

# Church Discipline

## I. Introduction & Definition

### A. Discipline is required in every corporate structure.

1. Earthly nations maintain discipline through laws and judicial function (Rom. 13:4).
2. Earthly natural families maintain discipline through rules and parental function (Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:9).
3. The Royal Family of God maintains discipline through Divine norms & standards and Divine discipline (Heb. 12:7,10; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:17).
4. Local churches maintain discipline through Biblical principles and church discipline (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:12).

### B. Definitions

1. discipline: n. *training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character; a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity.* v. *to impose a penalty on for a fault, offense, or violation.*
2. יָסַר yasar #3256: v. *to chasten, discipline, correct.* מוּסָר muwsar #4148: n. *discipline, correction.*
3. παιδεύω #3811: v. *to chasten, train, instruct.* παιδεία #3809: n. *chastening, discipline.*

## II. Development & Application—9 Passages to Consider

### A. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:1-13

1. Improper sexual activity is an area of personal sin that requires the Biblical application of Church Discipline (vv.1,10,11). πορνεία #4202: *fornication.*
  - a. Not an individual personal sin.
  - b. When that activity becomes habitual and unrepentant.
  - c. The external witness is destroyed.
  - d. Internal corruption is spread.
2. Other areas of personal sin would include covetousness, idolatry, drunkenness, etc. (vv.10,11).
  - a. This is not an exhaustive list.
  - b. The objective is holiness within the congregation (v.13; Deut. 13:5; 17:7,12; 21:21; 22:21).
3. Corporate mourning and corporate removal becomes necessary for the spiritual protection of the entire congregation (vv.2,6,7).
4. The Biblical application of church discipline provides a spiritual benefit to the subject of that discipline (v.5).
  - a. The spirit will become saved (ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῆι).
  - b. In the Day of the Lord (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου).

### B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:6-8

1. Church discipline has an extent which is referred to as "sufficient" (v.6). ἰκανός #2425: *many enough, enough, sufficient.*
2. The goal is ultimately forgiveness, comfort, and the reaffirmation of love (vv.7,8).
  - a. χαρίζομαι #5483: *to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, forgive, pardon.*
  - b. παρακαλέω #3870: *to comfort, encourage, exhort.*
  - c. κυρώω #2964: *to confirm, ratify, validate, make legally binding* (cf. Gal. 3:15). ἀγάπη #26: *unconditional, integrity love.*

Wherefore, I beg of you, please, that you confirm publicly and solemnly by a judicial decision your love for him. (Wuest)

3. Such forgiveness becomes a test for the congregation to pass (v.9; cf. Job 42).

### C. Matt. 18:15-20

1. Church discipline progresses through limited spheres of involvement. cp. Titus 3:10
  - a. "If your brother sins" (Ἐὰν δὲ ἁμαρτήσῃ) Aor.act.subj. ἁμαρτάνω #264: *to miss the mark, sin.*
    - 1) Demonstrate his fault. Aor.act.imper. ἐλέγχω #1651: *to expose, bring to light, set forth.* Bring someone to the point of recognizing wrongdoing; convict, convince.
    - 2) In private. μεταξὺ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου "between you and him alone."

Show him his sin with a view to convicting him of it and bringing about a confession between you and him alone. (Wuest)

- b. "If he does not listen" ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃ. Aor.act.subj. ἀκούω #191: *to hear.*
  - 1) Confirm every fact. σταθῆ πᾶν ῥῆμα "every word may be established."
  - 2) One or two more. Plus the initial reprover adds up to the required two or three.
- c. "If he refuses to listen" ἐὰν δὲ παρακούσῃ. Aor.act.subj. παρακούω #3878: *refuse to listen, disobey.*

