

12. COMMUNITY

—Encouragement, Correction & Reproof

Although this study is entitled *Encouragement, Correction and Reproof*, it could just as easily be entitled *Friendship*, because an important identity to embrace as a disciple of Jesus is FRIEND - an identity which forces us to ask ourselves, *do I want to be a friend like Christ?* Jesus said, “No longer do I call you slaves...but I have called you friends.” (John 15:15). We see Jesus loving, encouraging, ministering, eating and drinking with his friends, and if necessary correcting and reproofing them.

Biblical community fosters deep friendships, where friends encourage, correct and sometimes reprove one another with humility and grace. This implies that people are close enough that they have the intimacy, maturity, and discernment to speak into one another’s lives. The purpose of this friendship is to build up and not to tear down. It is to help everyone grow into the likeness of Christ himself (Gal. 4:19).

What do you learn about encouragement from the following passages? Are there ways you have experienced these in your own life?

I Samuel 23:16

Proverbs 12:25

Proverbs 15:4

Proverbs 18:21

Proverbs 18:24

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Acts 4:36, 11:22-26

Romans 15:4-7

I Thessalonians 3:2, 5:11-14; Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:16

Hebrews 3:12-13

Hebrews 10:24-25

The idea of correcting or reproofing others may make us very uncomfortable. “Who am I to judge?” is the common adage. *What do the following passages teach us about correction and reproof?*

Proverbs 9:8-9

Proverbs 25:12

Proverbs 27:5, 6, 17

2 Timothy 2:24-25

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Galatians 6:1-2

Reproof; Reprove: To reprove is to correct someone with the intent of amending a fault. God reproves as a parent in relation to his people, because He loves (Proverbs 3:12, Revelation 3:19). Reproof is a basic function of the Scriptures, (2 Timothy 3:16) and is expected to be one of the functions of a person who proclaims the word of God. (Luke 3:19, Titus 2:15.) -*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*

APPLICATION: 1. Take some time to assess yourself as an encourager. Do you routinely offer words of affirmation and encouragement to people you are close to build them up as followers of Christ? What are some practical ways you can do so? Is there a particular individual who comes to mind? 2. Ask a trusted friend or family member, “are there hurtful ways in me that I am blind to, that would be helpful for me to know?” 3. Is there an individual that you need to offer correction or reprove to? When and how will you do so?