**Series: #Life Together**

VBC

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Colossians 3:16

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**“Admonish One Another”**

Recently I was given the gift of a Nike Fuel Band

-it’s a sports tested accelerometer that measures movement

-I wear it on my wrist, and it tracks my daily activity—my fuel, calories, number of steps on a tennis court (stops at Starbucks)

-like scales and mirrors—it is one more tool of accountability

-we may try to outsmart them, but if we allow them—they will tell us something about reality—reveal truth about ourselves

*-things we don’t always want to know*

-whether we as the *church* realize it or not, we are called to *be “Nike Fuel Bands”* of sorts

-we need someone to occasionally *give us a read*—tell us the truth about our hearts and souls

-particularly when we might be getting off track, getting out of spiritual shape, eating sin calories

-we all have blind spots, weak areas that we cannot navigate on our own

-someone needs to help us question our motives, examine our consciences—and if necessary—*admonish!*

*-and we need to do this as well with others—read Colossians 3:16*

-to the list of “one anothers” we have looked at—encourage, provoke, welcome, bear with one another

-there is this “mutuality demand”—*admonish one another*

-it might be that this is the *hardest* of the “one anothers”

-the nature of the term hints at this

-to admonish means to literally “place the mind”, push the brain

-to admonish is to confront, challenge someone to alter a course—change one’s way—and many are resistant

-I posted a blog this week on Duhigg’s book, The Power of Habit, in which he talks about the control habits have over us

-he explains that we fall into habits because the brain is constantly looking for ways to *avoid exertion*

 (Heather—take this route)

-to admonish generally demands exertion

*-it implies something is not altogether right—behavior needs to change*

ILLUSTRATION—Jethro came to visit his son in law Moses, and after observing asked—

*“What is this thing you are doing for the people? Why are you alone sitting as judge, while all the people stand around you?”*

-e.g. why are you living an unlivable pace—are you really that indispensable? That good?

-then this admonishment—“*this habit you are in is not good*”—Exodus 18:17

-not surprisingly—Paul used this word “admonish” more than anyone else—maybe because he was constantly confronting—

-for three years, day and night, he did not stop “*warning* the elders “of the dangerous times ahead

-he *admonished* the Corinthians regarding their arrogant behavior—I Corinthians 4:14

-*admonished* those who were lazy in Thessaloniki—I Thessalonians 4:14

-but we tend to resist, avoid, ignore this one another—

1. we don’t know how to admonish without doing it badly

*-“Admonition is the mutuality command we obey least often, and when we attempt to obey it, we usually do the worst job”—Sittser*

1. we feel unqualified—who am I to tell a person to change?
2. we want to be liked—people who are admonished do not always like the admonisher
3. we would just as soon keep the peace

-it’s not worth the blow up—the abusive behavior I will receive in return

1. sometimes we would rather just gossip—if we admonish, they might change their behavior, and we will have nothing to talk about

*But here’s the problem—*

1. what if there is something you must have the courage to speak into someone’s life—something they need—but your fear is keeping you back?

*-what if Moses did not have a Jethro, David a Nathan, Esther an admonishing uncle?*

1. what if there is something you need to desperately hear—but no one will say it—or you are too afraid, proud to hear?
2. what if the church’s failure to admonish one another is the principal reason why too many of us are dull, out of spiritual shape, stagnant—making no real progress

point—the question is not whether we should—but HOW?

-the text gives at least four guidelines for admonishing—that will determine if we are bringing life or draining life—

1. *DO OUR WORDS REFLECT GOD’S WORD?*

-if they don’t—we may be nothing more than unhelpful noise

-notice that the exhortation to admonish one another does not stand alone

-in fact, it is a participial phrase flowing out of a larger imperative—let the Word inhabit—take up residence

-we are no good at admonishing if we have not first risen early to be with God

-to see our own need for change, repentance

-to hear His heart, His will

*-we cannot set straight in others what is not set straight in us*

-“dwell richly” implies total access—“let God’s Word have the run of the house” (The Message)

*-such that it all self-interest, ungodly anger, critical spirits, and judgmentalism can find no space*

-all of this implies more than mere reading—mere listening

-it requires contemplation, chewing, mulling over the Word

-such that it becomes our first vocabulary, the air we breathe—the lens through which we see life, situations

-otherwise—we can get things amiss—correct with the wrong heart, admonish with the wrong words, warn with wrong motives—like Job’s friends

-as Scripture fills our lives—we receive insight—our mercy is stretched, our motives are checked