- 1) Tell it to the church.
  - 2) The church's unified voice may then speak to him.
  - d. "If he refuses to listen even to the church." ἐάν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ.
    - 1) Disassociation.
    - 2) Like-mindedness in prayer.
  2. The goal is to "win a brother" (v.15). "If he listens" ἐάν σου ἀκούσῃ. Aor.act.ind. κερδαίνω <sup>#2770</sup>: *to gain, acquire, win* (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:19-22; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:1; Phil. 3:8).
  3. Church discipline reflects Divine discipline as the mental attitudes of the local church leadership will be motivated by heavenly judgments (vv.18-20).
    - a. The human activity of binding and loosing is presented in the aorist active subjunctive.
    - b. The Divine activity of binding and loosing is presented in the perfect passive participle.
    - c. The human activity therefore does not cause Divine activity, but rather reflects Divine activity.
- D. Titus 3:10. αἰρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον μετὰ μίαν καὶ δευτέραν νουθεσίαν παρατοῦ.
1. Factiousness is an area of personal sin that requires the Biblical application of church discipline. αἰρετικός <sup>#141</sup>: *schismatic, factious, heretic*.
  2. Warning. νουθεσία <sup>#3559</sup>: *admonition, warning*. Used 3x (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 10:11; Eph. 6:4; Tit. 3:10).
  3. Reject. Pres.mid.(dep.)imper. παραιτέομαι <sup>#3868</sup>: *to refuse, avoid, reject* (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 4:7; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:23).
- E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 3:6-15
1. The unruly & undisciplined life must be addressed through the Biblical application of church discipline.
  2. This erring believer has a walk that is out of step (vv.6,11). παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατούντος. περιπατέω <sup>#4043</sup> + ἀτάκτως <sup>#814</sup>: adv. *disorderly, out of ranks*. ἄτακτος <sup>#813</sup> adj. cf. τάσσω <sup>#5021</sup>: *to put in order, arrange, assign a place*.
    - a. These out of step brothers are not working. μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους. Pres.mid.ptc. ἐργάζομαι <sup>#2038</sup>.
    - b. They are busybodies. ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους. Pres.mid.ptc. περιεργάζομαι <sup>#4020</sup>.
  3. "Keep away from" (v.6) στέλλω <sup>#4724</sup>: *to keep one's distance, stand aloof*. "Take special note" σημειώω <sup>#4593</sup> "to not associate with him" μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι αὐτῷ. συναναμίγνυμι <sup>#4874</sup>: *to mix up together*.
  4. The bottom-line must always be kept in mind. These out of step brothers are still brothers! Not enemies!
- F. 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:19-21
1. Caution must be exercised when an accusation is made against an elder (v.19).
  2. Elders are entitled to repentance opportunities like any other believer in the church (v.20a).
  3. Unrepentant elders are subject to every area of church discipline that non-elders are subject to (v.20b).
  4. There can be no partiality in judgment for elders (v.21; Jms. 2:1-4; Lev. 19:15).
    - a. In their favor.
    - b. To their detriment.
- G. Gal. 6:1-5
1. The motivation of spiritual believers towards carnal believers is to work towards their restoration.
    - a. Such an intercessory ministry requires the fruit of the Spirit of gentleness.
    - b. Such an intercessory ministry requires alertness for one's own carnality.
  2. Bearing one another's burden is a fulfillment of "the law of Christ" (v.2).
  3. This restoration ministry is one of grace, and indicates no merit on the part of the restorer (v.3).
  4. This restoration ministry indicates no superiority on the part of the restorer (v.4).
  5. The absolute standard of judgment will be applied to each individual believer (v.5).
- H. 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:11,12
1. The Biblical application of church discipline is required in order to maintain a public witness to this fallen world (v.12).
  2. The volitional battlefield is the soul (v.11).
  3. Church discipline and the restoration of repentant believers are key procedures for waging war in the angelic conflict (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:24-26).
- I. Jms. 5:16,19,20
1. Anticipation of the Rapture motivates believers to patiently strengthened hearts (vv.7-9).
  2. Personal priestly function (v.13) can expand to corporate priestly function (vv.14,15).
  3. Personal prayer struggles can become corporate prayer struggles by taking such prayer burdens to your elders (vv.14,15), and the entire Body of Christ in corporate prayer (vv.16,19,20).

### III. Summary & Conclusion

#### A. Church discipline is a communication of love (Eph. 4:15; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:5).

1. This is an element of personal maturity and corporate local church growth (Eph. 4:12,13).
2. This is a protection against false teaching, tricks, and scheming (Eph. 4:14).
3. This is an application of “the proper working of each individual part” (Eph. 4:16).
  - a. It fits and holds together the whole body.
  - b. διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας. “*through every joint/ligament of supply.*” “What every joint supplies” (NASB, NKJV), “Every supporting ligament” (HCSB, NIV), “That which every joint supplieth” (KJV) all indicate that the real concept which makes the body parts function and the entire body grow is the interaction (relationship) between individual members.
  - c. Ligament support is provided by Christ in response to intercessory prayer (Phil. 1:19).
  - d. The parallel passage of Col. 2:19 gives the identical message.
4. Supporting elements for this language of love are a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:5).

#### B. Like every other Christian activity, Church discipline has an edification objective.

1. Building up fellow believers is a pursuit (Rom. 14:19). “Let us pursue” horatory subjunctive. διώκωμεν. pres.act.subj. διώκω <sup>#1377</sup>: *pursue, strive for, seek after, aspire to* something. Var. reading pres.act.ind. διώκομεν in earlier uncials (⊗ A B G P 048 0209 *al*).
2. Bearing one another’s burdens is something each of us “ought” to do (Rom. 15:1,2; cp. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 10:24).
3. Church discipline is an application of knowledge-based love (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 8:1).
4. Church leadership, exercising delegated authority, is designed for edification (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10).
5. Every word we speak is either rotten (σαπρός <sup>#4550</sup>) or edifying (Eph. 4:29).
6. Successful edification gives no license to stop at any point of time prior to the Rapture (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:11).

#### C. The message of Jude (Jude 20-25)

1. Jude outlines the edification activities of Christian beloved ones (v.20a).
2. It begins with corporate prayer (v.20b).
3. Beloved ones need to keep themselves in the love of God (v.21a cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 3:5; Rev. 2:4).
4. Beloved ones need to wait anxiously for the rapture of the Church (v.21b).
5. Beloved ones have ministry to weak believers (v.22), unbelievers (v.23a), and corrupted believers (v.23b). Note: the reversionistic believer is worse than the unbeliever! (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:8)
6. Beloved ones must remember that God the Father is the One Who is making us stand in His presence blameless with great joy (vv.24,25).

Your brother has sinned  
(Mt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1).

Show him his fault in private (Mt. 18:15).

Does he listen?  
ἀκούω #191

Yes  
Discipline is Sufficient  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:6)

Take one or two more with you (Mt. 18:16).

Does he refuse to listen?  
παρακούω #3878

No  
Discipline is Sufficient  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:6)

Tell it to the whole church (Mt. 18:17).

Does he refuse to listen?  
παρακούω #3878

No  
Discipline is Sufficient  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:6)

Disassociate (Mt. 18:17;  
1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:2,5,7,11,13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 3:6,14).

Does he ever respond?

Yes  
Discipline is Sufficient  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:6)

God will deal with him (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:13).

You have won your brother (Mt. 18:15).  
You who are spiritual, restore such a one (Gal. 6:1).