**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 Corrective Church Discipline
26. Save the Individual (erring)
    1. A common misconception about the discipline of withdrawal is that we are giving up on such a person.
       1. **2 Thessalonians 3:13-15** – noting him and not keeping company with him is preceded by the notion that in doing so you are “doing good,” and qualified by not counting him an enemy but having continued action of admonition toward him as a brother.
       2. **This does not describe “giving up” – it is simply the last step in a series of steps where we are lovingly attempting to save his soul.**
    2. The action is an attempt at saving their soul – **1 Corinthians 5:5**
       1. ***“deliver such a one to Satan” (1 Corinthians 5:5)***. (**cf. 1 Timothy 1:20**)
          1. Two powers (authorities) – **Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 2:1-3**
             1. **2 Timothy 2:24-26** – they are doing Satan’s will.
             2. However, he is still ***“among you” (1 Cor. 5:1, 2)***. – i.e. as though he were faithful (not merely physically in the assembly, but of your number).
          2. **His ACTUAL spiritual state must be RECOGNIZED – by the church, and by him.**
             1. It may be that the sinner is so advanced in his worldliness that he wants nothing to do with the Lord, or his brethren.
             2. Such a one must still be dealt with – we still have the responsibility to ***“deliver such a one to Satan.”***
          3. ***“that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:2)***
          4. ***“purge out the old leaven” (1 Corinthians 5:7)***
          5. ***“not to keep company with” (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11)*** – social contact.
          6. ***“not even to eat with such a person.” (1 Corinthians 5:11)*** – social contact.
          7. ***“Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person.’” (1 Corinthians 5:13)***
          8. ***“withdraw from” (2 Thessalonians 3:6) – “do not keep company with him” (2 Thessalonians 3:14)***.
          9. The idea is social ostracism – **Matthew 18:17** – like a heathen and a tax collector.
             1. The social intercourse enjoyed by brethren is a byproduct and blessing of their mutual fellowship with God in Christ – **Acts 2:46**
             2. **Cutting off the former gives emphasis to the latter, and “is the last warning to strike the obdurate conscience” (Lenski) so as to awaken it to the reality of severed fellowship with God, and alliance with Satan.**
             3. Social interaction is tantamount to consent – **2 John 10-11**
       2. ***“for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Corinthians 5:5)***.
          1. **Galatians 5:16-21** – he is one who has given himself to the desires and works of the flesh – the action of church discipline is aimed at destroying the desire, and practice of the flesh.
          2. **1 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8** – the action caused the sinner to abandon the flesh to secure the relationship with God and His people.
          3. Prodigal Son – **Luke 15:14-19** – he was given over to his sin, saw its true nature, **pined for the blessings he abandoned**, and determined to abandon the prodigal life instead.
       3. ***“that he may be ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14)***.
          1. **Ephesians 5:11-14** – the activity the sinner is engaged in is shameful, and reproving (exposing) their sin is intended for them to come face to face with the shamefulness of it.
             1. **(vv. 11, 13)** – ***“expose”*** – *elegchō* – “‘to convict, confute, refute,’ usually with the suggestion of putting the convicted person to shame” (VINE)
             2. **(v. 12)** – not speaking of the shame brought on the one reproving for even uttering such things, but the shame brought upon the one being convicted for actually doing it.

Like Nathan to David – **2 Samuel 12:5-7**

**Psalm 119:5-6, 80** – shame is avoided through obedience to the word, therefore, speaking the word to one who is disobedient brings shame to them.

* + - 1. **The point of withdrawal implies the initial exposure/reproof did not work – the corrective discipline of withdrawal is further attempt to bring shame – YOU ARE OF SUCH CONDUCT THAT WE CAN HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU (cf. 2 John 9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).**
    1. ***“that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20).***
       1. Parallel to the ***“destruction of the flesh.”***
       2. While this is a punitive measure, it is no less corrective and instructive.
       3. **Hymenaeus and Alexander** – by such action they would learn the severity of their error, and the gravity of preaching the gospel.
