

**Grow Up: Scripture Corrects Us**  
**By Pastor Daniel Denison**  
**2 Timothy 3:10-17.**  
**June 20, 2021 - FATHER'S DAY**

We're in our 3<sup>rd</sup> week of our GROW UP series and for the entire month of June as we learn about growing up spiritually, we are using the same text from 2 Timothy. I hope you have your Bibles or pull out a pew Bible and follow along with me. I will be making several other scripture references today so it will definitely be helpful to have your Bibles out. Here's what chapter 3 says:

**<sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,<sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,<sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom<sup>[a]</sup> you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.**

I think Paul does a magnificent job of laying out for young Timothy what it looks like for all of us to grow up. V. 10: we need to follow sound teaching which for Christians is always going to include the scriptures. We need to follow the conduct of older wiser mature Christians. We need to have patience and love and steadfastness. We need to understand and be emotionally ok with the fact that when we live life this way we may face persecution. And then v.14 and 15, we must continue on and persevere. But then here's the capstone of this chapter and it's where we have pulled the 4 ideas for each week in this sermon series:

**<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God<sup>[b]</sup> may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

Today's topic isn't exactly a fun one. I mean let me just read for you Webster's definition of reproof which is one of the words we see in v.16 (SLIDE): *An expression of blame or disapproval.* What Paul tells young Timothy and what we need to talk about this morning is that we all need correction and reproof in our life. And what makes this a difficult topic is NONE of us like to be corrected am I right? So we need it in our lives, but we hate receiving it!

Early on in our marriage one of the things that Mindy had to correct me on a lot was my wardrobe. I'd guess at least a few times a month I'd get dressed and she'd look at me and say "you can't wear that, it doesn't match!" And I would get so angry, mostly because I was embarrassed. But thank goodness she corrected me so that I didn't look like a fool. And now thanks to her correction, I'd like to think that I'm a halfway stylish guy. Especially compared to most of the United Methodist Pastors I know.

My son made the jump to coach pitch baseball about 9 months ago.(SLIDE) I think hitting a baseball is one of the most difficult skills of any sport. It takes a lot of practice AND a lot of correction. And he is soooo much like his daddy because he hates to get corrected. When we tell him to get his elbows up or to wait on the ball or to change his stance, he hates it, sometimes to the point of tears. But God bless him, he has gotten so much better and I'm so proud of his hard work. But his improvement and flourishing would not have happened without someone stepping in to correct him. Even though like all of us, he hates to be corrected!

Ok so none of us want correction in our lives. Or do we? I want to make the case that when it comes from an authority we trust and it is done from a place of love almost all of us long for it. We want to be led and corrected by authority and love. We all do. Years ago Mindy and I watched the TV show Lost. (SLIDE) And let's be honest that show went sideways really quickly with polar bears and smoke monsters and the Dharma initiative. But the real tension point at the beginning is that a plane crashes and survivors realize no help is coming. And so suddenly you have a collection of humanity with no social structure. And when everyone does what is right in their own eyes, some people choose compassion and love. But some people choose selfishness.

Some decided to hoard the medicine and the food for their own good. And so they quickly realize if we let everyone do what they want, we cannot flourish. They decide they need rules and correction that can govern their new society. And when they do that, they say we need someone who can lead all of this. And they look to the guy who had AUTHORITY. He was competent, he was a doctor, he understood the physical body and what it needed. But he also had COMPASSION. He used that power in the service of caring for people's needs. And so the survivors looked to Jack and they said you run us. Because you have authority, and you have compassion. You have competency and affection. You have power and love. And we want to be ruled and corrected by authority and compassion and love.

So the first thing we need to establish this morning as we talk about correction is that it has to come from the right kind of authority. The Bible can correct us because it has authority. As we discussed 2 weeks ago this is the inspired Word of God, the creator of life. So the being that created our entire world and knows what we need in order to flourish gives us instruction and rebuke through scripture.

