**Church Discipline**

*Proverbs 3:11-12*

**Introduction**

1. **Proverbs 3:11-12** – those who seek the Lord’s love should also understand and be ready to accept and embrace the discipline which God administers in the relationship.
   1. **(vv. 1-4)** – God’s wisdom offered in His word brings blessings.
   2. **(vv. 5-8)** – God’s wisdom is at variance with our own and requires self-denial.
   3. **(vv. 11-12)** – God cares for us so much that when we decide on our own way, He disciplines us to bring us back to the way of salvation.
2. The Bible teaches that church discipline is a part of God’s will through which He works to save His children and keep them saved until the end.
   1. Children of God do not get to pick and choose which part of God’s love they receive.
   2. A relationship with God requires all His terms to be met – one of them being a faith which trusts that God knows beyond a shadow of a doubt what we need, including discipline.
3. Church discipline can be a highly emotional subject due to the physical relationships which brethren sustain among themselves, and the implications of such when sin arises. This certainly makes the faithful practice of church discipline challenging.
4. It is important that we not only accept by faith that discipline is needed, but that we accept the entire pattern just as God has revealed it in His word and apply it faithfully.
5. When it comes down to it, the ultimate challenge of church discipline is not in understanding it (as it is very straightforward), but in whether we have the faith and courage to apply it. Do we?
6. What is discipline?
7. Two common misconceptions:
   1. **Discipline refers simply to “withdrawal” (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6)** – a discussion of church discipline necessarily includes a discussion of “withdrawal” from the unrepentant, but such is merely one part of something much broader. (Discipline is more comprehensive)
   2. **Discipline is antithetical to the love of Christ** – the love of Christ has been warped by many into a form of tolerance and fluidity which is foreign to the Bible.
      1. ***“For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.” (Proverbs 3:12)***
      2. Love (**Proverbs 13:24**); Hope (**Proverbs 19:18**); Salvation (**Proverbs 23:13-14**); Fellowship (**Proverbs 29:15**)
      3. **Love** – **1 Corinthians 13:6** – does not tolerate evil, so includes discipline.
         1. **Hosea 11:1-4** – bands of love…
8. Discipline Defined
   1. English (New Oxford American Dictionary)
      1. (1) the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience: *a lack of proper parental and school discipline.*
         1. the controlled behavior resulting from discipline: *he was able to maintain discipline among his men.*
         2. activity or experience that provides mental or physical training: *the tariqa offered spiritual discipline | Kung fu is a discipline open to old and young.*
         3. a system of rules of conduct: *he doesn't have to submit to normal disciplines.*
      2. (2) a branch of knowledge, typically one studied in higher education: *sociology is a fairly new discipline.*
   2. ***“My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD” (Proverbs 3:11, NASB).***
   3. **Bible equivalent** – *paideia* (Greek) – **cf. Proverbs 3:11** (LXX, ***“chastening”***); **Hebrews 12:5**
      1. “tutorage, i.e. education or training; by implication, disciplinary correction” (STRONG)
      2. “the act of providing guidance for responsible living, upbringing, training, instruction, in our lit. chiefly as it is attained by discipline, correction” (BDAG)
      3. “(1) the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals, and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment); (2) whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing passions. (2A) instruction which aims at increasing virtue (2B) chastisement, chastening, (of the evils with which God visits men for their amendment)” (THAYER)
   4. Included in “discipline” is:
      1. Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction (discipline) – **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – Scripture is a disciplinary tool. (**cf. Hebrews 4:11-13**)
         1. **Doctrine** – *didaskalia* – “teaching, instruction” (THAYER)
         2. **Reproof** – *elegchos* – “conviction” (THAYER); “implies not merely the charge, but the truth of the charge, and further the manifestation of the truth of the charge; nay more than all this, very often also the acknowledgment, if not outward, yet inward, of its truth on the part of the accused; it being the glorious prerogative of the truth in its highest operation not merely to assert itself, and to silence the adversary, but to silence him by convincing him of his error." (R.C. Trench)
         3. **Correction** – *epanorthōsis* – “restoration to an upright or right state” (THAYER)
         4. **Instruction** (in Righteousness) – *paideia* – training, education, admonition, chastisement, etc.