       4. **Any sinner** – will learn to repent, and not to sin.
    2. ***“that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5).***

1. Save the Church
   1. Christ’s will for the church – **Ephesians 5:25-27** – no spot, wrinkle, blemish, but holy.
   2. A church’s standing with Christ can be jeopardized by sin/error that is not dealt with – **Revelation 2:12-16** – church in Pergamos had sin/error among them.
   3. The sin was noted as being ***“among you”*** – **1 Corinthians 5:1** – this brought a personal tone to the situation.
      1. The sexually immoral man did not stand independent of the church.
      2. **Romans 12:4-5** – members of one another – it is not as though Paul meant to imply it is only for the good – IF THERE IS EVIL, IT WILL AFFECT EVERYONE. (**cf. Hebrews 12:15**)
   4. One member’s sin, left unchecked/uncorrected/undisciplined, will inevitably affect the whole – **1 Corinthians 5:6** – as it did in Corinth.
      1. Not all had to be guilty of the sin for it to affect the whole – only one member was guilty **(v. 1),** but he was a recognized part of the whole – ***“there is sexual immorality among you****”* (not ***“holy and without blemish”***)
      2. **Others will not necessarily be emboldened to partake in that particular sin (sexual immorality of that sort), but through failed discipline and lacking consequences, they may be emboldened to partake in the sin of their choice.**
      3. **At the very least, violence is done to the truth and our view of it when the guilty are not disciplined.**
   5. Church discipline purifies the church from sin/leaven – **1 Corinthians 5:7-8**
   6. Church discipline saves the vulnerable from the corrupting influence of sin and error – **Titus 1:9-11**
      1. **Those who resist what the Bible says on church discipline out of a suggested love for the one to be disciplined SHOULD THINK ABOUT THE ONES THAT COULD BE BROUGHT DOWN BY THEIR INFLUENCE.**
      2. **Matthew 18:7** – offenses may come through influence of an unrepentant sinner, **but also THROUGH NEGLIGENCE OF FAITHFUL BRETHREN TO ACT IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE.**
   7. A major problem in Corinth was the inability, or unwillingness to mourn over a spiritual death – **1 Corinthians 5:2** – church discipline GIVES VISUAL, AND EXPERIENTIAL PAIN TO WHAT IS ALREADY SPIRITUAL REALITY – *it gives an image of the damage and separation sin causes, rather than the status quo continuing.* (**cf. Isaiah 1:5-6** – how do we make people see something spiritual – this language, and consequences meted out in discipline)
   8. Church discipline establishes fear – **1 Timothy 5:20; Acts 5:10-11** – a people who do not fear sin and its consequences are a people who will be given over to impurity – discipline protects us from this by cultivating fear.
      1. If all knew with certainty what discipline they would receive upon committing sin, fewer would give in to the temptation to do it.
2. Glorify God
   1. To magnify, exalt and maintain the honor of Christ and His authority – **Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4** (name and power – authority**); 2 Thessalonians 3:6**
   2. The head is not glorified when the body is acting independently – **Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:21** – thus, God is not glorified.
   3. We glorify God and Christ by submitting to their will for us – **cf. John 17:4**
      1. **Psalm 19:1** – the heavens declare His glory through their magnificence, and functionality according to the will of the Creator. (**cf. Genesis 1:14** – for sings and seasons, days and years)
   4. Failure to glorify God in Israel:
      1. **1 Samuel 2:27-29; 3:13** – because Eli did not restrain his sons, he kicked at (***“scorn,” ESV***; trample down) the sacrifice and offering of God.
      2. **1 Samuel 15:2-3, 22-23** – the command to Saul was for punishment of sin, and his decision failed to glorify God.