But authority has to be coupled with compassion and love. Let's think about the role of a Dad since it's Father's Day. With the title of Dad comes built in authority. But if it's not coupled with love, then correction will not be received well. Many of you have or had dads that had both authority and love. And maybe you didn't appreciate their correction at the time, but as grown-ups we can look back now and give thanks if we had dads who coupled their authority with love in order to rebuke and correct us. It helped us to GROW UP as mature self-functioning, life giving adults. I know some of you didn't have dads like this or maybe your dad was completely absent, but I bet all of you can point to an older man in your life who offered you wise counsel and correction. So on this Father's Day, we say thank you and we celebrate and honor all of the father like figures in our life that were bold enough to speak truth and correction into our life.

Dads, I hope you picked one of these up 2 weeks ago when Tom mentioned it in his sermon. Moms and grandparents, you are welcome to get one too. It's a simple little book called GROW

AT HOME (SLIDE) that will help you talk about discipleship with your kids and grandkids. We're talking about GROWING UP all month in our sermons and this book is going to help you do that. This is our gift to you, so please get one at guest services or when you pick up your child in AsburyKids.

This morning there's really just two things I want to do. I want to first talk about the fact that we need to be willing to speak up and offer correction, but I also want to acknowledge that it's hard to receive correction and so we also need to learn how to receive correction.

If we want to be more adept at offering correction to others, then we have to be genuinely kind people. GENUINE KINDNESS is one of our three core behaviors on the Asbury staff. What we mean is not that they are just nice people, but that they are willing to speak the truth in love. If they have a problem with someone, they're going to go and talk to that person instead of triangulating and going to other people to talk about it. If they see a staff member who is doing something that they shouldn't, because they have genuine kindness, they will speak up and correct that staff person.

I want to De-stigmatize this idea that it's mean or hurtful to offer correction and reproof. Too many people in life are unwilling to rebuke and speak out and I believe our churches, our work places, our families, and our marriages suffer because of it. **Proverbs 27:6 says "Faithful are the wounds of a friend but profuse are the kisses of an enemy."** (SLIDE)

Kindness and niceness are two different things. Being nice is really just kisses from an enemy. When we are nice, we are trying to be perceived as friendly and comfortable and just easy to be around. Genuine kindness is wounds from a friend, because it actually requires that we tell people the truth. And here's the paradox of it all, when we choose to be nice instead of genuinely kind, we're actually being cruel. Think about it this way:

If you're sitting in a business meeting with your team at work and someone says or does something or proposes an idea that is really bad and you are reluctant or unwilling to speak up and say something difficult because of the way you might be mis-perceived or because you might hurt someone's feelings. If you do that, that is selfish and cruel. Because ultimately, you're trying to protect yourself instead of trying to help do what's best for the team or someone on the team. You are depriving that person or team of something that could really help in order to make yourself feel more comfortable. Too often we have this unnecessary guilt and we feel like people can't handle a direct and loving correction and as a result it becomes a lose/lose for everyone involved.

About a year before I came to Asbury I was really wrestling with what to do next in my career. I was thinking about leaving ministry mostly just because I was restless and interested in trying something different. I remember reading a book on sales and I remember thinking "hey, I could do that, that doesn't seem that hard and I could probably make a lot of money." And I can remember sharing this idea with a few friends and acquaintances and all of them were so encouraging and complimentary. They would say things like "Kudos for having the courage to be willing to explore something else." Or "I'm just so proud of you for being willing to take such

a leap of faith.” Or “Yea, I think you’d be really good at that.” Those were the nice and easy things to say. Those were kisses of an enemy.

But I had one friend that was willing to be genuinely kind. And he said: Daniel, don’t do that. You would be miserable doing that. You are not going to be fulfilled in that and quite frankly I don’t think you’d be very good at it. Now I’ll be honest that stung a bit, but that kindness saved me from potentially making a major mistake. Faithful are the wounds of a friend...

Now imagine with me that same friend had similar kinds of conversations with 4 other people. And we’re assuming that he was coming from a place of authority and love and compassion, which means probably at least 4 of those conversations ended up going really well and helping someone. But let’s just say one didn’t go as well, maybe he was a little too harsh and the person on the receiving end was a little too sensitive. And so he had to apologize and maybe for a few days things were awkward before they got better. Which is better: Helping 4 people and upsetting one person where you had to apologize. OR doing nothing for anybody and helping nobody. Sadly, too many people in our world and in the church choose to go 0 for 5 and help nobody for risk of POSSIBLY hurting or offending someone.

