

Rebuke: What, When, and How

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It doesn't take a lot of in-depth research to figure out that rebuke/reproof is something the modern-day American churches have almost completely done away with. Because the Laodecian churches are more concerned with a new-age "feel-good" type of Christianity, the only time they will use rebuke is when you dare to question their weak-willed, cotton-candy traditions. (i.e. They'll only rebuke you for rebuking them.)

Due to the lazy and cowardly habits of Laodecians Christians concerning rebuke, I thought it a good idea to define our terms, and go over what the Bible says about it. The first thing we should recognize is that we are given New Testament commandment to rebuke our brethren if they've rejected Biblical doctrine.

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. -2 Timothy 4:1-2

(Reproof is another word that is used interchangeably with rebuke.)

And in the next verse, Paul is warning us that a day will come when they will not listen to that rebuke.

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; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. -2 Timothy 4:3-4

Christians (or those claiming to be Christians) are going to look for men who will tell them what they want to hear, rather than tell them the truth. It is very obvious we are at a point today where most people claiming to be Christians do not want to hear sound Biblical doctrine, but rather want to find someone to tickle their ears with a fun-time message that makes them feel warm and happy inside.

In a general definition, rebuke is correction. Rebuke is used in the Bible when something or someone is doing something out of line, and he/she/it must be corrected. There are sections of the Bible where God rebukes [corrects] non-living things, (e.g. [Psa 104:7](#), [Luk 8:24](#), etc) but more specifically for people, rebuke is used as a correction in turning people from a certain trespass or false doctrine, so they can repent of it.

The first rule of rebuke: **NEVER rebuke God.** Peter learned that lesson early on:

And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. -Mark 8:32-33

This means that proper rebuke needs to come from the Word of God concerning doctrines. Because so many modern-day churches have turned away from doctrine in many aspects, it should be no surprise that rebuke has also left the Body of Christ.

85% of the Bible is rebuke; correcting our wicked ways.

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for instruction in righteousness: -2 Timothy 3:16*

Next, we need to understand that there are methods for rebuke in different situations.

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. -Luke 17:3-4

trespass (v):

1. literally, to pass beyond; hence primarily, to pass over the boundary line of another's land
2. to commit any offense or to do any act that injures or annoys another
3. in a moral sense, to transgress voluntarily any divine law or command; to violate any known rule of duty

(See 'trespass', American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828, retrieved June 26, 2014 [webstersdictionary1828.com])

If there is a matter of trespass, typically, our first reaction is to go to the police, but in the Body of Christ, we are in the family of God, and are supposed to treat one another as family.

So if a family member trespasses, we don't go to the law to handle the matter; we handle it within the household, which is why we are supposed to go to our brother/sister and tell him/her the fault.

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. -Matthew 18:15

We should be able to handle these matters personally between one another, but very often, the first step the typical Christian will take is to refuse to talk to his/her brother at all. **That is an unbiblical way to handle Christian brethren.** We attempt to handle these matters on a personal and private level so that it remains between the two people involved.

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. -Proverbs 11:13

There are people that are prone to gossip, which the Bible condemns, so we must handle these matters with prudence and discretion, but on the other hand, there are also those who will not hear rebuke because they don't want to know the truth.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. -Hosea 4:6

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. -2 Thessalonians 2:10

And they also don't want their evil deeds to be brought to light.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. -John 3:19

If they refuse to listen at all, then we're given further instructions:

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. 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. -Matthew 18:16-17

This is rarely seen in modern-day American churches. Typically, if anyone is ejected from the church, the pastor makes an unbiblical, one-step decision without any other Christians involved, and if we think about it for a moment, not only is it unscriptural authority the pastor is claiming for himself, but also it helps him to avoid anyone rebuking him in his trespasses.

For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. -Jeremiah 10:21

(Read "Is the One-Pastor Church Biblical?" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

There is also the matter of rebuking elders (older folks in leadership in the church):

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. -1 Timothy 5:1-2

This doesn't mean that if an elder trespasses against you that you cannot talk with them about it, but you don't correct them. Why not? Because they should be at a point in wisdom to which they should be able to correct themselves, and thus you should speak with them as you would speak with your own mom or dad in conflict.

On the other hand, another elder can rebuke the trespassing elder, so if the trespassing elder will not hear you, you can always go to another elder for help on the matter. But keep in mind that "elder" does not automatically mean "pastor" or "church leader," and also that if the elders will not hear concerning their trespasses and offenses to the Gospel, we can always sanctify (separate) ourselves from them, because if an entire group of elders is closed-off to the truth of the Word, you probably shouldn't be involved with that church at all.

Now let's get back to the typical modern-day American churches, and how their fear of upsetting anyone is causing them to keep silent concerning unbiblical words and actions.

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe. -Proverbs 29:25

And to recap once again that if a Christian brother/sister repents of their trespass, forgive them.

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. -Luke 17:3-4

However, what happens if he/she does *NOT* repent of a trespass? It's interesting that most churches talk about verses on forgiveness, but they usually end up excluding the correlating verses (like Luke 17) that specifically say to forgive them *IF THEY REPENT*. (And they don't typically preach repentance.) As Christians, if our brethren don't repent of a wrong action against God's Word, then we have a duty to rebuke them.

Let's say a Christian lied to you, but came back the next day and said, "I lied to you, and I'm sorry," would you rebuke him? No, of course not. You don't have to correct someone who is correcting himself.

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. -1 Corinthians 11:31

(Read "Unbiblical Cop-outs: Don't Judge Me!" here at creationliberty.com for more details.)