   5. When we do what Christ tells us to do we glorify Him.
   6. **When we do not do what Christ tells us to do we fail to glorify Him.**
   7. *Some argue that church discipline is ineffective – we should not do it because it likely won’t bring the sinner to repentance.*
      1. This manifests a severe lack of faith in Christ’s plan.
      2. THIS ALSO MISSES THE GREATEST POINT – faith does not test the reasonableness, or effectiveness of a command of God, BUT ACTS IN OBEDIENCE.
      3. **Even when it “doesn’t work” it works – not every case of church discipline ends with the repentance of the sinner – BUT EVERY CASE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE EFFECTIVELY APPLIED BRINGS GLORY TO CHRIST!**
   8. The church is the channel through which Christ acts to bring back lost sheep – **Matthew 18:10-14, 18-20** – to refuse to practice church discipline is to DENY JESUS HIS RIGHT AS HEAD, SAVIOR, AND SHEPHERD TO ENFORCE HIS WILL, AND RESCUE ONE OF HIS OWN.
      1. The only way to glorify Jesus is to do as He says.
3. Recipients of Church Discipline
4. Anyone Named a Brother
   1. ***“withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly… do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 15)***
   2. In the Corinthian letter, Paul makes a special note concerning this fact – **1 Corinthians 5:9-13**
      1. **(vv. 9-10)** – the corrective discipline of social ostracism/not keeping company with one is not meant for the world.
         1. ***“then you would need to go out of the world”*** (NOTE: shows us the degree of severity concerning the action against the unfaithful.)
         2. **Cf. John 17:15, 18** – like the apostles, we are sent into the (lost) world on a mission.
      2. **(v. 11)** – anyone named a brother – **cf. Ephesians 2:19-22** – i.e. one who has been added to the kingdom/household of God.
      3. **(vv. 12-13)** – we have a responsibility in this judgment among each other, but not the world.
         1. Paul made the judgment himself – **(v. 3)** – he had made the sound determination with the facts involved that this one was worthy of, and in need of this final act of discipline.
         2. He would call us to judge among each other in the next chapter – **1 Corinthians 6:4-6**
         3. **(v. 13)** – His quote concerned action taken among brethren – **Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; 24:7** – the law to govern Israel.
            1. ***“So you shall put away the evil from Israel” (17:12)*** – to avoid spread of corruption.

**(vv. 6-8)** – leaven leavens the whole lump.

* + - * 1. **(v. 2)** – ***“from among you”*** – the action by definition cannot be accomplished toward one who is ***“outside” (v. 12)***.
  1. Children of God who are willfully sinning are in especially grave danger – **Hebrews 10:26-27** – ***“go on sinning willfully” (NASB)***
     1. This describes the very point at which one would be withdrawn from as a last measure to save them.
     2. **2 Peter 2:20-22** – they are rejecting the good word of God and must be subject to the painful experience of discipline if they are to ever respond to reason.

1. The Disorderly
   1. One of the more common causes of inconsistency in practicing church discipline is the exercise of man’s wisdom in discerning what sins are severe enough for such a response.
   2. While an honest look at what scripture says about sin in general will rectify such a foolish approach, the Holy Spirit used all-inclusive language to discuss those who should be withdrawn from.
   3. **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14** – the ***“disorderly”*** or ***“anyone [who] does not obey”***
      1. **Disorderly** – *ataktōs* (adverb) – “(1) disorderly, out of ranks (often so of soldiers) (3) deviating from the prescribed order or rule” (THAYER)
      2. ***“unruly” (1 Thessalonians 5:14)*** (adjective)
      3. (**v. 14**) – shows what standard determines the disorderliness. (**2 Thessalonians 2:15**) (**cf. Acts 2:42** – ***“apostles’ doctrine”***)
   4. I.e. those who are insubordinate, disobedient, not submitting to the authority of Christ – **Colossians 3:17**
   5. ALL SIN IS DISORDERLINESS/UNRULINESS – **1 John 3:4** – sin is lawlessness – acting without law.
   6. **This is important because it covers all sin – any which is not repented of, and continued in makes the offender subject to corrective discipline:**
      1. Forsaking the assembly? – **Hebrews 10:25**
      2. Those who refuse to participate in church discipline? – **2 Corinthians 2:9** (it may seem ironic, but if a faithful one refuses to withdraw from the unfaithful then they themselves become unfaithful)
         1. **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14** – necessarily includes the instruction in the epistle to withdraw from the disorderly.