Let me wrap up genuine kindness and offering correction with a business example that may speak to some of you more than others. Patrick Lencioni is a management consultant (SLIDE) who has worked with all kinds of major fortune 500 companies. HE says this and I quote: **Being kind instead of nice is the key to agility and getting things done quickly and effectively. I honestly believe this idea of being willing to sometimes be perceived as a jerk because we have hard conversations is one of the greatest competitive advantages in all of business.** So if you just want good business advice, what I’m saying is huge in your place of work. Being willing to have crucial conversations at the expense of possibly hurting someone’s feelings will make you more successful, it will make your families stronger, and it will make our church stronger.

Patrick Lencioni is a faithful follower of Christ, and in addition to consulting with many fortune 500 companies he also consults with lots of churches and non-profits. He says that far and away the church is worse than any other organization when it comes to speaking the truth in love. He has worked with all kinds of dysfunctional businesses and the most dysfunctional of all have been many of the churches he has worked with. Ephesians 4:15 tells us (SLIDE) **Speaking the truth in love, we are to GROW UP in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.**

Church, it’s time for us to grow up and have some courage. The parking lot meetings and the anonymous notes and the passive aggression and the practice of going to complain to other people instead of the person you have the problem with is selfish and unloving. Let’s instead love one another with genuine kindness. Let’s not be afraid to have crucial conversations and offer correction out of love.

Now to be clear I’m not suggesting you start correcting random strangers and people you don’t know. We’ve seen way too many news stories and youtube videos over the last year of random strangers trying to tell people to wear a mask and that usually didn’t go very well for either party.

Remember we must have authority and love. I believe you naturally have some level of authority when you have a relationship with someone. SO I don't just mean that you have to be the boss or a parent when I say authority, I mean that you need to have a genuine relationship where there is trust. My employees can offer correction to me because they have a relationship with me and there's mutual trust. And whenever they do, they take that authority and they couple it with love and compassion. And we all flourish because of it. We become more complete and equipped for every good work as our text this morning tells us (v.17).

So there's my challenge to you: We need to speak the truth in love more and be willing to offer correction. But receiving correction can be really hard and so I'd like to spend the rest of our time talking about how we receive correction. And to do so I want to use another one of our staff's core behaviors and that is confident humility. Genuine kindness helps us offer correction and rebuke, but confident humility will allow us to receive correction in our lives. Now I realize that probably sounds like an oxymoron: am I supposed to be confident or am I supposed to be humble, which is it? And the answer is YES.

We all know people who are proud and arrogant. And it's NOT an attractive quality. Pride inherently builds within us the need to feel better than others. And if we have a need to feel like we're better than others, we will never be open to correction and rebuke. Proverbs 11:12 says: (SLIDE) **"A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor."** Pride makes us deride, that is to say, pride makes us look down at other people. It makes us do anything we can, physically or emotionally, internally or externally, so that we can puff ourselves up and feel better than others.

C.S. Lewis devotes an entire chapter to pride in his book Mere Christianity. Listen to what he says: (SLIDE) "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something. Pride only gets pleasure out of having more of something than the next person. Proud people are not really proud of being successful or intelligent or good looking, they're proud of having more success, more intelligence, and better looks than those around them. It's the comparison that makes us proud. It's the pleasure of being above the rest."

One of the consequences of pride is that our lives look like a court trial and we live in this constant state of litigation in which we are trying to prove to the jury, to our friends our peers our family and the world around us that we are someone, we are better than others, and we matter. When we live our lives this way we will never be open to correction.

The proud person is also desperately aware of themselves. Put a different way, they continually call attention to themselves. That's really the nature of pride: to be self-aware to be always thinking about how I'm looking, how I'm doing, how I'm performing, how I'm being treated by others. (SLIDE) **Proverbs 13:10 says, "Wisdom is found in those who take advice, but pride only breeds quarrels."** If you give someone advice, you are talking about the thing or the object, not the person, but that's not how the prideful person sees it. For example, if you say, "hey I think you put the nail up too high, it should probably go down here." You are talking about the nail, you're talking about the picture and where it should be hung. But that's not how the proud person sees it. The proud person says, "Don't tell me how to hang a picture! I know where to put the nail!" In other words for the proud person it's all about him or her. The proud person is

always calling attention to the self, to the person, to the ego. How you look, how you're doing, how you're performing, how others are treating you.