      2. Chastening, Punishment – **Hebrews 12:4-11**
         1. **(vv. 5-6)** – implies the unpleasantness of the experience, and the temptation to view it negatively.
         2. **(v. 11)** – not pleasant, painful, necessary for growth and production of fruit.
         3. **This should show us the difficult but necessary nature of church discipline and equip us with the understanding to embrace it instead of ignoring it.**
   5. **An image of discipline** – Parents to Children (God is our Father, and we are His children) – **Ephesians 6:4**
      1. ***“training* (paideia) *and admonition* (nouthesia)*”***
      2. “(nouthesia) is the training by word—by the word of encouragement, when this is sufficient, but also by that of remonstrance, of reproof, of blame, where these may be required; as set over against the training by act and by discipline, which is (paideia)” (R.C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament)
      3. **Teach – Encourage Application – Reprove – Correct – Chasten/Punish (action of correction when mere words fail)**
9. The Dual Nature of Discipline
   1. Instructive (preventative)
      1. All forms of teaching – preaching (**cf. Acts 20:7**), bible classes, singing (**cf. Colossians 3:16**), Lord’s Supper (**cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Peter 1:17-19**).
      2. Importance of instruction – **Hosea 4:6** – ignorance leads to destruction.
      3. **Prevention through instruction is always preferable to rescuing one captured again by sin.** 
         1. **1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 – written to learn from and avoid ever making the same mistakes.**
      4. Self-discipline is key – **1 Corinthians 9:27** – if we all worked hard at this, we would need far less corrective discipline.
   2. Corrective (punitive)
      1. Rebuking and warning a brother who has turned to sin – **1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 2:11; 6:1-2; James 5:19-20**
      2. Withdrawal from a brother who will not repent – **1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 11; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,15; Matthew 18:17**
   3. **Matthew 18** – A picture of the landscape of discipline.
      1. **(vv. 1-5)** – entrance into the kingdom.
         1. **Converted** – turn back to (God)
         2. **Little children** – figure of humility **(v. 4).**
         3. **Kingdom** – i.e. the rule of Christ.
         4. **Discipline** – Humility of faith which receives instruction, turns to the authority, obeys, receives further direction.
      2. **(vv. 6-9)** – offenses – from without, and self-inflicted.
         1. **Little ones** – i.e. humble ones who have submitted to the rule of the King.
         2. **Offenses** – sinful, i.e. departing from the rule of the King in self-will.
            1. **(vv. 6-7)** – caused by another – severity in consequence.
            2. **(vv. 8-9)** – caused by self – severity in consequence and measure of self-discipline.
         3. **Need for further Discipline** – When instruction fails due to the obstinacy or weakness of the kingdom citizen.
      3. **(vv. 10-14)** – the care of Jesus for His sheep, seeking to bring back the wandering one.
         1. Love of the Father and Christ expressed for the kingdom citizens – value of each **(vv. 10-11)**.
         2. Figure of the sheep and shepherd to show what He will do for one who has left the fold (disobeyed, sinned).
         3. **Discipline** – *the figure helps demonstrate the reality* – the method of Him bringing back the sheep is through corrective discipline.
      4. **(vv. 15-20)** – the figure finding reality – personal offense, Jesus’ efforts to bring back the wanderer accomplished through – individual, church, Christ with them in the effort.
         1. This answers to the method of Jesus in bringing back the wandering sheep – HE WORKS THROUGH THE FAITHFUL. (**cf. Galatians 6:1-2**)
         2. Efforts to gain a brother who has sinned (contextually, personal/private):
            1. Go to brother (rebuke, correct).
            2. Bring two or three witnesses (establish truth of the charges).
            3. Tell it to the church (made public) (more admonition on greater scale) (**elders at helm**).
            4. Social ostracism – heathens and tax collectors were shunned and avoided by the Jews.
         3. **(vv. 18-20)** – demonstrates whose power is exerted in this effort – JESUS IS ENGAGED IN THIS THROUGH HIS FAITHFUL.
