



**FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH**

# **“From a ‘C’ to an ‘A’ Christian, Part 3”**

**January 22<sup>th</sup>, 2012**  
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***Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.***



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From a “C” to an “A” Christian, Part 3

Our text for this third sermon in our series is **1 Timothy 5:20**:  
**20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.**

Thank you for listening and thinking with me as we study God’s Word to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series, “From a “C” to an “A” Christian comes from **Philippians 2:14**, which tells us to:

**14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,  
15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.**

I can remember some of my earliest school experiences. Even from my earliest elementary days of academic experience, I recognized that there are two responses that a student could give his teacher. The student could give his teacher the correct answer, or the student could give his teacher the incorrect answer.

Students that responded with the correct answer were praised, while students that responded with the incorrect answer were, from my immature perspective, humiliated. To my young mind, to hear the teacher say the word “wrong” as a response to your answer was the utmost in humiliation.

I lived in the days of corporal punishment. I found it humiliating to hear the word “wrong” at school, but doing the wrong thing at home could lead to a punishment much more painful than simply being humiliated.

So, from my earliest days, I found it important to be correct, rather than wrong. Of course, when I was a child, being correct was a matter of objective truth. In school, the questions that I was asked had objectively correct answers. Math problems had correct answers, English grammar was objectively structured, science problems were based upon observed facts, and history happened in a certain place on a certain date.

At home, my parents gave me detailed instructions as to how I was supposed to act, so I was seldom surprised when my parents were displeased by my actions.



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

If we have good parents, our childhood life is objective. God tells parents, in **Proverbs 22:6**:

**6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.**

<sup>[1]</sup> Training involves repeatedly giving our children the correct instructions and information that they need to become productive adults. Training also involves role modeling those instructions, so that our children can both see and hear that which they need to learn.

However, <sup>[2]</sup> training also involves those two dreaded words, “you’re wrong”.

Our first parents set the tone for our natural reaction to those two words. When God asked the man, in **Genesis 3:11**:

**11 “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”**

The correct answer to the question would have been “yes”. The man did not think to lie to God, which would have been pointless, but the man decided to try to protect himself from the consequences of disobeying God’s instructions by justifying that which he had done. The man shows us that the primary way to justify disobedience is to blame one’s actions on someone else. So the man said, in **Genesis 3:12**:

**12 “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”**

The man blamed both the woman and God, but doing so did not deflect God’s punishment.

It would have been better for the man to simply take responsibility. He should have simply confessed his sin without blaming anyone and repented, as <sup>[3]</sup> **1John 1:9** tells us:

**9 If we confess our sins, [the LORD] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Since Adam had the gall to blame God for his sin, Adam received the punishment that his sin warranted.

What is my point? My point is although we may naturally find hearing “you’re wrong” somewhat traumatic, God tells us that we have to overcome our discomfort, acknowledge our error, repent and improve our behavior in order to go from a “C” to an “A” Christian.

The genius of my wife’s title for this sermon series is found in the fact that her title recognizes that we, as Christians, have the responsibility to improve our behavior, notwithstanding how well we think that we behave. And the biggest problem that many of we Christians have is our inability to acknowledge our own failings.

For many of us, our favorite Bible verse is found in **Matthew 7:1**:

**1 “Judge not, that you be not judged.**



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Many Christians, especially those that consider themselves to be good Christians, hate to have anyone evaluate their behavior and find it wanting. These Christians are quick to retort, when their behavioral errors are pointed out to them, “You have no right to judge me.” Of course, these Christians do not understand the concept of judging.

In a courtroom, the judge is the person who has the power to render a verdict and pass a sentence. Now, it is obvious, however, that the lawyer for the prosecution has the duty to enumerate the offenses of the accused. It is also obvious that the witnesses for the prosecution have the responsibility to testify to their certain knowledge of the offensive actions of the accused. It is equally obvious that, should the evidence presented impress the members of the jury that the defendant is guilty, the members of the jury have the responsibility to declare such to the judge.

The prosecutor is not judging; he is prosecuting.

The witnesses are not judging; they are witnessing.

The members of the jury are not judging; they are serving as members of the jury.

Only the judge is judging, and the judge is the only one that has the ability to pronounce the defendant guilty. You may not be aware of this fact, but the judge has the leeway to set aside a jury verdict should the judge decide that the jury decided the case in error. Regardless of the jury verdict, the defendant is not convicted until <sup>[4]</sup> the judge says that he is guilty. And the judge is the one that decides the sentence.

