

Correcting Others

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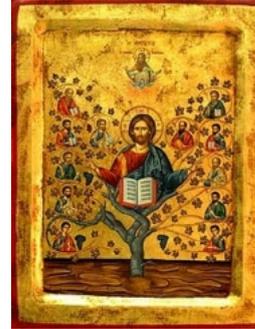
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1. "If you want, or rather intend, to take a splinter out of another person, then do not hack at it with a stick instead of a lancet, for you will only drive it in deeper. And this is a stick – rude speech and rough gestures. And this is a lancet – tempered instruction and patient reprimand. "Reprove," says the Apostle, "rebuke, exhort," but he did not say "beat." (II Timothy 4:2) And if even this is required, do it rarely, and not with your own hand." [St John Climacu, the Ladder o Divine Ascent, Step 8, On Freedom From Anger and On Meekness](#)
2. "If you wish to correct anyone from his faults, do not think of correcting him solely by your own means: you would only do harm by your own passions, for instance, by pride and by the irritability arising from it; 'but cast thy burden upon the Lord,' (Ps. 55:22) and pray to God 'Who trieth the hearts and reins,' (Ps. 7:9) with all your heart, that He Himself may enlighten the mind and heart of that man." [St. Gregory Palamas \(On Prayer and Purity of Heart no. 3, The Philokalia Vol. 4 edited by Palmer, Sherrard and Ware; Faber and Faber pgs 344-345\)](#)
3. "Question: If one of the brethren or one of the sick should sin, and I, desiring to correct him, tell him something with disturbance: should I later bow down to him (asking for forgiveness)? If it should happen that he leaves the infirmary being angry at me, what should I do? And in general, for what faults should one make a prostration (to the other)? For pride and self-justification darken the mind. And when one makes a prostration, vainglory again finds an occasion for itself.

Answer: Do nothing with disturbance, because evil does not give rise to good. But endure until your thought should become calm, and then speak in peace. And if the brother should listen to you – well and good; but if not, tell him: "Would you not like me to reveal this to the Abba, and we will do as he judges," and you will be at peace. But if he goes away angry, tell the Abba, and he will enlighten him: but make no bow to him (that is, do not beg forgiveness), for through this you will give him occasion to think that you are actually guilty before him, and he will arm himself against you even more. But from other people be careful to ask forgiveness, corresponding to the sin: as soon as you see that your sin is great, bow down; but when it is not great, say with your lips, with a feeling of heartfelt repentance: "Forgive me, brother."

Beware of pride and self-justification, for they hinder repentance; and it also happens that a man gives a bow out of vainglory. Despite these three passions (pride, self-justification, and vainglory); where necessary, make a bow with humility, fear of God, and understanding. According to your strength, strive to remain in these virtues, and God will help you, by the prayers of the Saints." [Saints Barsanuphius and John: Guidance Toward Spiritual Life,](#) trans. by Fr. Seraphim Rose, (Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990)

Source: http://www.orthodox.net/gleanings/correcting_others.html



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