ESSAY · NOVEMBER 10, 2022

Rebuke With Wisdom

Written by Bill Perkins

Sometimes an exhortation works like a chisel that chips off a rough edge. While the process is painful, it may be necessary. That's why the Apostle Paul urged Timothy to not only "correct" and "encourage" but to "rebuke" as well. Even though the word "rebuke" refers to a stern or sharp correction or reprimand, it may be the most loving thing a leader can do.

Rebuke With Wisdom

In his book, *The Management Methods of Jesus*, Bob Briner notes that the word *rebuke* is an archaic term that we don't hear very often. However, there are occasions when an old-fashioned rebuke should be the action of choice. But we need to exercise wisdom so that our words build up rather than tear down.

I find it fascinating that none of the disciples Jesus rebuked ever left him. In fact, even Peter, to whom Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:23) stuck with him. Those disciples Jesus most harshly rebuked experienced the greatest growth and success.

Build A Relationship Before Giving a Rebuke

Yet, Jesus didn't walk around with his finger on the hairline trigger of a loaded verbal gun, ready to fire rebukes at anyone and everyone. On the contrary, he first built the kind of relationship with his disciples that prepared them to *profit* from a stern rebuke. We must be sure we've invested enough time and effort in a relationship so a rebuke will prove beneficial. In fact, I only rebuke those I care the most about. And then I only rebuke after much prayer and thought. I want to be sure my motive is to help, not hurt the recipient of my words.

Remember, exhortations arrive in all sorts of packages. Occasionally, as Jesus showed, they may be wrapped in a rebuke.