



Legalistic or Antiseptic?

A Bible Study On Biblical Correction

“Legalism! Legalism!” That is the cry of many a professing Christian of our day when a brother or sister in the Lord attempts to offer biblical correction. **But is it legalistic to humbly and lovingly point out error or preach against sin?** We will now investigate this question in this study.

Many people in today’s culture of “political correctness” have been conditioned to think that “everything is relative”, any opinion is valid, you can believe whatever you want, and so on. Similarly, many Christians and non-Christians alike, say that we should not preach against sin, because Jesus said “judge not lest ye be judged”. Still other Christians avoid preaching against sin and neglect biblical correction because they think that if their hearers are not saved, they might get the idea that salvation is by works. And of course there are those who don’t want to correct or rebuke others because then they would have to allow others to correct and rebuke them. So what you end up with is one big happy group of sinners who look nothing like the Bride of Christ and everything like the world, a group that - like the carnal Corinthian church - can boast in their tolerance and acceptance of others, others who shame the Church and its Bridegroom.

But the God of the Bible is a god who cares greatly about holiness and about spiritual truth and about the way His children live. And when in the Bible, the Lord says: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” [Revelation 3:19] what makes you think He does not use other people in that process, people in the local congregation (primarily) as well as the godless heathen - when it suits Him?. This God, the one and only true God, commands his followers to “test the spirits”, prove all things, earnestly contend for the truth, and remove the leaven (sin) from their lives:

1John 4:1 - “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but **try the spirits whether they are of God**: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

1Thes 5:21 - “**Prove all things**; hold fast that which is good.”

Jude 1:3 - “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Eph 5:11 - “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, **but rather reprove them.**”

Rom 16:17 - "Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned**; and avoid them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

James 5:19 - "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that **he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way** shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

The desire of true believers

If we are true believers in Christ we will want to know if we are offending a brother or sister and we will also want to be set straight by others. **We will not look for excuses to shirk our responsibility to be our brother's keeper.**

Genesis 4:9 - "And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's **keeper**?"

KEEPER: 08104 rmv shamar shaw-mar' a primitive root; TWOT-2414; v AV-keep 283, observe 46, heed 35, **keeper** 28, preserve 21, beware 9, mark 8, **watchman** 8, wait 7, watch 7, regard 5, save 2, misc 9; 468
1) to keep, guard, observe, give heed

Are we expected to be sinless before we correct others?

John 8:7 - "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The best way to correct an individual:

It is best (and biblical) to take a brother or sister aside to correct them unless they refuse to hear us privately as noted by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 18, verse 15:

Matthew 18:15 - "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man

and a publican.”

We should also pray to God to ask Him to show us OUR OWN sins:

Psalms 139:23 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Sometimes God shows us our sins when we read scripture and sometimes by correction from another believer:

Galatians 2:11 - “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was **to be blamed** <2607>.

Galatians 2:11 with Stong’s numbers: 11 ¶ But <1161> when <3753> Peter <4074> was come <2064> (5627) to <1519> Antioch <490>, I withstood <436> (5627) him <846> to <2596> the face <4383>, because <3754> he was <2258> (5713) to be blamed <2607> (5772).”

WITHSTOOD HIM: 436 anyisthmi anthistemi anth-is'-tay-mee from 473 and 2476; ; v

AV-resist 9, withstand 5; 14

1) to set one’s self against, to withstand, resist, oppose

2) to set against

TO BE BLAMED: 2607 kataginwskw kataginosko kat-ag-in-o'-sko from 2596 and 1097; TDNT-1:714,119; v AV-condemn 2, blame 1; 3

1) to find fault with, blame

2) to accuse, condemn

The effects of ignoring correction:

What if parents never corrected their children because they did not want to offend or upset them? They would be raising future tyrants most likely. Also, in Christ’s church, correction is essential for the health of each individual. We must not forget the pervasiveness of sin...

1 Corinthians 5:6 - “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”

Galatians 5:9 - “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

Bad habits or to put it more bluntly - sin unchecked - is quite contagious. It spreads to those around it unless it is purposefully sought out, identified, and

then cast out. Also, we are our brother's keeper. And God has gifted each believer with sensitivities and perceptions unique to that individual that they may be used to disciple us and correct us in areas of our life that we are not sensitive to - yet.