2. The Interpersonal Offender
   1. Many sins are interpersonal – i.e. relational, between two or more people.
   2. **Matthew 18:15-17** – specifically addresses an interpersonal sin starting on a private level.
      1. Such may escalate through lack of repentance to involve church action of withdrawal.
      2. **May include lying, slander, gossip, cheating, stealing, wounding of conscience, etc. – anything done by one against another.**
   3. Some of these sins are neglected because of a puffed-up perspective in human wisdom – **cf. 1 Corinthians 4:8, 10, 18; 5:1-2, 6**
      1. **Sticks and stones wisdom** – may be good in helping children keep control of their emotions, but not in saving souls and churches.
      2. **“You can’t help what others think or say about you”** – this is a one-dimensional way of thinking which forgets about the one in the greatest danger – the sinner!
      3. Reducing such offenses to petty matters unworthy of our attention and energy makes a mockery of God – **1 Peter 1:15-16; Proverbs 6:16-19** – leaving such matters unchecked makes an assault on God’s character.
      4. **NOTE: Matthew 18:15 is a COMMAND THAT WE MUST OBEY – none are bigger than this.**
   4. Interpersonal sins are harmful by definition – **Romans 13:8-10** – by definition, a sin against another is doing him harm.
   5. Interpersonal sins are still sins against Christ – **1 Corinthians 8:12** – at the end of the day, all sin is against God.
   6. **Interpersonal sins always threaten the unity of the body:**
      1. **1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 11:17-18** – divisive spirit.
      2. **Galatians 5:14-15, 26** – envy, conceit.
      3. **Philippians 4:2-3** – not getting along.
      4. **Ephesians 4:1-3** – the unity is in the Spirit’s revelation but takes proper attitudes toward brethren to be preserved.
      5. **Part of church discipline is to protect the church, and interpersonal sin is a great threat to the unity of the church.**
3. The Sower to the Flesh
   1. Despite the glaring nature of the sin present in Corinth, Paul’s words were inclusive of any work of the flesh – **1 Corinthians 5:10-11**
      1. These were those who had been changed, and were not to live that life any longer – **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**
      2. From homosexuality and idolatry to the covetous and the revilers – **there is not a sin that is exempt from this measure of discipline.**
   2. **Ephesians 5:3-4** – no work of the flesh is to be ***“named among [the saints].”***
      1. ***“not even named among the Gentiles”* (1 Corinthians 5:1)**
      2. Not that it is not spoken of, or is not something they have heard of.
      3. **Not accepted, tolerated, condoned, or familiar in any way shape or form – FAILURE TO PRACTICE CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS TO HAVE THAT FORM OF THE FLESH “NAMED AMONG US”**
      4. Rather – **(vv. 11-13)** – they are to be exposed/reproved, bringing those practicing such to shame.
   3. **Galatians 6:1-2** – this is an example of “church discipline.” (not the final stage of withdrawal)
      1. Context – **5:16-23** – exhorting Galatians to deny the flesh, and submit to the Spirit’s teaching.
         1. Works of the flesh catalogued in part – “and the like” – not a comprehensive list.
         2. Fruit of the Spirit revealed.
      2. ***“overtaken in any trespass”*** = committing ANY work of the flesh.
      3. ***“you who are spiritual”*** = submitting to the Sprit’s revelation.
      4. **(vv. 6-8)** – continues the context to warn the one who would be disciplined about self-deception.
