



“Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” Hebrews 3:13.

The Stewardship of Counsel

Central Truth: A good steward encourages the doubtful and warns the wayward.

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Topic: Stewardship; Counsel.

A good steward encourages the hesitant and warns the wayward. He does it by “exhorting” them and “provoking” them to love and to good works (Hebrews 10:24, 25). That means He seeks to stimulate and arouse people to faithful living by encouraging, admonishing, and helping them. Here is a blessed ministry that we can exercise toward one another to our mutual benefit and to God's greater glory. It is also an essential ministry. The Bible urges believers to “*exhort one another daily . . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (Hebrews 3:13). The ministry of counsel, rightly exercised, can keep a brother or sister in Christ from becoming hardened in sin. Think of it! You can be a blessing through your counsel. “But I do not have training as a counselor,” someone may object. It matters not. There is much good you can do to your fellow Christians and your non-Christian associates by “*speaking the truth in love*” as opportunity arises (Ephesians 4:15). The parent can counsel the child. The teacher can counsel the student. The friend can counsel the friend. And sometimes the stranger can counsel the stranger, for God will create that opportunity on occasion. If we are ready to serve, God will bring us to one who needs our service.

I. THE BASIS OF COUNSEL (Romans 14:7-12)

A. Interdependence: we belong to one another. “*None of us liveth to*

himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7). The church is “one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another” (Romans 12:5). “The body is not one member, but many. . . . But God hath tempered the body together, . . . that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (I Corinthians 12:14, 24-27). What hurts you hurts me and what helps you helps me. As Christians we complete — not compete with — each other. Let us help one another.

B. Ownership: each of us belongs to the Lord. *“Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8). Each Christian lives in a physical body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). God said, “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine” (Ezekiel 18:4). “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1).*

You belong to me and I belong to you because both of us belong to the Lord. That is why we minister in love to one another.

C. Intrusion: it is possible for us to invade one another’s life without warrant. So God asks us, *“Why dost thou judge thy brother?”* (Romans 14:10). To do that presumes a position we do not occupy. We are to be doers of the law, not judges of whether another person is keeping it or not (James 4:11, 12). We should enter one another’s life to strengthen and encourage, not to judge and condemn.

D. Accountability: each of us must answer to God for himself (Romans 14:10-12). Rewards and discipline will be meted out according to our works in that day (Luke 12:42-48). *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (II Corinthians 5:10). Let us take heed, therefore, how we deal with one another, neither neglecting when we are needed nor intruding where we have no ministry.

Those four principles are the basis of our counsel to one another. Review them and be guided by them.

II. THE LIMITS OF COUNSEL (Romans 14:13)

Romans 14:13 sets two limitations on our dealing with one another. Notice how practical they are, and how needed they are.

A. We must not judge one another in counsel. *“Let us not therefore*

judge one another any more.” Even if we have been judgmental in our attitude in the past, we must do it no more. *“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand”* (Romans 14:4). *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God”* (1 Corinthians 4:5). It is easy to be critical of a brother or sister who has stumbled. That is why in restoring a person overtaken in a fault, one must keep watch lest he be tempted (Galatians 6:1). Do not condone sin or condemn the sinner. Love and lift as Jesus does.

B. We must not hinder one another. *“Judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way”* (Romans 14:13). Criticism of an erring brother can cause him to give up hope and go further into sin. Standing in a spirit of self-righteous superiority over a weak brother will discourage him more (1 Corinthians 8:8-13). We must take care that nothing we say or do will be a weight to one who errs (Romans 14:21). Instead, let us become as a servant to anyone in need, that we may help him to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

In every situation we are a part of the problem or a part of the solution. Which will you be?

III. THE GUIDELINES IN COUNSEL (Hebrews 10:23-25)

A. Be steadfast in the faith. *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering”* (Hebrews 10:23). Here is the challenge: *“Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end”* (1 Peter 1:13). We set an example and give hope by being *“stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Hold steady even when others err.

B. Be watchful of others. *“Let us consider one another”* (Hebrews 10:24). Like a watchman set over the city, we are to watch against the enemy and warn of his coming (Ezekiel 3:17). Spiritual leaders *“watch for your souls”* (Hebrews 13: 17) and God approves such a ministry.

C. Encourage Christian virtues. *“Provoke unto love and to good works.”* (Hebrews 10:24). That is the goal of all Christian counsel. Love motivates good works, and good works are the manifestation of love. Help someone grow in both.

D. Be faithful in meeting with the saints. By *“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”* we counsel in deed; by *“exhorting one*

another” we counsel in word (Hebrews 10:25). Some will fail to meet as they should, but that must not keep others from the assembly. We need the assembly of the saints. There we are exhorted (encouraged and aroused) to the work of God. There will never come a time when the meeting of the church is no longer needed. The closer His return draws, the more important it will be for the saints to assemble and encourage one another.

By being steadfast, being watchful, being an encourager, and being faithful in assembling with the saints we can strengthen one another in the Lord.

IV. THE GOALS IN COUNSEL

Spiritual growth into a greater likeness to Christ is the ultimate goal of every Christian. We were saved that we might be conformed to His image (Romans 8:29). That includes the practical discipline of growing in faith (Hebrews 10:22), hope (verse 23), love (verse 24), and good works (verse 25).

The Holy Scripture is the basis of our exhorting one another. We do not depend on human wisdom or the philosophy of secular counselors. God's Word is wonderfully sufficient in all areas of belief and behavior.

Meet regularly with your fellow Christians for Bible study, prayer, and worship. Help one another and receive help from one another, and you will *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (II Peter 3:18). A good steward of counsel gives it and receives it as need requires.

Questions

1. Explain the terms “provoke” and “exhorting” as used in Hebrews 10:24, 25.
2. Why does Hebrews 3:13 say we need to be exhorted?
3. What insight does Ephesians 4:15 give in counseling?
4. What does Romans 14:7 give as a reason for our helping one another?
5. What warning is there in Romans 14:10?
6. Why might we be tempted to judge one another in counseling?
7. How can we be sure we do not cause a brother to fall?
8. How can we *“consider one another”* as in Hebrews 10:24?
9. Why is church attendance so important for us?
10. What is our ultimate goal in helping one another?

