

Provoking Unto Love

Sixty-six Articles Designed
To Spur You On To
Love And Good Works

Boyce Mouton

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Introduction

Many people assume that an emphasis on love will mean an absence of discipline and firmness. Exactly the reverse is true. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. Those who are without chastisement are treated like bastards and not sons (see Heb. 12:6-8.)

The Scriptures teach that "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (Prov. 29:15.)

It is natural to be concerned enough to be critical of those whom we love. We may not care enough about someone else's children to examine them with an analytical eye and to punish them for failure to measure up to high standards . . . but we ought to do that with our own children . . . if we really and truly love them. An undisciplined child brings his mother to shame.

Certainly the same principle applies to the family of God. Those whom we love . . . we chasten. We guard them with a jealous eye. We endeavor to protect them from actions which are careless and irresponsible. Sometimes our love requires that we say and do things which are temporarily painful. "**. . . no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby**" (Heb. 12:11.)

It is in this regard that the early Christians were admonished to "**CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS**" (Heb. 10:24.)

The Greek word which is translated as "consider" is "katanoeo," which means to "know fully." The word "noeo"

means to perceive, think, ponder, etc. The word “kata” in front of it intensifies and strengthens the word.

Perhaps we can gain insight into the word by examining the way it is used in Acts 11:6. Simon Peter was the first Apostle of Jesus Christ to preach to the gentiles. This dramatic event was not accomplished, of course, without a great deal of deliberation and serious thought. God gave to Peter a vision in which a sheet was let down from heaven. It was full of all manner of wild beasts, birds, and creeping things. Peter was then commanded to rise, kill, and eat. Acts 11:6 informs us that Peter “considered” this vision. The experience was so profound and disturbing that we can well imagine the serious nature of his thoughts.

The word “katanoeo” is a strong word. It teaches us the way we are to “consider” or “know fully” our brethren in the Family of God. Our concern for them is not to be casual and indifferent. We are to do what we can to know them fully.

Our interest in them is for a purpose. It is to enable us to “provoke” them unto love and good works.

The Greek word translated as “provoke” is another powerful word. It is “paroxusmos.” (Para = beside, intensive, and oxus = sharp) Note the similarity with our English word “paroxysm.” This refers to a sudden attack of a disease, or perhaps a strong outburst of laughter. The N.I.V. translates the word as to “spur one another on.” This is a good translation, for it includes both the strength and intensity of the word without being negative.

We are not to “provoke” people to hurt them. Our every effort is to help others. If we do provoke someone, it is to help them. It is to spur them on to love and good works. Our sharp and pointed words are carefully chosen to avoid negative results. Our cutting remarks are to have a therapeutic value. They are to help people stay out of hell. They are to keep us from forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, and to help us grow more fervent in our exhortations to steadfastness and fidelity.

The force of these inspired instructions should not

be avoided or evaded. We should all "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." We should prayerfully figure out a plan to stimulate those sluggish members of His Body to love and productivity.

Hopefully, this little volume of "caustic comments" will have a positive affect. It is a compilation of short lessons and essays which were written over a period of many years. I am not certain that my heart was always right when some of these sarcastic thoughts invaded my mind. I can only beg indulgence from those of you who read these words. I pray that in spite of my glaring inadequacies and imperfections, the God of all Comfort will use these words for your edification and strength . . . and ultimately for His glory!

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As His Spirit leads

And for God's glory

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For the building up of His Body

And for the evangelization of the world