         1. **Implication** – some may not respond to the initial step of discipline.
         2. Withdrawal in an effort to destroy their flesh lest they reap corruption (**cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5**) – NO MATTER WHAT THE WORK OF THE FLESH IS SPECIFICALLY, IT WILL LEAD TO CORRUPTION.
4. The False Teacher and the Divisive One
   1. Paul’s charge to Timothy to wage the warfare was due to some who were teaching falsely – **1 Timothy 1:18-20** – Hymenaeus and Alexander did not repent, and were disciplined accordingly.
      1. Such must be stopped because they destroy the faith of some – **2 Timothy 2:16-18; Titus 1:9-11**
      2. **2 John 9-11** – social interaction with them manifests tolerance or indifference.
         1. **Insidious nature of error** – it does not simply work from the pulpit, but in homes with basic conversation!
         2. Even well-meaning people destroy others with error.
         3. **Those who have reached this point (*where withdrawal is necessary*) have stopped being honest as they have rejected the initial efforts to correct them.**
      3. **NOTE: Not simply preachers, but anyone who teaches falsely – we’re to teach and edify one another, and nobody is above the discipline to ensure the doctrine taught is sound.**
   2. Divisive people are to be disciplined even if their division is not a result of doctrinal error – **Titus 3:10-11;** **Proverbs 6:16-19** – the Lord HATES those who sow discord among brethren.
      1. **Ephesians 4:1-3** – the unity kept is in accord with the Spirit’s revelation, but even if we have that, but we fail in these characteristics unity is threatened.
      2. **Interpersonal sin which sows discord/division – slander, gossip, lying, etc.**
      3. **Romans 16:17-18** – not exclusive to false teaching.
         1. **What division and offense (even if not a result of doctrinal error) is not contrary to the doctrine we have learned? – i.e. entire gospel of Christ, the core of which requires holiness and the preservation of unity.**
         2. **EX: Selfish-ambition** – *eritheia* – “electioneering or intriguing for office; (A) apparently, in the NT a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and fractious spirit which does not disdain low arts; (B) partisanship, fractiousness” (THAYER) “This word is found before NT times only in Aristotle where it denotes a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means. (A&G) Paul exhorts to be one in the mind of Christ not putting self forward or being selfish (Phil 2:3). James 3:14 speaks against having selfishness or self-promoting in your heart. (Wayne Steury)” (Outline of Biblical Usage)
            1. Does not necessitate the teaching of doctrinal error.
            2. Simply divisiveness from selfish ambition.
5. The Elder Who Continues in Sin
   1. While the elders may be at the helm in church discipline, Paul makes it a point to note that even they are not above church discipline – **1 Timothy 5:17-20**
      1. There is not more leniency for them, and it is not a different pattern.
      2. Only the elder who does not repent should be withdrawn from.
      3. ***“Blameless” (1 Timothy 3:2)*** – does not mean they are immune to temptation and sin, but that they lead a faithful life in Christ, and respond to rebuke and correction with rectifying their sin.
   2. **Acts 20:29-30** – Paul warned the Ephesian elders that there would be some from among them that will become wolves and attack the flock. (Error, immorality, dishonesty, etc.)
6. Participants in Church Discipline
7. The Individual
   1. Self-Discipline
      1. **1 Corinthians 11:31-32** – self-discipline consistently applied makes corrective church discipline unnecessary.
      2. Discipleship is predicated on self-discipline – **Mark 8:34**
      3. Self-examination in faith will eliminate sin before the responsibility to discipline ever reaches others – **2 Corinthians 13:5; James 1:21-25**
         1. **1 Corinthians 9:27** – discipline (to hit under the eye), bring it into subjection (to enslave).
      4. **Self-discipline always comes prior to the discipline of others:**
         1. **Matthew 7:1-5** – remove sin from self to be able to help a brother.