The more we interact, the more offenses that will occur:

When we pattern our church after the biblical pattern of the family (i.e. interact house church meetings), we are going to have a greater likelihood of offending one another and sinning against one another. Hopefully, that is offset by the blessings we are to each other (encouraging, ministering to needs, learning/teaching each other, etc.) We must come to realize that correction is one of those blessings. How long would we let a blind man wander down the wrong road, if we were truly concerned about his welfare? How long would we let a child beat up his little sister before taking corrective action, if we truly love that rebellious child and those he is offending? Are we to wait until he starts beating on US? How long should we wait, if a brother's unkind behaviour is grieving the hearts of those in the congregation, before bringing to his attention his hurtful behaviour?

Hebrews 12:4 - "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. 12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; 13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. 14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;"

If we don't sharpen one another with the Word, we will run the risk of falling into sin:

Proverbs 27:17 - "Iron **sharpeneth** iron; so a man sharpeneth <02300> the **countenance** <06440> of his friend."

Hebrews 4:12 - "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

SHARPENETH: 02300 ddx chadad khaw-dad' a primitive root; TWOT-605;
v

AV-sharpen 5, fierce 1; 6

1) to be sharp, be alert, be keen

COUNTENANCE: 06440 Mynp paniym paw-neem' pl. (but always as sing.)
of an unused noun hnp paneh paw-neh'

from 06437; TWOT-1782a; n m

AV-before 1137, face 390, presence 76, because 67, sight 40, countenance
30, from 27, person 21, upon 20, of 20, ... me 18, against 17, ... him 16,
open 13, for 13, toward 9, misc 195; 2109

1) face

1a) face, faces,

1b) presence, **person**

Heb 3:13 - "But **exhort** one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be **hardened** <4645> through the deceitfulness of sin."

HARDENED: 4645 skleruno {sklay-roo'-no} from 4642; TDNT -
5:1030,816; v

AV (KJV) - harden 6; 6

1) to make hard, harden

2) metaph. 2a) to render obstinate, stubborn 2b) to be hardened 2c) to
become obstinate or stubborn

If we don't take the time to form close friendships with other believers we will be less likely to have true friends who are willing to tell us like it is. Anyone can find a friend who will tell us what we want to hear:

Prov 27:6 - "**Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.**"

2Tim 4:3 - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

We must not forget that judgment should begin with ourselves:

Those who offer correction must be willing to accept correction from others

and must accept it graciously, remembering that God gives grace to the humble and chastises those He loves!

1 Pet 4:17 - "For the time is come that **judgment must begin at the house of God**: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Psa 26:2 - "**Examine me, O LORD**, and prove me; try my reins and my heart."

We are commanded to avoid hypocrisy:

God commands us not to have double standards - an easy standard of righteousness for ourselves and a very strict standard of righteousness for others.

Matthew 7:3 - "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

What God is saying is that if we condemn someone for some sin, we had better be sure that we are not excusing the sin in our own lives... because sin in our lives - like a huge log in our eye - can blind us or at least warp our ability to see sin in others. God is not saying that we are to never speak out against sin. Just that we are not to be hypocritical about it.

There is a biblical way of correcting a brother or sister:

2Tim 4:2 - "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; **reprove** <1651>, **rebuke** <2008>, **exhort** <3870> with all **longsuffering** <3115> and **doctrine** <1322>."

REPROVE: 1651 elegcho {el-eng'-kho} of uncertain affinity; TDNT - 2:473,221; v

AV (KJV) - reprove 6, rebuke 5, convince 4, tell (one's) fault 1, convict 1; 17
1) to convict, refute, confute

1a) generally with a suggestion of shame of the person convicted

1b) by conviction to bring to the light, to expose

2) to find fault with, correct

2a) by word

2a1) to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove

2a2) to call to account, show one his fault, demand an explanation

REBUKE: 2008 epitimao {ep-ee-tee-mah'-o} from 1909 and 5091;

TDNT - 2:623,249; v

AV (KJV) - rebuke 24, charge 4, straightly charge 1; 29

1) to admonish or charge sharply

EXHORT: 3870 parakaleo {par-ak-al-eh'-o} from 3844 and 2564; TDNT - 5:773,778; v

AV (KJV) - beseech 43, comfort 23, exhort 21, desire 8, pray 6, intreat 3, misc 4, vr besought 1; 109

1) to call to one's side, call for, summon

2) to address, speak to, (call to, call upon), which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc.

