



Mind Matters: #8, Helping Each Other Think Well  
Romans 15:14  
November 10, 2019

God calls us to help each other think well. One key Bible word for this is *noutheteo* [*nous* (“mind”) + *tithemi* (“put, place, set”)]. It properly means “to put or place in the mind.” It is translated admonish, instruct, counsel or warn. The essence then, is to help each think well and have the will and disposition to live accordingly. The purpose is not to shame others but to help them mature in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 1:28).

Admonition is not the only tool for helping people grow (Colossians 1:28), nor always the proper tool (1 Thessalonians 3:14), but it is needed (Acts 20:31; Colossians 1:28). Leaders are to admonish the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12) and fathers their children (Ephesians 6:4; cf. 1 Timothy 3:4-5), but all Christians should learn to as well (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16). It can be done through words (Acts 20:31), letters (1 Corinthians 4:14), Scripture (1 Corinthians 10:11), and song (Colossians 3:16).

Since it helps us mature, we all need to be admonished (Acts 20:31; Romans 15:14; Colossians 1:28), but certain kinds of Christians are specifically indicated, including the disorderly, idle, or undisciplined (1 Thessalonians 5:14), those who don’t obey what is written (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15), and any who cause division (Titus 3:10). Admonition is not appropriate for non-Christians, however, since they have not even agreed to follow Christ and do not have the power of the Spirit to enable them to do so. Instead, non-Christians need to hear the gospel!

Many people enjoy admonishing others because it gives them a feeling of power, but that is not its purpose. Nor are everyone’s thoughts equally worth putting in other people’s minds (Luke 11:52; 1 Timothy 6:20). Rather, there are important prerequisites. First, we need to be full of God’s healthy truths (Romans 15:14). We need a knowledge of Christ and his ways (2 Corinthians 4:6; Colossians 2:3; 3:16a; 2 Peter 1:5; 3:18), so that we have truly healthy thoughts to share. We are giving Bibles to our 4-year-olds today to get them started early on this!

Second, we need to actually be living by the knowledge we have received from God and want to pass on to others (see “goodness” in Romans 15:14; and Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 4:14, followed by his example in vv. 16-17).

Third, we need to genuinely care about the people we would admonish. Paul admonished the Christians in Ephesus regularly, yet he did it “with tears” (Acts 20:31). He admonished the Corinthian Christians many times, but his words toward them were like those of a father, and they were his beloved (*agapetos*) children (1 Corinthians 4:14-15).

So, people who set an example of working hard serving Christ among others, who lead and care for them in the Lord (cf. NIV with ESV in 1 Thessalonians 5:12), and who are full of goodness and knowledge (Romans 15:14) are well suited to admonish others. When admonishing someone, we are wise to also prioritize what matters we discuss, consider whether we truly understand the situation, choose a good time and setting, use dialog, and make sure our tone and manner are godly.

When people admonish us, we may resist it because we want to be independent and free. Yet God’s book of wisdom repeatedly commends those who are open to instruction and correction (Proverbs 1:7; 8:33; 10:17; 15:5, 32; 19:20). We still evaluate what we hear, of course, and accept what is worthy (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

