

The Ministry of Mending
“Admonish” Greek “noutheteo, nouthesia,”

By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1993 (Rev. 96,10)

Introduction: At the start of each lesson we want to remind you of the ministry of “comfort.” The English word “comfort” is the “anchor word” we are using in our series. Our English word “comfort” comes from two Latin words, “cum” in Latin meaning “with” and “fortis” in Latin meaning “fortification, fortress, or fortify.” One commentator stated the English word “comfort” literally means a “strengthened-wither” or more understandably “someone who is with you giving strength.”¹

We are going to explore other words that although not translated “comfort,” can give “comfort” by their very nature, meaning and usage.

1. Word Usage in Language/Translations

What can be understood about the word we are studying today?

A. Forms used (Greek)

This word “noutheteo” comes from two Greek words, “nous” which means “mind or understanding” and “tithemi” which means “to put or place.” This word for “comfort” means “to speak with” implying “a conversation of encouragement, a gentle influence by words.”²

B. Times used

This word for comfort is used 11xs in the Greek New Testament its various Greek forms: “noutheteo” is used 8xs; and, “nouthesia” is used 3xs.³

C. Ways used (translated)

This word is translated into English at least two main ways:

“noutheteo” translated “warn” used 4xs, Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 4:14; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:14

“noutheteo” translated “admonish” used 4xs, Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess. 3:15

“nouthesia” translated “admonish” used 3xs, 1 Cor. 10:11; Eph. 6:4; Titus 3:10⁴

2. Word Usage in History

How is the word we are studying used historically?

A. Classic writing

In classical Greek literature, this word was used to “...Describe the exertion of influence upon the mind, implying resistance. By means of admonition, advice, warning, reminding, teaching, and spurring on, a person can be redirected from wrong ways and his behavior corrected.”⁵

B. Septuagint writing

The Septuagint (LXX, 250bc-150bc, Greek translation of the Old Testament) used this word “noutheteo” for “restraining” (Heb. “kahah”) in 1 Sam. 3:13 and “instructing” (Heb. “yacar”) in Job 4:3.⁶

C. Rabbinical writing

None found!⁷

D. Pre-New Testament writing

The usage of this word prior to the New Testament times was that of “admonition” but it seems as though the emphasis was on “instruction.”⁸

E. During New Testament writing

The usage of this word during the New Testament times (45ad-100ad) maintains the concept of “using knowledge to give spiritual counseling with the motivation of love and with the aim of maturity in Christ.” It was not used as “punishment” as there were specific words for this, “punishment” (Gr. “kloadzo”) and “punishment” (Gr. “kolasis”).⁹ Noutheteo “...means to exert influence upon the will and decisions of another with the object of guiding him into a generally accepted code of behavior or of encouraging him to observe certain instructions.”¹⁰

F. After New Testament

The usage of this word after New Testament times was “admonishing” in the sense of “putting pressure on someone.”¹¹

3. Word Usage in the New Testament

How is the word we are studying used in the New Testament?

A. Acts 20:31

In Acts 20:31, the reader can see how much compassion and care there is associated with this word. Paul spent three years “warning” (Gr. “noutheton”) each believer day and night with tears about the plots of the Jews and others (20:29, the savage wolves) who would come in among them to destroy the church and testimony of Christ. Paul’s warning was from the heart with deep concern for the people he loved. He kept this information “before their minds” constantly for over three years.

B. Romans 15:14

In Romans 15:14, Paul encouraged the Christians in the church of Rome, to “admonish” (Gr. “nouthetein”) each other because they were full of “goodness” (Gr. “agathosunes”) and filled with all “knowledge” (Gr. “gnoseos”). These Christians at Rome had been instructed in many truths of Christ, so that the result is that they should “instruct” or “guide” other Christians in the ways of Christ. “The Romans have the ability to instruct one another where instruct means more than ‘teach;’ it has rather the idea of ‘admonish’ with the thought of correcting what is amiss.”¹² You can never have enough ible knowledge. The thought that you have enough knowledge or that you just need a little bit of knowledge, and that the more important thing is that you go out and win souls for Christ, is not what Paul’s goal for the Christian really was.

C. 1 Corinthians 10:11

In 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul tells us that all the things that happened to Israel, as recorded in the five books of Moses, were written as “examples” (Gr. “tupikos” a pattern or model”) for the Christian’s “admonition” (Gr. “nouthesian”). “Admonition” has the individual’s best interest at heart and wants to keep them from committing sin, by keeping certain things before their minds.