2a) to admonish, exhort

2b) to beg, entreat, beseech

LONGSUFFERING: 3115 makrothumia {mak-roth-oo-mee'-ah} from the same as 3116; TDNT - 4:374,550; n f

AV (KJV) - longsuffering 12, patience 2; 14

1) patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance

2) patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

DOCTRINE: 1322 didache {did-akh-ay'} from 1321; TDNT - 2:163,161; n f

AV - doctrine 29, has been taught 1; 30

1) teaching

1a) that which is taught

1b) doctrine, teaching, concerning something

2) the act of teaching, instruction

2a) in religious assemblies of the Christians, to speak in the way of teaching, in distinction from other modes of speaking in public

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a **fault** <3900>, ye which are spiritual, **restore** <2675> such an one in the spirit of **meekness** <4236>; **considering** <4648> thyself, lest thou also be **tempted** <3985>.

FAULT: 3900 paraptoma {par-ap'-to-mah} from 3895; TDNT - 6:170,846; n n

AV (KJV) - trespass 9, offence 7, sin 3, fall 2, fault 2; 23

1) to fall beside or near something

2) a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness

2a) a sin, misdeed

RESTORE: 2675 katartizo {kat-ar-tid'-zo}

from 2596 and a derivative of 739; TDNT - 1:475,80; v

AV (KJV) - perfect 2, make perfect 2, mend 2, be perfect 2, fit 1, frame 1, prepare 1, restore 1, perfectly joined together 1; 13

1) to render, i.e. to fit, sound, complete

1a) to mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair

1b) ethically: to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be

MEEKNESS: 4236 praotes {prah-ot'-ace} from 4235;; n f

AV (KJV) - meekness 9; 9

1) gentleness, mildness, meekness

CONSIDERING: 4648 skopeo {skop-eh'-o} from 4649; TDNT - 7:414,1047; v

AV (KJV) - mark 2, take heed 1, look on 1, look at 1, consider 1; 6

1) to look at, observe, contemplate

2) to mark

3) to fix one's eyes upon, direct one's attention to, any one

4) to look to, take heed to thyself

TEMPTED: 3985 peirazo {pi-rad'-zo} from 3984; TDNT - 6:23,822; v

AV (KJV) - tempt 29, try 4, tempter 2, prove 1, assay 1, examine 1, go about 1; 39

1) to solicit to sin, to tempt

2) of the temptations of the devil

What happens if we don't offer correction:

1. Without correction sin spreads

Sin is contagious. The sooner it is stopped the better. When it is left unchecked, it spreads to others...

Galatians 2:11 - "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood <436> him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled <4942> likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation <5272>."

WITHSTOOD: 436 anthistemi {anth-is'-tay-mee} from 473 and 2476; v

AV (KJV) - resist 9, withstand 5; 14

1) to set one's self against, to withstand, resist, oppose

2) to set against

DISSEMBLED: 4942 sunupokrinomai {soon-oo-pok-rin'-om-ahee}

from 4862 and 5271; TDNT - 8:559,1235; v

AV (KJV) - dissemble with 1; 1

1) to dissemble with 2) to act hypocritically

DISSIMULATION: 5272 hupokrisis {hoop-ok'-ree-sis} from 5271;
TDNT - 8:559,1235; n f
AV (KJV) - hypocrisy 5, dissimulation 1, condemnation 1; 7
1) an answering 2) an answer 3) the acting of a stage player 4)
dissimulation, hypocrisy

1Corinthians 5:1 - "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

What is leaven?

Leaven symbolizes sin, be it fornication, hypocrisy, gossip, malice, unforgiveness, etc.

How do you purge out the sin? Using biblical correction. How do you correct? According to the biblical prescription mentioned above in Galatians 6:1 and 2Timothy 4:2.

2. Without correction we end up with false peace:

Surely by avoiding confrontation and correction we maintain an air of peace. But is this peace genuine? Doesn't it consist of peace on the outside but not on the inside, at least for the person who is concerned about or grieved about the words or actions of a brother?

