

**Gathering Question:** How good are you at definitions? How about this one? What does the word admonish mean? Create a list of synonyms for the word.

## Admonish One Another

Admonish? How do you do this well? That kind of sounds dangerous in a community of believers, doesn't it. To admonish means to counsel, to caution, to warn, to advise, and to encourage someone not to do something that is harmful or wrong. The reason it sounds so dangerous is that few people take warning or caution or even sometimes advice in a good way. They might feel threatened or judged by the one who is trying to give the admonition. They might bristle at the advice thinking that it is none of your business.

But there it is in Scripture, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom.” (Colossians 3:16). We have a responsibility to one another in the community of believers. And even though it might not seem pleasant, we are called not only to teach but also to admonish one another. If you look at the instruction closely you might be able to notice some things that will help you be successful in the process.

First, all admonition is preceded by dwelling in the Word of God. We are not trying to form each other into the image of ourselves. Admonition is never about personal preferences or choices that lie outside the Bible's instruction. There are some things that the Bible clearly states are personal things between us and the Father. Giving, for example, is one of those very private matters. It has to do with gratitude, and willingness, and our heart's response to God. No one can tell another person how much he or she should give. In fact, Jesus said that a person should not let his left hand know what his right hand is doing. It is that personal. But there are some things that do affect the community and that should be addressed by one another. It is so important to know the Word of God well enough to know the difference!

Also did you notice Paul's concern that this be done in all wisdom? It is as important to know how to say something to another individual as it is to know what to say. To be able to correctly admonish each other presupposes a deep relationship with that brother or sister. If we have not spent the time and energy getting to know someone and sharing a life of love, any attempt at admonition will likely not have its intended results. When we know each other well, we know how to talk to each other in the most effective way. This calls for a heart of wisdom. There is a time and place that is most effective for admonition. Wisdom directs us to that time and place.

**Read:** Colossians 3:16; Proverbs 15:5, 31, 32; I Thessalonians 5:12, 14.

### **Discuss:**

1. What is the difference between admonition and teaching – if any?
2. List some things about which Christians should admonish one another.