Fortunately for me, I am not a judge. I no longer have the power to declare anyone guilty or innocent. Paul tells us, in **Romans 14:4**:

**4 Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**

Of course, at one time, between 13 and 29 years ago, I was a judge. My jurisdiction was small; only one person entered my courtroom for judgment.

**Colossians 3:20** describes it:

**20 Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.**

In my very literal interpretation of this passage of Scripture, the Greek word teknon, translated children, literally means a child, an offspring of a parent, either by birth or by legal adoption, less than 18 years of age. <sup>[5]</sup> Christian [parents] have the jurisdiction over their legal children until their children reach the age of majority. So I was my son’s judge. If I found him guilty, I had the authority to pass sentence on him. And let me give you the Old Testament background for my statement, which is recorded in **Deuteronomy 21:18–21**:  
**18 “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them,**



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

**19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city.**

**20 And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.'**

**21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.**

Of course, in the New Testament dispensation, the authority for parents have their children stoned no longer exists. Jesus tells us, in **John 3:17**:

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

But the authority for parents to judge their children is still part of the counsel of God. And it is the parents' responsibility to provide discipline for their children, short of terminal punishment.

Other than our children, Christians have no responsibility to judge one another. But we do have the responsibility to evaluate one another's sins, as do the prosecutor, the witness and the juror. We cannot pass sentence on one another, but we ought to rebuke one another. Paul tells us, through his letter to Timothy, his son in the ministry, in <sup>[6]</sup> **1 Timothy 5:20**:

**20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.**

Paul reinforces this instruction when he writes Timothy the second time, in **2 Timothy 4:2**:

**2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**

Paul gives a similar instruction to Titus, another of his sons in the ministry. Paul tells Titus, in **Titus 2:11–14**:

**11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,  
12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,**

**13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,**

**14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**

Then in the next verse, **Titus 2:15**, Paul instructs Titus:

**15 Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.**

So, we are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. We are to live sober, righteous and godly lives. And when we do not, we are supposed to remind one another of that which we are supposed to be doing and rebuke one another when we fail to do that which we should.



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

<sup>[7]</sup> Rebuking one another is not judging; rebuking one another simply means to bring the things that Jesus taught us to our remembrance.

The truth of the matter is that Christ is our judge. Paul likens our individual lives to individual bricks that are part of a building, which is built on the foundation of Christ. Paul says, in **1Corinthians 3:11–15**:

**11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

**12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,**

**13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**

**14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.**

**15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

Gold, silver and precious stones represent us when we deny ungodliness, deny lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly. When we do so, our lives are not only godly, but our lives allow us to represent our Savior.

It seems to me that since I am part of probably the smallest church in Lansing, my biggest influence in the community is among those that enjoy jazz at the various clubs and venues. I don't preach at these venues, but I exhibit to those watching how a minister can go in the club and enjoy himself without sinning, and how a man can focus on his marriage to the exclusion of any other women. I am gratified every time a woman comes up to my wife, as a few did this Friday night at the venue in which we were dancing, and complemented my wife on our ability to consistently display our love to one another on the dance floor.

I thank God that He gave me the mind to understand what ballroom dancing was all about and how a social ministry can affect those in the world. Of course, I need to use that opportunity to evangelize more effectively, but I think that my devotion to my wife will certainly be counted as gold when the Day of Judgment comes. After all, Jesus started His ministry off providing wine at a wedding; Jesus must be in favor of partying, as long as the partying is done well.

On the other hand, when we are building with wood, hay or straw, we are doing something that does not honor the Lord and causes the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, as David did when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband so that he could marry her.

We all have some wood, hay and straw to go with our gold, silver and precious stones. And the Lord tells us to rebuke one another so that the gold, silver and precious stones will predominate and we can receive a larger reward. Of course, Paul tells us in 1Corinthians we are saved either way, whether or not we get a reward, but Jesus wants to give us the largest reward possible.



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

So, Jesus tells us to rebuke one another when we do wrong. The problem is that when we hear those dreaded words, “you’re wrong”, in our minds, we become as bad children before good parents as did the man and woman in the Garden.

We revert to the sinful nature that we received from Adam and look for someone to blame. And if we can find no one to blame, we may take refuge behind **Matthew 7:1** to keep from facing the fact that we have sinned and need to feel badly about ourselves. We tell the person rebuking us that they ought not act as judge, even though they are not doing so.