And so you're saying "Ok, so I just need to be really humble." Well yes, sort of, but you also have to be confident!

Because since a proud self is always aware of itself, what we like to call low self-esteem, is really a form of pride. If you're thinking to yourself, "well I don't think very highly of myself so I must not struggle with pride," think again. When you have a low self-esteem you're still only concentrating on yourself. You feel like a failure, you feel bad, your down on yourself, your sad, you think the world is out to get you, but in the midst of all that you're still focused solely on who? YOURSELF. The person with low self-esteem is just as absorbed with himself as the arrogant person. If you have a low self-esteem, you still are living your life as if you're in a court trial, but instead of building up all the evidence of why you're so great and deserving, you're building up evidence against yourself of why you're so undeserving and so worthless. You're still living in this constant state of trial, arguing and litigating for yourself, the only difference between you and the person with the superiority complex is that you are losing the trial instead of winning it! So pride is needing to feel better than others and it's being morbidly self-conscious and aware of yourself.

Thus we need to have CONFIDENT HUMILITY. Because if we are constantly trying to build our resumes for why we are better than others and if we're constantly self absorbed, we will NEVER be in an emotional state to receive correction from others. So let me offer you two ways to do a quick self-assessment on yourself to see how well you measure up with confident humility:

First, how do you respond to criticism? The prideful person, because they are so self-absorbed, whenever someone comes to them and says, "You know, I love you enough to come and challenge you in this particular way," the prideful person becomes super defensive. Who are you!? I don't do that, you're the one that does that! That's not me, why don't you get the log out of your own eye before you start dealing with the speck in mine! Do you get defensive and angry when people criticize you or maybe instead on the other end of the spectrum you completely crumble? And instead of taking the critique with a grain of salt, you let it eat away at you and you beat yourself up and you think your worthless because someone pointed out a fault. Both of these reactions, being defensive or becoming completely devastated at the thought of not being perfect are pride working in our lives. Identify it by looking at how you respond to criticism.

But also ask yourself, "how do you respond to encouragement?" IF someone comes up to you and just heaps a whole bunch of praise on you, how do you respond? Let me demonstrate for you how the prideful person handles a compliment: "Can I just tell you what an incredible job you did, that was amazing!" And this is how the prideful person responds: "Oh, please, no, stop it, come on, you're just saying that, it was no big deal, geez your embarrassing me, cut it out!"

Have you ever known someone like that? For whatever reason they just can't let you extend them a compliment? You ever wonder why people do that? I have a theory and I have developed this theory because sometimes I react the very same way to compliments. The reason why I

sometimes sluff off a compliment is because I really don't want you to know just how desperately I wanted and needed that praise. We don't know how to graciously accept thanks and praise from people, because deep inside we are terrified of them knowing just how much we desperately crave their praise. Do you know what that is? That's pride.

So what is the point of all this? Is the point simply to go around correcting more people? Is the point to allow ourselves to receive more correction in our life? No, let me point you back to the final verse of our text, (SLIDE) **2 Timothy 3:16-17, All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, SO THAT the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

We're talking about correction and rebuke SO THAT we might GROW UP and be trained in righteousness and be complete and equipped to go and do every good work in the name of Jesus Christ.

Let me close with this: In Revelation 5, John is receiving a vision from an angel. In verse 5 the angel says to him, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." The angel of course is talking about Jesus and he says to John, "Look at the lion!" But when John looks at the lion, listen to what he sees in verse 6, "Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a LAMB standing as if it had been slaughtered." John looks for the lion and he sees a slaughtered lamb.

In the person and work of Jesus Christ we have both lion, the confident man that turned over the money changers tables in the temple, but we also have the lamb, the merciful gracious one who humbly gave of his life so that we might have life eternal. When you meet Jesus, when you seek to walk in the ways of our Lord, you can be someone that is confident, while still being humble and you can be humble while still being confident.

Friends, it's all about Jesus. He is the reason we're here, he is the reason for everything we do. If we want to grow up if we want to be trained in righteousness and equipped to do every good work, we need to know Jesus. If you've never given your life to Jesus, today is the day. As we come to the table this morning if you've never asked Jesus into your heart, I hope you will make today the day.