            1. ***This is how Jesus seeks the lost sheep and brings him back!***
      5. **(vv. 21-35)** – when one returns – forgiveness.
         1. **(vv. 21-22)** – forgiveness as many times as the brother repents.
         2. Parable to demonstrate command to forgive as God forgives:
            1. **(vv. 23-27)** – King forgives debt of servant through compassion.
            2. **(vv. 28-34)** – Forgiven servant refuses to forgive fellow servant’s debt to him, king is told, and that servant is delivered to torturers.
            3. **(v. 35)** – application – we must forgive, or God will not forgive us.
10. **Discipline is the comprehensive effort of God to save His people and keep them saved until the eternal reward which involves instruction, training, correction, and punishment applied to the erring by the faithful.**
    1. **“punishment applied to the erring by the faithful”** – implies the consistency of faith in Christians which will also humbly submit to God’s commands involving the carrying out of disciplinary measures.
    2. **We must know what God says on the matter and have faith to obey it.**
11. Why is discipline important?
12. The Absence of Discipline is Disorder
    1. God is not the author of confusion – **1 Corinthians 14:33**
       1. *Akatastasia* – “instability, i.e. disorder” (STRONG); “opposition to established authority, disorder, unruliness” (BDAG)
       2. **Context** – proper use of spiritual gifts according to the revelation of God’s will **(v. 37).**
       3. **Discipline –** **(v. 38)** (textual variant, evenly divided in MSS) – ***“But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.” (NASB)***
          1. **(vv. 36-37)** – rebuke for thinking they are somehow exempt from the way the Spirit regulated the use of gifts in every place.
          2. ***“let him be ignorant?”*** – begs the question, why did Paul write about it anyway? Is there ever an encouragement to let ignorance remain?
             1. Such would contradict **verse 33**.
             2. If God does not want disorder, then he is not to be left alone.
          3. ***“HE IS NOT RECOGNIZED”*** – i.e. by God, and should not be by you – **cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1a, 2b** – among you, but should not be (your fellowship – because he is not in fellowship with God).
             1. ***“*Two early mss read *is not to be recognized” (fn, NASB)***
    2. Law without Order (enforcement of that law) is an empty volume of words – **2 Corinthians 10:10-11** – Paul is saying that the law is not vain but will be enforced with the weight of Divine authority.
       1. ***“Law without enforced consequences are merely suggestions.” (Ron Brackin)***
    3. **Church discipline enforces the order which God has revealed.**
13. Discipline is the Difference Between Assent and Faith
    1. Saving faith is not mere assent, but loyalty, obedience, fidelity, and commitment.
    2. **Luke 6:46** – they claimed faith in Jesus’ Lordship but did not practice self-discipline in obeying His words.
    3. Jesus taught His disciples, and required obedience as a true measure of faith:
       1. **John 13:13-17** – after washing the disciples’ feet.
       2. **John 15:1-2** – regarding all his teaching, discipline, both instructive and corrective (punitive).
    4. Faith without works is dead (**cf. James 2:26**), and without discipline (instructive and corrective) there cannot be working faith.
    5. **Church discipline provides for true, Biblical faith.**
14. Discipline is the Difference Between Reverence and Contempt
    1. **Proverbs 13:13-14** – fearing the commandment is necessary and brings blessings, but the fear springs from the surety of consequences to breaking the commandment.
    2. **2 Corinthians 11:3** – Paul was afraid they had been deceived like Eve.
       1. **Genesis 3:1-4, 22-24** – Eve was given a law, and warned of consequences, but Satan deceived her about those consequences. She died spiritually, and eventually physically.
       2. **How would the account bear any significance to the Corinthians by Paul’s pen if the law God revealed had not been enforced with discipline?**
    3. **Church discipline produces reverence/fear for God’s word.**
15. Where There is Community There Must Be Discipline
    1. What are these without discipline? – Home, work, school, society, military?
    2. **Where there is common purpose among people there must be discipline.**
       1. **Common purpose requires rules, or laws.**
       2. **For the common purpose to be achieved by these rules, or laws, they must be taught and explained.**
       3. **The rules, or laws must have consequences or penalties for violation if they are to be implemented throughout the community.**
    3. *EX: Government* – **Romans 13:2-5** – government codifies and reveals laws, then enforces them with consequences for disobedience.
