

HOW TO HAVE HARD CONVERSATIONS

GIVING ADMONISHMENT

PREPARING TO ADMONISH

- Pray for the person and yourself, about whether you should admonish them.
 - *James 1:5* “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”
- Address any sin, bias, or judgment that you may be bringing to the table.
 - *Matthew 7:5* “...first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”
- Base your admonition on Scripture, not just personal opinions.
 - *2 Timothy 3:16-17* “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
 - *Colossians 3:16* “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...”
 - Don't use Scripture as a hammer. Share Scripture gently and watch it work! (*Hebrews 4:12*)
- Check your motives.
 - The motivation should be to love them and seek the best for them, not to exact revenge, vent anger, or bring on humiliation. Ask yourself what thoughts and feelings are motivating you.
 - *1 Corinthians 4:14* “I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children.”
 - Remember that you are not the Holy Spirit. He is the one who brings conviction, not you! “...[H]e will convict the world of its sin” (*John 16:8*)
 - The end result of admonishing should be that they will be “...thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (*2 Timothy 3:17*). Your primary motivation for admonishing someone should be for them to be better equipped for Kingdom business.
- Pray about the right time, place, and method to approach the person.
 - Timing is a key factor. What does the moment call for?
 - *Ephesians 4:29* “Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth but only such a word as is good for edification, according to the need of the moment.”
 - Pick a place where both of you will feel comfortable having a conversation.
 - Your method should adjust on whether they are unruly, fainthearted, or weak.
 - *1 Thessalonians 5:14* “And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

DELIVERING ADMONISHMENT

- Approach the person privately and in person.
 - *Matthew 18:15* “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.”
 - Speak in person! Don't hide behind texts or emails. (*see Electronic Communications document*)
 - Do not gossip. Be wise about even sharing your plans to admonish someone.
 - *Proverbs 20:19* “...a slanderer reveals secrets. Therefore do not associate with a gossip.”
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- Admonish gently.
 - *Galatians 6:1* "...if someone is caught in a sin; you who are spiritual should restore him gently."
 - Be gentle both in what is said and how you say it. Watch your non-verbal communication.
 - Remember that being admonished is a sensitive and potentially painful thing.
 - *Ephesians 4:2* "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."
 - Be calm. It's best not to admonish someone when frustrated, angry, and stirred up.
 - *1 Timothy 5:1* "Do not rebuke an older man harshly... exhort him as if he were your father."
- Admonish clearly, accurately, and thoroughly.
 - Be clear and specific on why you are admonishing them, giving examples as needed. Avoid sarcasm and broad generalizations.
 - This is the time to speak up! Staying silent in the midst of sin, is sin. "...it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it. (*James 4:17*) Be thorough. Don't let gentleness be an excuse for not saying what's needed. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend..." (*Proverbs 27:6*)
 - Be accurate. Don't exaggerate. "...put off falsehood and speak truthfully..." (*Ephesians 4:25*)
 - Seek to understand. Ask questions. Get their side of the story (*Proverbs 18:17*)
- Admonish without bringing on shame or condemnation.
 - Be clear that your intent is to help them grow in Christ-likeness. "...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ." (*Ephesians 4:15*)
 - State the problem clearly (e.g. you told a lie.), but don't then infer that the individual is the problem (e.g. you're a hopeless liar. You're incapable of telling the truth.).
 - Address the sin, but don't attack the person. Keep things in perspective; don't speak in such a way as to criticize or disparage who they are as a person. Be careful judging motive.
- Be careful not to be influenced by their sin.
 - *Galatians 6:1* "...Restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you may also be tempted."
 - Admonishing someone involves talking about and dealing with sin. As sin is deceitful (*Hebrews 3:13*), Scripture warns us to be careful whenever we are, in any way, dealing with sin. We may be tempted by the sin, or even worse, engage in the very same sin that we are reproofing.
- Be patient with them as they process and respond to admonishment.
 - Give them time for reflection and God's conviction on any sin. Don't necessarily insist on immediate compliance (though flagrant sin might call for that). Revisit the conversation.
 - If they are still resistant and you have biblical grounds, follow the steps in *Matthew 18:15-17*.

