes people give spiritual correction to hurt others: *Galatians 5:15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

5. Do you have an example of this?

Sometimes people give spiritual correction to tear others down and to lift themselves up: *Proverbs 30:32 “If you play the fool and exalt yourself, or if you plan evil, clap your hand over your mouth!*

6. Do you have an example of this?

For the rest of the week let's look at different ways to give and receive spiritual correction

DAY 2: Giving Spiritual Correction Part 1.

1. The goal is growth.

The chief goal in any Christian relationship should be to help each other grow up in Christ (Eph 4:14-15). This means correction must be aimed at building up, not tearing down (2 Cor 13:10). So when you speak, prayerfully consider how your words can give constructive grace that will help others mature in Christ (Eph 4:29). Show them how your correction, if applied, can help them better reflect the glory of God (Matt 5:16).

2. Correct humbly.

Pride delights in correcting others. So, if you're excited to dish out correction, it might be a sign that pride is guiding your heart. The best way to grow in humility is to spend time thanking God for the many ways he has graciously corrected you. Rehearse how the gospel is good news for you and be stirred anew by how gracious God has been to you (Eph 2:1-5). This will help you to take the log out of your own eye before helping someone else take the speck out of theirs (Matt 7:1-5).

3. Give encouragement with your Correction.

Correction should almost always be served with a healthy dose of encouragement. This is not a psychological trick to avoid hurting feelings; rather, it's a way of affirming that God is working in them, despite their need to keep growing. Reading the letters Paul wrote, you can see what I call the Affirmation sandwich. Affirm – Correct - Affirm

For instance, when Lance gives me advice on preaching, I need him to help me see both what needs changing and what I should continue doing. Pointing out evidences of grace along with areas to improve will make your corrective conversations all the more helpful.

4. Be thoughtful.

Give consideration to what you should say before you say it (Prov 29:20). This will help you sift out nit-picky stuff and get to the heart of what needs to be communicated. Prayerfully ask yourself, "What is the main issue I need to address? What do I hope they walk away from our conversation remembering? What really needs to be said and what can be overlooked?" This work on the front end will serve both you and the person you are confronting.

1. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Giving Spiritual Correction Part 2.

5. Be clear.

When you give correction, be as clear as possible. Are you speaking about a sin issue or a personality issue? Is this a big deal or something that could become a big deal? One way to do bring more clarity is to use examples.

For instance, don't just say "you are rude." You might try saying, "I know you have good ideas, but I've noticed that you tend to cut people off when they are talking. I'm not sure if you've caught yourself doing this, but it can make people feel like you don't need to hear what they have to say." Being clear in your correction will help make sure you get to the heart of the issue.

6. Be gentle.

Wrap your words of correction with gentleness. Love wants to communicate truth in a way that can be easily swallowed. It's a mark of spiritual maturity to gently help people grow in spiritual health (Gal 6:1). Gentleness must not be viewed as weakness, but rather a heart posture that God can use to lead others to repentance (2 Tim 2:24-26). One way to grow in gentleness is to think how you would want someone to speak to you if they were giving the same correction (Matt 7:12). How can you show them honor while still helping them grow (Rom 12:10)? By considering how they will hear what you say, you can shape your words to be given gently.

7. Be patient.

"Love is patient" (1 Cor 13:4). Remember that some habits or sins take time to be corrected, especially when they are deep-rooted heart issues. Take the long view in your relationship and ask God to help you remember how patient he has been with you (Ex 34:6). This will keep you humble before God and patient with those you are helping to correct.

8. Be prayerful.

Ruth Graham once said of her husband, "It's my job to love Billy; it's God's job to change him." There is much wisdom in that statement. While we can bring truth to a heart, only God can make that seed grow (1 Cor 3:6). What this means for us is that if we aren't praying for people, we certainly shouldn't be trying to change them. God alone is able to change a person, so plead with him on behalf of other people.

1. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Receive Spiritual Correction Part 1.

1. Be hungry to grow.

Do you desire to grow in spiritual maturity? Do you long to look more like Jesus? If so, then you must do all you can to put to death the pride that wants to protect your image. When others correct us, our natural reaction is to defend ourselves and make excuses for the correction they bring up.

Proverbs 12:1 says, *“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”*

The reason those who hate reproof are stupid is because there is nothing better than to be corrected for the glory of God. So pray with God to make you want to grow in holiness and usefulness above all other things. Ask him to help you not fear being made stronger through being humbled by the help of those who are speaking into your life.

2. Assume you need to be corrected.

Proverbs 12:15 reminds us that *“the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.”*

Do you assume you need people in your life to critique and correct you? Do you assume others can see things in you that you might be blind to? It’s foolish to presume that even on our best days we cannot be helped by the critical insight of others.

3. Don’t be easily offended.

Spurgeon once wisely advised, “If any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him, for you are worse than he thinks you to be.” The pride in our hearts is often ignited when someone speaks corrective words to us. Plead with God to help you remember that no matter what someone says to you, it is far less cutting than what God has said to you in the gospel.

4. Ask clarifying questions.

When someone gives you correction, thank them for helping you grow and then follow up with questions. Ask for examples to help you understand better. Ask for suggestions on how you might change. By doing this, it turns the corrections into a conversation, which is what is always the best place for growth to happen.

1. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: Receive Spiritual Correction Part 2.

5. Assume there is at least some truth in what others say to you.

People are not infallible, so there are times their words of correction or critique will be off-base and unwarranted. Your first response shouldn't be to shoot holes in what they are saying, but rather to see what bit of truth may be salvaged from their words. It's rare that you can't find a little gold in even the biggest load of trash.

6. Keep the church in view.

When you are corrected by others, you aren't the only one who benefits. Because you are part of the Body of Christ, your growth means good things for everyone (1 Cor 12). I could probably list 10-15 corrections I've received over the years that significantly altered the course of my life and ministry.

I'm so glad for all the correction people like Lance and Seth have given me over the years. Even though it hurts sometimes, it is always helpful both for my walk with Christ but also as I grow within this family. I want to be useful to Jesus and each of you as I operate as a part of the body of Christ in our church.

7. Do it for God's glory.

First Corinthians 10:31 says, "*Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do [including giving and receiving correction] do it all for the glory of God.*"

This means that our aim in giving, receiving, and applying critique must always be to help God be seen clearly in our lives and the lives of others. If God's fame is our greatest aim, it will guard our hearts in what can be tough and trying conversations.

1. What strikes you from this week's devotionals?