       1. This promotes order through the fear of suffering the wrath of the government – consequences.
       2. This promotes order for the Christian especially through the conscience – knowing we are to obey as directed by God.
    4. **What about the church?**
       1. Every church practices discipline to some degree – total tolerance does not exist – in every church there is some limit to what will be tolerated (however arbitrary the limit may be).
          1. Instructive – if there is any instruction there is discipline.
          2. Corrective – if there is ever any admonition, rebuke, or correction there is discipline.
       2. **If we understand this, the only question that remains is whether we will faithfully adhere to the entire pattern of church discipline revealed in God’s word. (cf. 2 Timothy 1:13)**
16. God’s People and God’s Discipline
17. God has always required faithfulness in His house – **Hebrews 3:1-6**
    1. **House** – i.e. household – the people – family – GOD BEING THE FATHER.
    2. **(vv. 2, 5)** – Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house. (Old Testament – Israel)
    3. **(vv. 2, 6a)** – Christ is faithful as a Son in God’s house – superiority of Christ to Moses.
    4. **(v. 6b)** – we are a part of that house if we are faithful, holding fast our confidence. (New Testament – the church of Christ)
       1. **(vv. 7-19)** – give the example of the Israelites as a warning about disobedience in the house – punishment.
       2. **(vv. 7-11)** – quotation of **Psalm 95:7-11** acting as a form of discipline (instructive and corrective – warning, rebuke) for readers when it was written, and even now (as long as it is called today).
18. Discipline in the Old Testament
    1. Adam and Eve
       1. **Genesis 2:15-17** – given law with consequences of disobedience.
       2. **Genesis 3:22-24** – consequences meted out upon disobedience – discipline administered.
    2. Disobedient in Noah’s Time
       1. **Genesis 6:1-3** – intermarrying between faithful and unfaithful led to total corruption.
       2. **Genesis 6:5-7** – God destroyed the world.
    3. Rebellion of Israel at Kadesh
       1. 12 spies sent into Canaan – Joshua and Caleb had faith, others did not and led people to rebel.
       2. 40-year sentence of wilderness wandering – **Numbers 14:33-35**
          1. Recorded for our benefit – **cf. Psalm 95:7-11; Hebrews 3:7-19**
    4. The Sabbath Breaker
       1. **Numbers 15:32-36** – was stoned as a consequence according to the law for breaking the Sabbath.
       2. This would demonstrate to the people that God’s laws must be kept! (What if there was no consequence??)
          1. **Numbers 15:37-41** – commanded to put tassels on the corners of their garments with a blue thread to remind them that God’s laws must be kept.
          2. This would act as a preventative measure – lest anymore break the Sabbath and die.
    5. Moses’ Disobedience
       1. **Numbers 20:7-12** – told to speak to the rock to bring forth water, but struck the rock, and suffered the consequences – not able to enter the land.
    6. Achan Taking of the Accursed
       1. **Joshua 6:18** – to abstain from the accursed things.
       2. Failed to take Ai – **Joshua 7:11**
       3. Achan exposed, and stoned – **Joshua 7:24-25**
    7. **Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11** – though these were under a different law, they were nevertheless a part of God’s house, and the record informs us of how God deals with His house.
19. Discipline in the New Testament
    1. Ananias and Sapphira
       1. They lied about the amount they sold the land for, and what they gave.
       2. **Acts 5:5, 10-11** – both were punished, and the result was fear on all who knew.
    2. Corinth
       1. Paul’s letter was one of discipline – not only instruction, but rebuke and warning.
       2. He warned of punitive discipline – **1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 2 Corinthians 13:1-3**
    3. The Sexually Immoral Man at Corinth
       1. **1 Corinthians 5:1-5** – was to be taken away from among them, delivered to Satan.
    4. Peter
       1. **Galatians 2:11-13** – Paul withstood Peter to the face for his hypocrisy, and the influence it had on others.