D. Ephesians 6:4

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul states that a father must raise children in the “admonition” (Gr. “nouthesia”) or “instruction” of the Lord. The concept here literally is “to place before the mind.”¹³ Many commentators see “admonition” (Gr. “noutheteo”) as a special element or aspect of the “discipline” (Gr. “paideia”) and “discipline” includes the entire circuit of education and upbringing which a child requires.¹⁴

E. Colossians 1:28

In Colossians 1:28, Paul describes two characteristics of his “preaching” (Gr. “kataggelloman”) to every one listening, (1.) “admonishing” (Gr. “nouthetountes”) or “counseling” and (2.) “teaching” (Gr. “didaskontes”). The purpose is so that every one will be complete in Christ.¹⁵

The sphere of this “admonishing” was “in all wisdom” so that the Christian will use their mind to make correct choices and live properly.

F. Colossians 3:16

In Colossians 3:16, Paul states the “Word of Christ” as it “dwells” (Gr. “enoiketo” literally meaning “to be at home with”) in the Christian, the Christian will do two things to other Christians: (1.) “admonish” (Gr. “nouthetountes”) and (2.) “teach” (Gr. “didaskontes”).

G. 1 Thessalonians 5:12

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Paul informs us that we should “recognize” (Gr. “eidenai” literally “know”) the leaders who: (1.) “work hard among you” (Gr. “chopiontas”), (2.) “are over you” (Gr. “proistamenous” or concerned about you), and (3.) “admonish you” (Gr. “nouthetountas”). The “admonishing” “...is the activity of reminding someone of what he has forgotten or is in danger of forgetting. It may involve a rebuke for wrong doing as well as a warning to be on guard against wrongdoing. It directs an appeal to the conscience and will of one being admonished in order to stir him to watchfulness or obedience.”¹⁶

H. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul commands that Christians continually “warn” (Gr. “noutheteite” present active imperative) those who are “disorderly” (Gr. “ataktous”).¹⁷

4. How are we to understand this word, “noutheteo?”

This word we studied “noutheteo” literally means “to put into mind” and has the following characteristics:

- used with someone who maybe getting or is involved in sin
- used with someone who may need help in going on with the Christian life
- a use of Bible knowledge
- a giving of instruction
- a giving spiritual insight
- motivated by love
- motivated by a deep concern
- the use of gentle influence
- the giving of encouragement
- exert influence on the mind and will
- a warning to be on guard against sin
- a stirring toward watchfulness
- a guiding toward obedience
- an aim to maturity in Christ
- an aim to make right decision
- an aim to steadfastness

Christians are commanded to give “admonishing” to other Christians.

Perhaps a definition of “noutheteo” or “admonition” would be “using knowledge with love to encourage and guide by giving gentle spiritual instruction.”

Conclusion:

The concept of “admonishing” from the pastor and from each other is healthy in the “mending ministry” to the saints.

Jay Adams helped reclaim the so-called "Biblical Counseling" model by replacing the "old" model of integrative counseling with the New Testament concept of “nouthetic” counseling. The church in

general was highly influenced by secular models. Secular psychology tended to undermine responsibility, replace biblical doctrine with Freudian nonsense, and replace instruction with alternative "therapy," practices which never dealt with sin seriously. Jay Adams in his book *Competent to Counsel: An Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (1970) led the way to a more "Biblical approach" to counseling. Jay Adams writes in his introduction, (1.) Nouthetic counseling demands the counselor to recognize that the counselee's ultimate and all-pervading problem is not mental illness but sin (xi). (2.) the secular methods of counselors, psychiatrists and mental institutions are in fierce competition with a biblical approach to counseling. They seek to remove guilt from the counselee by "misclassifying" sin problems (xiv). (3.) Freud goes beyond science to teach "the art of living" and built secular modes as an alternative to religion for a world, (xxii, 1). (4.) there is a moral model of responsibility to stand against the anti-responsibility models (xvi-xvii). (5.) Psychotherapy has become little more than a search through one's past for someone else to blame (xvii) and is presuppositionally deficient (xviii). Nouthetic counseling is getting people to realize they are responsible, sin has consequences, and God has solutions.

References:

- ¹The Love of Life, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Glendale: G/L publications, 1973, p. 187
- ²The Analytical Greek Lexicon, Harold Moulton, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, p. 279
- ³Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, p. 275
- ⁴Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament, J.B. Smith, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1977, p. 240
- ⁵The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 568
- ⁶The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 568; Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, John Eadie, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, p. 444
- ⁷(Spare place in the event I find some new data)
- ⁸A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979, p. 544
- ⁹The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 568
- ¹⁰The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, vol. 1, p. 567
- ¹¹The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, James Moulton and George Milligan, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, p. 488; A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979, p. 620
- ¹²The Epistle to the Romans, Leon Morris, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, p. 509
- ¹³Ephesians, R. Kent Hughes, Wheaton: Crossroads, 1990, p. 201
- ¹⁴Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, John Eadie, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979, p. 444
- ¹⁵"Colossians," Curtis Vaughan, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, Vol. 11, p. 193
- ¹⁶1 & 2 Thessalonians, D. Edmond Hiebert, Chicago: Moody, 1992, p. 249
- ¹⁷Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Charles Wanamaker, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, p. 196