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? -2 Corinthians 13:5

However, if he doesn't repent, then we use the Word of God for his correction, that he would be sound in the faith.

Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; -Titus 1:13

Rebuke should never come through malice, but through the desire that we all be sound in the faith. After addressing the Christian personally, and he/she will not listen, then we do it again in front of witnesses.

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. 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. -Matthew 18:16-17

Thus, if the whole church gets to hear the matter, and the guilty party will not hear, then we treat them as the rest of the world. That means if the offense of this person was something in the manner of assault, theft, or destruction of property, after he/she is removed from the church, you should file a report with the local authorities. We handle these matters within the family, but if they will not hear the Word of God on those issues, then they are not part of the family, and so they have to be handled by the law.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: -John 10:27

Will people hate you for rebuking them? Often, yes they will.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.... But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. -2 Timothy 4:2-5

afflict (v): to give to the body or mind pain which is continued or of some permanence; to grieve, or distress

(See 'afflict', American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster, 1828, retrieved June 28, 2014 [webstersdictionary1828.com])

Because I rebuke Christians so often in my teachings, many of them think it's just a normal thing for me to do, and that I have no trouble doing it. This is a false impression. I hate having to rebuke Christians. It pains my stomach to do it (sometimes to the point I feel like puking), but that is the very definition of affliction, and we are instructed to rebuke and reprove our brethren with longsuffering, enduring the affliction caused by it. I don't rebuke because I like it, I rebuke because God's Word tells us to do it, and likewise, you may not like doing it either, but we all have commandment to do it.

These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. -Titus 2:15

People will despise you for rebuke, but don't worry yourself with it, so long as you stand firm on the Word of God. You will find favor with God for the Biblical rebuke you give to men.

He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. -Proverbs 28:23

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. -Revelation 3:19

Those that really love you and care for you will rebuke you, and if you truly love your brethren, you'll rebuke them. Jesus Christ rebukes us because he loves and care for us, and those who do not rebuke you, do *NOT* love you at all.

To better understand this, the Bible tells us that we receive reward in heaven for working righteousness and sanctifying ourselves, and so those who refuse to rebuke you care more about their personal feelings (i.e. they don't want to endure affliction), than they do about making sure you build up reward in heaven. As I've said many times, most people in the modern-day American churches care more about how they feel, than they do about the truth of God's Word.

New-Age Pastoral "Immunity" to Rebuke

Pastors are not exempt from rebuke in Scripture, but often, many Christians are reluctant to rebuke their pastors if they do any wrong. (Either that, or refuse to admit their pastor does wrong.) God is not a respecter of persons.

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. -James 2:9
(Read "[Why Are Christians Respecting Persons?](#)" here at [creationliberty.com](#) for more details.)

Respecting persons means that you respect the title of "pastor," and uplift him on a pedestal above everyone else, to where he is above rebuke. Certainly those pastors should uphold a high standard of operation, acting in a manner that does not lead to his reproach, but that doesn't make him immune to rebuke.

Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. -1 Timothy 5:20

For many Christians that have written me over the years, the pastor is often a man that cannot hardly be addressed in one-on-one conversation, as either he does not make himself available, or he makes excuses for himself. Often, it's best to approach him in a group of two or three so you can have a group of witnesses to the conversation.

And they not only reject rebuke from their brethren, but also from the Word of God. The new-age church does not want to be told that they do anything wrong, which is why it is filled with so many false converts.

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: -Hebrews 12:5

They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. -Proverbs 1:30

He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth. -Proverbs 10:17

Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish. -Proverbs 12:1

He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. -Proverbs 15:32

The world seeks to unite together under one yoke, but the Body of Christ is supposed to be exclusive, not inclusive. All men are called to repentance, but those who have repented are supposed to be separate from the world.

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

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? -2 Corinthians 6:14

(Read "[Did Christ Come to Bring Peace?](#)" here at [creationliberty.com](#) for more details.)

Jesus Christ never said to come as you are, but to come in repentance, that you might be changed and made a new creature.

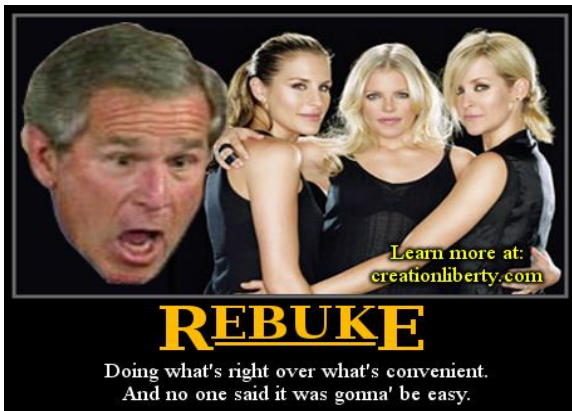
Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; -Acts 3:19

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: -Acts 17:30

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. -2 Corinthians 5:17

And don't forget that, after rebuke has taken place, and after we take all the proper steps, when we are afflicted and hated for the rebuke, don't hang on to it. Learn to let it go.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. -Ephesians 4:31-32



That means we don't need to hold a grudge. The problem I see more often is not the holding of a grudge, but that of Christians who let go of a trespass *WITHOUT* addressing it first, which only enables the trespasses to continue.

Christians, listen up: Let's stop making excuses about how we feel, study the Word of God to get proper doctrine, and then reproof and rebuke our brethren with longsuffering. Though we might feel bad from upsetting someone else by our rebuke, we suffer that affliction on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if we are sound in His doctrine, then we'll receive reward for doing what's right, instead of what's convenient.