    5. Hymenaeus and Alexander
       1. **1 Timothy 1:18-20** – Paul delivered them to Satan – possibly together with the Ephesian church.
    6. Are we different? – **1 Corinthians 14:36-38**
20. The Law of Christ Sets Forth a Pattern of Church Discipline
    1. **Matthew 18:15-17** – *“go and tell him his fault…take with you one or two more…tell it to the church…let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”*
    2. **Romans 16:17** – *“note those who cause divisions and offenses…and avoid them.”*
    3. **1 Corinthians 5** *– “he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you…deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh…purge out the old leaven…not to keep company with anyone named a brother…not even to eat with such a person.”*
    4. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** – *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers…Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord.”*
    5. **Galatians 6:1-2** – *“if a man is overtaken in any trespass…restore such a one”*
    6. **Ephesians 5:11** – *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them”*
    7. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** – *“warn those who are unruly”*
    8. **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15** – *“withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly…do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed…admonish him as a brother.”*
    9. **1 Timothy 5:20** – *“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”*
    10. **2 Timothy 3:5** – *“from such people turn away!”*
    11. **Titus 1:9-11** – *“exhort and convict those who contradict…whose mouths must be stopped…rebuke them sharply”*
    12. **Titus 3:10-11** – *“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition”*
    13. **James 5:19-20** – *“he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”*
    14. **2 John 9-11** – *“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him”*
    15. **Jude 22-23** – *“And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.” (NASB)*
    16. **Do we think there is a better way?** – **1 Samuel 15:22-23** – another way, though it may come from a suggested effort to do what we think is best, is simply rebellion.
21. Our Options with Church Discipline
22. Disobedience
    1. **As with all commands of God we have the option to ignore and disobey them:**
       1. Church discipline is a test of obedience to Christ – **2 Corinthians 2:9**
       2. The Corinthians were failing – **1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 9** – refusing to do what Paul called them to do out of pride.
          1. **1 Corinthians 4:8, 18-21** – they viewed themselves as spiritual giants (perhaps because of spiritual gifts – **ch. 12-14**) that could not be affected by one person’s sin.
          2. **1 Corinthians 5:6** – it had affected them.
    2. **Some disobey:**
       1. Through ignorance – hasn’t been taught – **Hosea 4:6**
       2. Through naivete – the issue will resolve on its own – **Hebrews 12:15**
       3. Through fear – diminished numbers, angry members, litigation, etc. – **Isaiah 8:13** – let God be your fear!
23. Perversion
    1. **As with all commands of God there is a danger of perverting them, although in attempted obedience:**
       1. **2 Peter 3:16** – must have proper teaching and stability to not misuse God’s word.
    2. **Some pervert (misuse/abuse) church discipline:**
       1. Through the wrong motive – **2 Thessalonians 3:15; Galatians 6:1-5**
       2. Through hastiness – **1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:14**
       3. Through prejudice, partiality, and inconsistency – **1 Timothy 5:21; James 2:1, 9, 12-13**
24. Faithful Obedience
    1. Of the 7 churches of Asia, Philadelphia was exceptional – **Revelation 3:7-8** – this is what the Lord delights in.
    2. **What can be done to ensure our faithfulness on this subject?**
       1. Seek, and trust in the infallible source – **2 Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 55:8-9**
       2. Seek to understand – **Ephesians 5:17**
          1. You can – **Ephesians 3:4** – desire, effort, and time.
          2. If you don’t, there is a heart issue – **Matthew 13:14-15**
       3. Clear teaching on the subject – **Acts 20:20, 26-27**
       4. Have faith and courage! – **1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13**
       5. Cultivate true love – **John 14:15; 1 Corinthians 13:6; 16:14; 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:20**
25. Divine Objectives in Church (Corrective) Discipline
26. Save the Erring
27. Save the Church (Purity, establishes fear)
28. Glorify God (Through such, shine light on darkness, season earth, save world – not bring reproach upon God by world through negligence of discipline, but bring glory to Him in the eyes of the world)
29. Recipients of Church Discipline
30. Participants in Church Discipline
31. The Procedure of Church Discipline
32. The Procedure When One Returns
33. Questions and Objections Concerning Church Discipline