-we see illustrations that guide us…

1. David was admonished by his pastor—2 Sam 12

-a man who was first filled with God—and David changed

1. We find other instructive stories—Samuel admonishing Saul; the man of God confronting Jeroboam; Elijah warning Ahab; Isaiah admonishing Hezekiah; Jehu rebuking Jehoshaphat; Mordecai warning Esther; Jesus admonishing His disciples for their failure to have faith; Paul confronting Peter to his face for deviating from the truth

-acts which often rescued men and women from wrong turns

-but it starts with being filled with Word

1. *DOES OUR WARNING REFLECT GOD’S WISDOM?*

-the text tells us that admonishment must be “with all wisdom”—for good reason

-too often—our admonishment is not so wise—it can be shortsighted, mistaken, erring, out of line, inappropriate

-with all wisdom describes an admonishment that—

1. pays attention to boundaries—to the ways of God
2. shows an attentive respect for reality—an eye for how things work in God’s world

 -where certain roads lead to, what certain choices will bring

1. listens, observes, discerns, asks before admonishing-

-is this person truly veering off a wise course?

-what is it that is hindering this person from growing in Christ?

1. exercises good judgment

-involves tact, discretion, thoughtfulness, insight—the opposite of clumsiness, carelessness

-wise admonitions fit the situation—do not hit a straight pin with a hammer

*-use the Word properly*

-are full of sense—pay attention to time—is this the right moment?

*-admonition does not wait until it is too late—until the consequences*

*ILLUSTRATION—“*A Dazzling Priest’s Lurid Fall, to Drug Case Suspect” (Wed NY Times)

-story of Kevin Wallin, a towering figure in the Roman Catholic Church in SW Connecticut

-but behind his impressive sermons and spiritual pilgrimages and a social life, hobnobbing with the very important was a man whose life was coming apart at the seams

-becoming frail, thin, shaking, late to appointments, doubting his faith publicly

-there were the rumors—lots of men were visiting his apartment

-he was having numerous affairs, was deeply into porn, using drugs, dealing drugs

-eventually he was arrested for dealing crystal methamphetamine

*-nowhere did the story indicate he was admonished, warned!*

-what if someone exercised Col 3:16 at the first sign of a life shifting from godliness

-had the concern to say—“I’ve admired your passion and energy but…”

-the courage to ask—“Are you neglecting your inner life at the expense of your public ministry?”

-admonition challenges lust before it turns to adultery, greed before it eases into materialism, small lies before they grow into large ones, spiritual doubts before they turn to unbelief

1. *DOES OUR ADMONITION INCLUDE TEACHING?*

-teaching and admonishing might seem two ways of saying the same thing—but they are not

-both are necessary—admonishing without instruction can end up being of no help at all

-admonishing with instruction is intent upon restoring, solving the problem, aiming ultimately for success

1. admonishment warns me that I must be a better father

*-teaching me tells me how to do this*

1. admonition warns me that one must be faithful

*-teaching shows a person how to rebuild a marriage*

1. admonition warns that sin is the wrong recipe for health

*-teaching gives out the right recipe for living*

-all of this is fairly obvious in the text—but it is the last part that seems out of place—singing psalms, hymns, spiritual song—with gratitude to God

*-what does this have to do with admonishing one another?*

-it could be giving us one more guideline—

1. *DOES OUR CORRECTION EXHIBIT GRACE?*

-only a church caught up in worship—a heart in tune (lit) with God

-filled with grace and gratitude to God

-is prepared to speak into someone’s life

-a congregation without grace—without song

-a community of self-appointed “Ministers of Exposure” gathered to spot someone’s sin—will only do great damage

-graceless admonishment leads to these predictable results—*“sometimes conformity, often rebellion, never maturity”*

-but when people know that those who admonish love God and love them—and see something amazing that longs to be released—*only then are they inclined to receive one’s warnings and corrections*

CONCLUSION:

-in his chapter “The Gift Nobody Wants”, John Ortberg writes—*we generally don’t intend to make a mess of our lives*

-nobody takes a vow of marriage and plans to be in divorce court

-no pastor takes an ordination vow and plans to cave

-no disappointed homemaker picks up a glass of wine and plans to become an alcoholic

-no businessman makes his first deal and structures a lifestyle that will drain his generosity and compassion

But they happen—and often because we have no one in our lives who has been invited to tell us the truth

-or no one who has the courage to tell us what we need to hear—*and this is wrong!*

 *“Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls another back from the path of sin”—Bonhoeffer*

Illustration—Susan-how can you claim to know Jesus and reject the body of Christ?

-who is your Mordecai, your Jethro, your Nathan?

-or—who might be an Esther, a Moses, a David God is calling you to speak needed words, words of admonishment—into their lives?

-words that might change a course—even a world?