AFTER ADMONISHING

- At a different time and in a different setting, contact them again to reassure them of your love for them.
 - Sometimes just a hug or handshake and a simple, "<name>, I love you and value our relationship," is sufficient. At other times, a longer exchange may be needed.
 - Realize that, initially, your admonition may hurt them, but in the end, it will benefit them and strengthen your relationship.
 - *Hebrews 12:11* "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."
 - Be patient with them as they respond to your admonishment. They may need some time to process before feeling completely comfortable with you.
 - Be willing to journey with them through the process.
 - The goal of admonishing someone is restoration and change. You should try to be involved with that process as much as would be possible and beneficial. Don't just tell them what's wrong and leave. Be willing to help them address it.
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HOW TO HAVE HARD CONVERSATIONS

RECEIVING ADMONISHMENT

PREPARE YOUR HEART

- Be approachable and humble.
 - Pray that God gives you a humble and responsive heart.
 - *James 4:6* "...God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
 - Give them permission to "*speak the truth in love*" with you (*Ephesians 4:15*)
- Realize that being admonished usually doesn't initially feel good, but it is good for us. We should be grateful for those who are willing to admonish us.
 - *Psalms 141:5* "Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it..."
 - *Proverbs 25:12* "Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is the rebuke of a wise judge to a listening ear."
 - *Proverbs 24:26* "An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips."
 - *Proverbs 9:8b* "...Rebuke the wise and they will love you."
 - *Proverbs 12:1* "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid."
- Realize that sometimes when people admonish us, they may not do it perfectly.
 - "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best." (*Hebrews 12:10*)
 - Give the admonisher the freedom to be imperfect.

RECEIVE THE ADMONISHMENT

- Listen attentively to what is being said.
 - Don't just think how you can respond and invalidate what they are saying. Listen humbly and attentively.
 - Practice active listening and speaker / listener technique.
 - *Proverbs 18:13* "To answer before listening--that is folly and shame."
 - In a non-defensive manner, discuss the issue.
 - Seek to understand what they are saying, rather than immediately offering a rebuttal. Be suspicious of your flesh's defensiveness.
 - Ask for clarification and examples where necessary.
 - *Proverbs 18:17* "The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him." There are usually two sides to every story!
 - Hear the truth in what they are sharing.
 - Try to really hear what they are saying, and what the Holy Spirit might be saying to you through them. Pray that God speaks to you through the admonishment.
 - Find the truth in what they are sharing, even if the majority isn't right. If 10% of what's being shared is true, hear and receive that 10%
 - *James 1:21* "Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."
 - *Proverbs 17:10* "A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool."
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- Graciously respond to the admonition.
 - *Proverbs 19:20* “Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.”
 - Stay engaged
 - Keep the focus on yourself and the issue at hand. Don't try to deflect the focus onto the admonisher or onto another issue.
 - Even if you disagree, thank them for the admonishment and promise to prayerfully consider it and reflect on it.
 - If you do agree, thank them for pointing out an area in your life that needs growth.
 - If you're convicted of sin, confess it to them and God, and ask forgiveness.
- End the conversation in prayer.
 - If appropriate, both parties should pray.

AFTER RECEIVING ADMONISHMENT

- When someone correctly admonishes us, we should esteem them, not resent them.
 - *1 Thessalonians 5:12-13* “Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.”
 - Make every effort to reconnect with the person or to reaffirm the relationship.

ASKING FOR HELP

Since it isn't natural for our flesh to desire admonishment, we need to intentionally invite those who are close to us to feel the freedom to admonish us. We need to ask for help before we need it! Ask yourself these questions of your close relationships:

- Do they know they have the “green light” to admonish you?
 - Ask each other if you feel this freedom. If not, find out why. Are you disengaged or reactionary to the degree that those close to you wouldn't be comfortable admonishing you?
- Do they feel the freedom to raise issues that aren't black & white?
 - Must they feel that they have brought an “open and shut” case to your attention that you can't refute, or is their freedom to inquire and get to the heart of the matter?
- Do they feel the freedom to kid you (lovingly) about your weaknesses?
 - Can you relate to one another with humor and grace, or do they need to walk on eggshells around you because you're defensive and thin-skinned?
- Do you all consistently build an environment of encouragement?
 - We are much more open to receive correction from those who have expressed affirmation and belief in us (*Ephesians 4:29*).

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