         2. **Luke 17:3** – take heed to yourself. (own faith, cause for stumbling, need to restore/forgive)
         3. **Galatians 6:1-5** – subject to Spirit, considering self, self-examination, bearing own load.
         4. **Acts 20:28** – Elders look at themselves first, and make sure they are in line so they can look after the flock.
   2. Interpersonal Discipline
      1. **Matthew 18:15-16** – this is not optional, but a responsibility enjoined on us by the Lord. (**cf. Matthew 5:23-24** – inverse but shows the urgency of the matter.)
      2. **Galatians 6:1** – it may not be against you, but to see a brother sin is to find responsibility toward them and God to restore them.
      3. This is what love dictates – **1 Corinthians 13:6**
         1. **1 Peter 4:8; James 5:19-20** – love covers sin by turning the sinner away from it.
         2. Mourning, not pride, manifests the motive of love – **1 Corinthians 5:2; 1 Samuel 15:35; Ezra 10:6; 2 Corinthians 2:3-4**
8. The Elders
   1. God’s organization of the local church includes elders – **Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5**
      1. They rule in the church – **1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17** – such rule clearly extends to carrying out church discipline.
      2. **Bishops** (overseers) – *episkopos* – one who has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that someth. is done in the correct way, guardian… The term was taken over in Christian communities in ref. to one who served as overseer or supervisor, with special interest in guarding the apostolic tradition (BDAG)
      3. **They have the responsibility of overseeing church discipline. Ultimately, it goes through them:**
         1. **“safeguarding or seeing to it that [church discipline] is done in the [scriptural] way”**
         2. **“guarding the apostolic tradition [of church discipline]”**
   2. Taking heed to, overseeing the flock among them – **Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2**
      1. ***“take heed”*** – *prosechō* – 1 to be in a state of alert, be concerned about, care for, take care; 2 to pay close attention to someth., pay attention to, give heed to, follow (BDAG)
         1. ***“pay careful attention to” (ESV); “Be on guard for” (NASB)***
      2. **Titus 1:7-13** – this would include the responsibility of protecting the flock from sinful influence and error.
      3. Making judgments about an individual’s spiritual state based on evidence, and therefore the effect on the congregation as a whole – **1 Corinthians 5:2-3, 6-8, 12-13**
   3. **Matthew 18:15-17** – while not explicitly mentioned, the involvement of elders is necessarily implied in this passage.
      1. ***“tell it to the church” (v. 17)*** (**cf. 1 Corinthians 5:4-5** – ***“when you are gathered together…deliver such a one to Satan”***)
      2. How would scripture dictate this action to be taken?
      3. **Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5** – the Holy Spirit reveals the will of Christ to have elders in every church.
         1. They give account for the souls of individuals in the congregation, and thus, for the state of the congregation as a whole – **Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-4** (answer to Chief Shepherd for how they take oversight)
         2. Their job is to protect the flock – ***“Be on guard…for all the flock” (Acts 20:28, NASB)***.
      4. ***“tell it to the church” (v. 17)* necessarily implies telling the elders who exercise their oversight and tell it to the church.**
         1. **The elders, then, would lead in the process of carrying out and enforcing church discipline.**
9. The Church
   1. **Matthew 18:17** – telling the church is for the purpose of involving them in the effort of restoration.
      1. **(vv. 15-16)** – manifests a progression in disciplinary effort to bring the brother to repentance.
      2. **Telling the church informs all who are not yet aware of the sin which the brother has refused to repent of TO ENGAGE THE EFFORT OF EVERYONE IN THE CONGREGATION AT SEEKING TO RESTORE HIM THROUGH ADMONITION. (since prior efforts have not led him to repentance)**
      3. **(vv. 15, 17b)** – ***“If hears you, you have gained your brother”*** extends to the next step of the witnesses, and with the church.
         1. Therefore, ***“let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector”*** is an attitude and action to be taken by the whole church to ***“gain your brother.”***
   2. **1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 7, 11, 13** – this action is taken when the congregation is assembled because it is an action which involves the entire congregation.