Jer - "6:13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. 14 They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. 15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD."

Correction can be unbiblical also...

For example, what is the opposite of a spirit of meekness:

harsh, prideful, angry, vindictive (vengeful)

Proverbs 15:1 - "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

Proverbs 15:18 - "A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife."

Proverbs 10:12 - "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."

Proverbs 28:25 - "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat."

Proverbs 29:22 - "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression."

Proverbs 8:13 - "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

Proverbs 11:2 - "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom."

Proverbs 13:10 - "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom."

Proverbs 14:3 - "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them."

Proverbs 16:18 - "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 29:23 - "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

Psalms 94:1 - "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself."

Why we don't like to give correction:

Not everyone responds very kindly to correction.

Proverbs 15:10 - "Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die."

It is easier to find someone to complain to about a perceived offense than to lovingly confront the offender. It is easier to gossip than to confront...

Proverbs 16:28 - "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer <05372> separateth chief friends."

Proverbs 18:8 - "The words of a talebearer <05372> are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly."

If we don't want to be corrected ourselves, perhaps we are not saved:

John 3:19 - "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil. 20 For **every one that doeth evil hateth the light**, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Professing Christians are commanded to examine themselves...

2 Cor 13:5 - "**Examine yourselves**, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, **except ye be reprobates?**"

1 Cor 11:28 - "But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

If we don't examine ourselves we run the risk of going about thinking we are saved when we are lost.

If we don't see fruit in our lives, perhaps we are not saved.

Matt 7:17 - "Even so **every good tree bringeth forth good fruit**; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."

The fruit of a Christian WILL be different than the fruit of the unsaved and will be increasingly different from his old life as a former unbeliever...

Gal 5:18 - "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And **they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.**"

A true child of God wants to bear fruit, good fruit.

If we are not interested in dealing with our own sin, perhaps we are not saved.

If we really don't hate sin, if we really are not offended by sin in us and around us, we need to be concerned about whether or not we really belong to Christ. The Bible states that a true believer will hate sin and will want God to search out the sin in his own heart:

Psa 139:23 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psa 119:104 - "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."

If we are truly saved, we will have a desire to be sanctified, to deal with even the smallest, seemingly insignificant sins in our lives, like violating speeding limits, exposing our eyes to things that we should not be viewing, spending our money selfishly, joking about things we should not joke about, saying things about people that may not be true, talking about people behind their backs...

SOS 2:15 - "Take us the foxes, **the little foxes, that spoil the vines:** for our vines have tender grapes."

A true believer should be proactive:

A believer who does not want to be a stumbling block or an offense to his brethren will be confessing his sins to others even before they are brought to his attention by others:

James 5:16 - "**Confess** <1843> your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

CONFESS: 1843 **exomologeō** {**ex-om-ol-og-eh'-o**} from 1537 and 3670; TDNT - 5:199,687; v

AV (KJV) - confess 8, thank 2, promise 1; 11

1) to confess

2) to profess

2a) acknowledge openly and joyfully

1 John 1:9 If we **confess** <3670> our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

CONFESS: 3670 homologeo {hom-ol-og-eh'-o} from a compound of the base of 3674 and 3056; TDNT - 5:199,687; v
AV (KJV) - confess 17, profess 3, promise 1, give thanks 1, confession is made 1, acknowledgeth 1; 24
1) to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent
2) to concede

Conclusion

As we see in this study, the Bible COMMANDS us to reprove and rebuke, in order that we might be our brother's keeper, having a concern for the spiritual welfare of others but there is a Biblical way of doing that. Similarly, if Christian parents truly care about their children they will:

teach them by the Word

teach them by example

correct them by the Word and through Christian discipline when they go astray

Biblical Christian correction is part of an overall process whereby believers teach, disciple and watch over each other. And as part of a local community of believers, they engage in biblical correction and biblical discipline of one another. That means they must not forget that they are commanded to receive correction **graciously** as well as give it **graciously**. So according to God, in Scripture, it is our responsibility to give and receive correction - in a God-glorifying way.

***“Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way:
and he that hateth reproof shall die.”***

[Proverbs 15:10]

SEE ALSO: Is It Right To Judge?
