

Rebuking In the Bible



Genesis 31:42 *“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you.”*

Why the rebuke? Sometimes we need to say *just stop it!* There was a story I heard of a man from an African country that had never been in a canoe. In fact, he had never learned to swim. One day, some friends took him to a beautifully cold lake in the mountains to sit in a canoe and enjoy the scenery. All was going well until he stood up. Over the side he went. A few yards away was another canoe watching this man try and turn the canoe over. One of his friends yelled stop! We are coming to your rescue. Amazingly this African man did stop. There he stayed in the water while holding on to the boat until help arrived. Did his friend rebuke him sharply or save him?

Luke 3:19 *“But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done.”*

Luke 17:3 *“So watch yourselves. “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.”*

A rebuke in the Bible is done for many reasons. What if it looked like yelling or criticism, but in reality, it was saving your life? Why did Jesus’ rebuke Peter and call him Satan? Probably, it was one of the worse things you could call someone. Yet, it was meant to be direct, sharp, and

harsh. I was just asked in a Bible study to make kingdom goals. What is that? Peter wanted Jesus to stay with them and not return to heaven. Maybe, Jesus was asking Peter to think of kingdom goals first. To Jesus the goal was beyond death. I am sure Jesus was thinking of me being saved while he hung on the cross. He died for a prostitute finding safety and salvation in a church rather than a brothel. That rebuke wanted Peter to think beyond this world.

Leviticus 19:17 *““Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.”*

Luke 23:40 *“But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?”*

Who really wants to share the Gospel with friends, family, and neighbors? We are asked to in church. There are a few people that always do that. I have heard countless stories of people becoming estranged from their friends, family, and neighbors because they offered the gospel. You are putting your friendship on the line when you share the good news of Christ Jesus. Many will reject it and you. Yet, the rebuke in the two verses above say that we share in their guilt if we remain silent.

How harsh is that? Why are we guilty for their sin? Years ago, I went through divorce. Three divorced ladies had befriended my wife in the months leading up to the split. They were the only voices that she heard to leave me. They shared in her sin. Yet, the voices that remained silent might have turned divorce into marriage if they had not remained silent. What could a sharp rebuke have done to save me and my Ex-wife? What pain, mental anguish, and heartbreak could have been spared, if only someone had rebuked her and me?

1 Timothy 5:1 *“Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers.”*

A rebuke can be done as a gift. Sometimes we need a strong word to correct us. It's been a human pastime for the young to rebuke the older. It's by no mistake that one of the Ten Commandments is *“honor your mother and father.”* Humans have a hard time with the elderly. The reality of it is that they are usually wiser than us. They have experienced more life than we have. For some reason that grates on the young. We feel so much smarter than them. Recently, a new brand of church has risen up called emergent or progressive. They claim that modern man knows God better than the fathers of the past. They have upgraded the Gospel understanding in a false way. Do they know better than the older generations?

Matthew 20:31 *“The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”*

We should honor our elderly. On the flip side we should respect and train our youth. A rebuke should be done to turn people onto a good path. The verse above was used to quiet people from asking for a good thing. Sometimes we don't think that person has the right to ask. That someone is not justified or worthy to become a Christian. How about a rapist who wants to change his ways? A criminal that needs to turn over a new leaf? Remember, a rebuking in the Bible was meant to change course. To show wisdom and understanding. In most cases, a good rebuke, is meant to save lives. To stop people from drowning in their own wisdom.