In order to go from a “C” Christian to an “A” Christian, we have to get past the tendency to defensively reject rebuke. We have to learn to embrace rebuke, because we all sin. Listen to that which the Bible says about it, in **Luke 19:1–7**:

**1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.**

**2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.**

**3 And [Zacchaeus] sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.**

**4 So [Zacchaeus] ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see [Jesus], for He was going to pass that way.**

**5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw [Zacchaeus], and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”**

**6 So [Zacchaeus] made haste and came down, and received [Jesus] joyfully.**

**7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “[Jesus] has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”**

Now there isn’t much question that Zacchaeus was a sinner. The tax collectors had a certain quota of money that they had to turn over to the Roman procurator, and their pay was all the money that they could collect after they had the money for Rome. The tax collectors were known for cheating people; the Roman demand for money was so voracious that without cheating people, the tax collectors could not get rich. And Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector, so it went without saying that he was a cheat. And although all of the religious people complained against someone who purported to be holy like Jesus spending time with a sinful, cheating tax collector, Jesus knew that tax collectors needed salvation as well. So Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus as they traveled along the road, and then they arrived at Zacchaeus’ house.

The rich Zacchaeus had his servants prepare a banquet for Jesus and the disciples, and they sat together at the table and prepared to eat. Then, as **Luke 19:8–10** tells us:



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

**8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”**

**9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;**

**10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”**

Jesus did not come for those that do NOT need rebuke. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Jesus is not now here physically, but He tells us, in **Matthew 28:19–20**:  
**19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**  
**20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.**

How did Jesus make a disciple of Zacchaeus? And how do we make disciples of all the nations? Jesus tells us, in <sup>[8]</sup> **Revelation 3:19**:

**19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.**

The key to both the growth of individual Christians and the spread of Christianity is rebuke. If you can't take a good rebuke from a brother or a sister; if you are defensive about your sins and try to justify them by either blaming them on someone or some situation, or pulling out the “don't judge me” card, you cannot go from a “C” to an “A”. In fact, you may be headed for a “D” or an “F”.

Accepting a rebuke spiritually is analogous to physical exercise. If you want those physical muscles to grow, you have to exercise them and break them down, after which the muscle fibers will grow back together stronger. If you want your spiritual life to grow, you have to take rebuke and break your thoughts and actions down, after which, your spirit will be more disciplined and grow stronger in your ability to do that which the Lord says to do.

One day, Jesus preached to a crowd until the sun was low in the sky. As the dusk drew nearer, the disciples tried to stop Jesus, telling Him to allow the people to go away to find food for the evening meal. But in **Matthew 14:16**:

**16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”**

The disciples protested that they did not have enough food for such a large crowd. **Matthew 14:17** records:

**17 And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.”**

So Jesus took the fish and bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and told the disciples to feed the multitude with it. As the disciples were distributing the fish, the fish miraculously multiplied, so that the disciples were able to satisfy the hunger of 5,000 men, not counting their wives and children.

The next day, a greater multitude came looking for Jesus. Those closest to Jesus spoke, in **John 6:30–31**:





## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

**30** Therefore they said to [Jesus], “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?”

**31** Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Ah, that bread. Jesus gave away manna, meaning bread, along with fish, in the desert the previous day, and the people wanted their daily allotment as it was in the days of Moses. Alas, it was not to be, since it was not the end of the day. But Jesus offered them an alternative. In **John 6:51** Jesus said,

**51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”**

Whoa. His flesh? **John 6:52** records:

**52** The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”

Jesus answered them. In **John 6:53–58**:

**53** Then Jesus said to them, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.**

**54** **Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

**55** **For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.**

**56** **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.**

**57** **As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.**

**58** **This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”**

Now, those of us who understand the concept of communion know that which Jesus was saying, but those who were focused on the earthly things of this life could not understand that which Jesus was saying. **John 6:60** records:

**60** Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”

So Jesus explained it. In **John 6:63–64** Jesus said:

**63** **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**

**64** **But there are some of you who do not believe.”** For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.

And there turned out to be two groups of people there. **John 6:66** records:

**66** From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

<sup>[9]</sup> Those disciples wanted the physical fish and bread, but they did not much care for that spiritual food that led to everlasting life. But the twelve were there as well. **John 6:67-69** tells us:

**67** Then Jesus said to the twelve, “**Do you also want to go away?**”



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

**68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**

**69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”**

Peter knew, and testified, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Nevertheless, Peter had been rebuked by Jesus, and even called Satan. Peter heard that hard saying, in **Matthew 16:23**:

**23 But [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”**

Even after receiving this harsh rebuke, Peter maintained his belief in Jesus, and recognized that he had spoken out of turn when he told Jesus that Jesus should not be going to the Cross. And all of the rest of the disciples maintained their faith in Jesus, except Judas.

