

April Leadership Trait: Teaching/Admonishing

Teaching/Admonishing and Your PWOC Board

All members of PWOC Boards are to be teachers and admonishers (encouraging/exhorting others to take action) in at least three ways.

First, Jesus calls all of His children to teach and admonish others (and to receive the same) in *daily conversation* about following Him as you sit and walk and talk and work and rest every day. (Deuteronomy 6:5-9) Second, you are to teach and encourage each other by *living your faith in action*. (John 13:35 and James 2:18) And third, you are to teach and exhort others by *discipling your replacements* for the next generation of leaders for Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20)

That's a whole lot of "Jesus" among fellow leaders who are already supposed to be fairly mature in Christ. Do you think there could be some occasional resistance? Oh yes. A bulk of God's Word seems to deal with religious leaders who sometimes didn't want to lead or didn't want to be led. I've been on both sides of those sins and continue to struggle to keep a teachable spirit and to speak up for Jesus' glory and others' faithfulness, even when I'm not sure how it will turn out.

Maybe that's why, of all the commands in Colossians 3:1-17, Paul lists "teaching and admonishing" with "bearing and forgiving" as a "one another." He knows it will be especially critical and difficult to give *and receive* such sensitive ministries among each other.

Let's talk about that and consider three basic ways to embrace the challenge with faith in Jesus

This month we're looking at TEACHING/ADMONISHING. Colossians 3:16 says, "*Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.*" Colossians 1:28 gives us insight into the specific goal and way of teaching and admonishing. "*He is the One we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.*" (emphasis mine)

The goal is our maturity in *Christ*, and the way is by continually proclaiming *Him*. But some questions may immediately come to mind. 1) What should maturity look like on a PWOC board? and 2) Why do even Board members sometimes resist teaching and admonishing or receiving the same? Defining what maturity looks like is easy because Scripture repeats the theme. It's love as He defines it: following Christ (obeying His teachings, not our opinions or desires) and doing so by faith (trusting in His grace, not our strengths or self-righteousness) for His glory in His people. Understanding resistance is pretty clear, too. We have two basic obstacles: our fear and pride.

Obstacles to Teaching/Admonishing on a PWOC Board

Typically, we hesitate to teach and admonish others because we fear that we're not good enough. In both of Paul's letters to Timothy, the elder pastor continually reminded the younger pastor of the need to feed His sheep and encouraged him in God's grace – even when some sheep seemed to have a wolf-like bite. Sometimes we hesitate to teach and admonish them out of our own pride, not wanting to share God's good news with others we would like to see judged. Remember Jonah and the Jewish Christians' attitudes toward the Gentiles in the books of Acts, Romans, Galatians, etc.?

More often, though, our pride is the obstacle to *receiving* teaching and admonishing.

So how are we to deal with fear and pride? Before we think of judging others, Matthew 7:1-5 reminds us that the first step is always to deal with our own sins. When we've truly grown in faith and love, we will find that our dealings with others will come more *super-naturally*. (see Galatians 6:1-6, especially the implied humility to teach and admonish even elder "one-anothers" in verse 6)

How to deal with our Fear and our Pride for genuine Discipleship

First, understand that most of us tend toward fear or pride. Even after Jesus saves us, we are still sinners. And fear and pride are just different manifestations of loving self instead of loving God and others. We even see these struggles in two of the greatest Apostles. Scripture seems to show that Paul's sinful bent was fear (1 Corinthians 2:3 and 2 Corinthians 10:1) and Peter's was pride. (Matthew 16:22-24, Matthew 18:21, Galatians 2:12, etc.) The fearful tend to crave being taught and admonished because they know that they need to grow, but they're resistant to teach and admonish others because they believe that their level of maturity (or lack thereof) is their hope of being helpful to others. The proud tend to crave opportunities to teach and admonish because they believe that they *are* grown. For the same reason, they resist others' teaching and admonishing.

Knowing your own bent can help guide your prayers for your repentance and service, identify what types of believers you need in your life and anticipate how the devil is likely to tempt you – to fearfully resist teaching and admonishing or to proudly resist receiving the same from others.

Second, remember God's goal: to present each other as mature in *Christ*. Both fear and pride tend to believe that *we* are supposed to be the measure of maturity. But self-focus just exacerbates fear and pride. Focusing on maturity *in Christ, from Christ, by Christ*, etc. can encourage the fearful that their inadequacies are merely God's opportunities to show what great things He can do with so little. So bring what feels like your few fish and loaves to feed the 5,000 needs and problems on your Board. Those are just potential miracles of God's grace and power waiting to happen for His glory and the growth and joy of His Body! Focusing on maturity in Christ can also humble and encourage the proud to remember where their real joy in Christ began: repentance from self-righteousness and resting in Jesus' grace. (Galatians 3:1-6)

Third, and most important, remember God's way: to proclaim *Jesus*, not our wisdom, experience, strengths, or anything else that might encourage faith in us. Whether you tend toward fear or

pride, you need to be grounded in *Jesus' goodness* by His *grace* for His *glory*. (Romans 11:36) If you tend toward fear, you need to renew your mind in the Scriptures that lovingly encourage you to step out and speak up because of Jesus' goodness, grace and glory. And you need regular relationship other believers that you trust to encourage you in the same. If you tend toward pride, you need to renew your mind in the Scriptures that lovingly encourage you to step back and listen up because of Jesus' goodness, grace and glory. And you need regular relationship other believers that you trust to encourage you in the same. In other words, the fearful and the proud need other believers to disciple you in Christ so that you, in turn, can disciple others in His love and holiness.

"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:14-17

Because His goal is *each other's* maturity in Christ, I also believe there can be great wisdom in members of the Board *not* teaching PWOC Bible studies. This helps provide more opportunities for other sisters in the Body of Christ to grow by serving. It also helps ensure that Board members are nourished by being taught and admonished in Jesus' goodness, grace and glory - not burning out by working in their own strength.

Resources for Your Board

I have found the following reads to be helpful, as I struggle with pride and my wife struggles with fear. I pray that they may be helpful to you:

1. For the fearful - *"When People are Big and God is Small"*, by Edward T. Welch
2. For the proud - *"Return of the Prodigal Son"*, by Henri Nouwen
3. For both - *"Toughest People to Love: how to understand, lead and love difficult people in your life"*, by Chuck DeGroat.
4. And http://www.openbible.info/topics/having_a_teachable_spirit references additional verses.

May our gracious and holy God Jesus bless you and your board as you serve Him and one another for His glory and your joy in Jesus.

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