      1. ***“when you are gathered together”*** = ***“when you come together as a church” (11:18)***
      2. The command to withdraw from the disorderly is given to the whole church – **2 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:6, 13-14** (the church of the Thessalonians, you, brethren)
      3. The command to note and avoid the divisive ones is given to ***“brethren,”*** i.e. members of the church – **Romans 16:17-18**
   3. It is imperative that all members of a local congregation understand that this action is part of the elders’ rule, and must be submitted to – **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17**
      1. If there are any who refuse to participate in the corrective discipline of withdrawing from the disorderly, they are in rebellion to the rule of the elders, and are likewise to be disciplined – **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14**
10. Must family members withdraw from each other?
    1. **This question evokes strong emotions which must be tempered and regulated by God’s word – *“let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).***
    2. Foundations for answering the question:
       1. Love for the Lord must be more than love for family – **Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37**
       2. The Lord’s estimation of spiritual family is greater than physical family – **Matthew 12:47-50**
          1. **When a physical family member becomes spiritual family, the spiritual relationship takes precedence over the physical.**
       3. The Lord warns that following Him may bring conflict to the family relationships – **Matthew 10:34-36**
       4. Nobody must show partiality in observing this command – **James 2:1; 1 Timothy 5:21**
    3. The church is commanded to withdraw – **Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14**
       1. ***“Church”*** is a collective word including every member.
       2. If you have been added to the church, you are a part of church discipline – **cf. Acts 2:47** – even if the unfaithful are family members.
    4. ***“every brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:6)* includes *“every brother”* who is a physical family member as well – if not, why not?**
    5. **Exceptions?**
       1. ***The Bible does not give contradictory commands*** – EX: work to provide for self and family (**cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8**), but also not forsake the assembly (**cf. Hebrews 10:25**).
          1. We don’t choose one or the other but observe both.
          2. **However, one does not, and cannot be allowed to negate the other – forsaking the assembly to work.**
       2. **Is there an exception?**
          1. **Spouses (yes)** – **1 Corinthians 7:3-5; 1 Peter 3:7; Genesis 2:24** – excepted due to the obligation to fulfill conjugal obligations, dwell together, and share a life together as one flesh.
          2. **Parents to children (no):**
             1. Are they Christians? If yes, then they are included.
             2. Like marriage, same relationship from beginning to now – **cf. Deuteronomy 21:18-20** – was not excluded before.
             3. Grown children – independent – what would prohibit withdrawal of social interaction?
             4. Dependent children (at home) – to be corrected by force – **Proverbs 13:24 (cf. 1 Samuel 3:13); Proverbs 22:15; 23:13-14**
          3. **Children to parent (no):**
             1. Their obedience is to be ***“in the Lord”*** – **Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1** – would not prohibit obeying the command to withdraw.
             2. **Honor** – **Ephesians 6:2; Matthew 15:4** – what greater act of honor is there than seeking to save their soul?
          4. **Other and Extended family (siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc.) (no)** – what passage would require social contact?
             1. **Numbers 16** – Korah was Moses and Aaron’s first cousin – **cf. Numbers 16:20-22** – God called them to separate from their cousin and those with him so God could consume them.
             2. **Numbers 12** – Aaron and Miriam were Moses’ brother and sister and were not spared from discipline which affected his relationship with them.
    6. **A common point made in discussions of the church discipline of withdrawal – “It won’t be effective unless we have built close relationships in love for one another.” – AMEN!**
       1. Withdrawal puts pressure on the unfaithful to repent of their sin and return to those relationships – **1 Corinthians 5:9, 11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14**
       2. **Family will have the greatest impact!**
    7. **The command of church discipline includes the participation of family members.**
11. The Procedure of Church Discipline
12. The Procedure When One Returns
13. Questions and Objections Concerning Church Discipline