When Mary came to anoint Jesus’ feet with costly aromatic ointment in preparation for His burial, Judas Iscariot rebuked Mary, saying, in **John 12:5**:  
**5 “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”**

Why was Judas Iscariot so concerned about the poor? **John 12:6** tells us:  
**6 This [Judas Iscariot] said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.**

But Jesus rebuked Judas. **John 12:7–8** tells us:

**7 But Jesus said, “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.”**

Compared to the rebuke Jesus gave Peter, the rebuke that Jesus gave Judas was mild, but, Judas did not get the three hundred denarii that day. Since Judas couldn’t get that money, Judas figured that Jesus owed it to him, and later, Judas did clean up on a financial transaction, at Jesus’ expense.

The scribes and Pharisees were looking to arrest Jesus, but they could not do so during the daytime, even with their armed Temple guards, because of the protection of the crowds that surrounded Jesus. They wanted to catch Jesus at night when the crowds went home, but they didn’t know where Jesus was staying. But **Matthew 26:14–16** tells us:

**14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver [Jesus] to you?” And they counted out to [Judas Iscariot] thirty pieces of silver.**

**16 So from that time [Judas Iscariot] sought opportunity to betray [Jesus].**

Rather than accept a rebuke and the resultant loss of income, Judas decided to betray Jesus.

When we are rebuked, we ought not allow our emotions to be inflamed, but rather we ought to remain calm, accept the rebuke, and objectively examine



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

whether the rebuke has any merit or not. And, my friends, since **Romans 3:23** tells us:

**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

There is an awfully good chance that the rebuke has merit.

Going from a “C” to an “A” means that we have to recognize that we are sinners.

If we are not under a vicious attack from the devil, we are under a subtle attack of the devil. The devil can come with fire and brimstone, or he can disguise himself as an angel of light, but he is always trying to persuade us to sin, and then trying to persuade us to justify our sin can by either blaming it on someone else or getting the person rebuking us to back off by calling them a judge.

But John tells us, in **1John 1:9**:

**9 If we confess our sins, [the LORD] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

And <sup>[10]</sup> we must learn to accept the discomfort that we feel when we are rebuked, calmly and rationally evaluate the rebuke, check ourselves, and then repent.

Once we break the habit of reflexively defending ourselves, we will find that by calmly accepting rebuke, we can have better relationships with one another.

Jesus came to rebuke us, but He came in love, as **John 3:16** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

Jesus Christ came to love us and rebuke us, because we need both.

**Hebrews 12:6** tells us:

**6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”**

So let us learn to accept rebuke calmly, consider the objective content of the rebuke, be slow to take offense, but always be ready for repentance and reconciliation.



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Questions:

1. What does training involve?
2. What are the two dreaded word that we receive during training?
3. Adam blamed God and the woman for his sin. What would have been a better action?
4. What is the job of a judge?
5. Christians are authorized to judge in one case. What case is that?
6. Since we can only judge our children, what should be our response to the sin of a Christian that is not our child?
7. What is rebuking?
8. How did Jesus make a disciple of Zacchaeus?
9. Why did the disciples that left Jesus not accept His Body and Blood?
10. What should we do when we are rebuked?



## FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

Answers:

1. Training involves repeatedly giving and role modeling the correct instructions and information that our children need to become productive adults.
2. “You’re wrong”.
3. Confess his sin without blaming anyone. If we confess our sins, the LORD is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
4. Determine guilt or innocence and pass sentence.
5. Christian parents have the jurisdiction over their legal children until their children reach the age of majority.
6. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.
7. Rebuking one another is not judging; rebuking one another simply means to bring the things that Jesus taught us to our remembrance.
8. Jesus rebuked and chastened Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus was zealous to repent. Jesus tells us, as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.
9. Those disciples wanted the physical fish and bread, but they did not much care for that spiritual food that led to everlasting life.
10. We must learn to accept the discomfort that we feel when we are rebuked, calmly and rationally evaluate the rebuke, check ourselves, and then repent.

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