

# Whom Do You Rebuke?

**1 Timothy 5:1-25** Later in 2 Timothy Paul writes Timothy and tells him to rebuke those who oppose themselves by going their own willful way even after they have walked for a season with Christ Jesus. We are to rebuke those who will not endure sound doctrine, but who instead walk after their own lusts. In today's reading we see a clear warning to Timothy about not rebuking certain people. Paul says, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren" (v. 1, KJV).

Rebuke should always be done with a meek spirit. If we ever rebuke anyone, we should do it with the attitude that but for the grace of God we also might go our own willful way. The reason Paul tells Timothy not to rebuke an elder is because of the respect we should show toward our elders. Timothy should leave such rebuke to another elder. Whether Paul is speaking of not rebuking those in the office of eldership in the church, we do not know. The message, however, is clear. Timothy was exhorted not to rebuke those who were older than him either in the spirit or in the flesh. I believe the understanding was for Timothy to leave such rebuke in the hands of older people or more mature Christians. We know Timothy was very young.

Timothy is also exhorted not to rebuke younger men. I believe this exhortation to Timothy was to protect those who were young in the spirit from being crushed by such a rebuke. We have to constantly be reminded that reproof and rebuke are for only one purpose. We rebuke or reprove a brother or sister in Christ with meekness of heart and with the intent to soften the heart of such a brother or sister so that they will repent. Reproof and rebuke are always used to restore a brother, not to crush or embarrass a brother or sister in Christ.

Paul in this letter is challenging us all to tread lightly when we feel we should reprove or rebuke a fellow Christian. We always have to do this with a heart of love toward this person, not a heart filled with criticism and judgment. Remember, if we rebuke or reprove in any spirit other than the spirit of love, we open ourselves to fall into sin in the same way the one we have rebuked fell. Remember Jesus' words: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with what measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matt. 7:1-2). What a sober thought to end this devotional with! I am challenged to tread lightly in reproof and rebuking. Frankly, if I am busy about my Father's business, I won't have time to judge the sins of others.

Lord, forgive me for looking at the sins of others more than I look at my own sins. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and I confess to You the many times I have sat in judgment of others.

**READ: Jeremiah 35:1-36:32; 1 Timothy 5:1-25; Psalm 89:14-37;  
Proverbs 25:25-27**