

SOUTH CULLMAN CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Extensive Study of Church Discipline

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1/17/2014

A series of 8 lessons presented at the South Cullman church of Christ in Cullman, AL discussing the need, purpose, meaning and direction of "Church Discipline".

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Church Discipline - Introduction

Introduction. J. D. Tant, Ancient Landmarks, Vol.XI, No.4, April, 1976

“It is no accident that we are depicted as ‘the family of God.’ We are spiritually brothers and sisters in the household of God, sharing ‘the Father of spirits’ and an elder brother. This is no superficial relationship of people who get together on Sundays for a good time. God decreed that these ties of the spirit family are deeper even than the cherished, but fleshly, parent-child relationship (Mt.10:34-39). But in order to have such family solidarity, there must be discipline. To have the unifying love at the expense of purity in faith and life is an exercise in self-destruction. The forces of love and discipline are not mutually antagonistic, but are rather complementary. When you think of the environment of the physical family, you understand that where either of these elements is missing you have a flawed structure. So it is with the Lord’s family — the church.”

“But we have extremists on two fronts who seemingly stress one almost to the exclusion of the other. Some cry for love, tolerance, fellowship and brotherhood, stressing unity no matter how deviant in life or doctrine one may become. On the other hand are the professional purifiers who go from place to place and person to person to seeking witches whom they may condemn to the flames ignited within their own crucibles of self-righteous indignation. ‘Party-line-pronouncements’ thus become the standard of measurement. Must we have one without the other? We encourage parents to strike a happy balance within the family sphere so that firm discipline and loving acceptance can work together in bringing children to fruitful maturity. That fruitful maturity is the same goal we have for the spiritual man, and the Bible teaches the same recipe of firm discipline coupled with loving obedience.”

“In fact, these two cannot properly exist without one another. Separation, discipline, is good and proper, but when it is separated from the motivation of love, it deteriorates into the works of the flesh - ‘factions, divisions, parties.’ And while unity is most desired, there is that which is worse than division - unity and compromise with error either in faith or morals. Balance is needed, and God’s word certainly gives the formula for success.”

Hebrews 12:5-11

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not

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sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected {us}, and we paid {them} respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened {us} as seemed {best} to them, but He for {our} profit, that {we} may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

I. Two Extremes

Misuse (abuse)

Wrong Motive (2Th.3:15)

No Teaching, Encouraging, Exhortation (Ac.18:26; 1Th.5:14)

Inconsistency (Js.2:1-13 esp. vv.1,9)

Non-use (ignore sin)

1. Ignoring, hoping it will go away (1Co.5:2)

2. Fearing the consequences (Mt.10:28)

The Need for Clear Teaching and Consistent Practice

B. Clear Teaching (Mt.4:4) (Jo.8:32) (Ep.5:17)

In all matters of faith, the Bible is our complete guide (2Tim.3:16-17)

No authority for what “I think” works

We “**live**...by **every** word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt.4:4) (cf. Ac.20:26-27)

This includes teaching on discipline

God’s word can be understood on this matter (Eph.5:17)

If there is a failure to understand, it is either a matter that God has not revealed (Deut.29:29) or there is a hindrance in our heart (Matt.13:14-15).

The problem is NOT that God’s Word cannot be understood (Jo.7:17; 8:32; Eph.5:17; Isa.35:8)

Given enough time, we should understand God’s will on this subject

Just like with moral truths

This indicates maturity (or lack thereof) (Heb.5:12)

C. Consistent Practice (1Co.15:58)

The need for faith and moral courage

Stand against sin

Uphold preaching against sin

Uphold teaching and practice of discipline

Many More Would Fear (1Tim.5:20; Ac.5:11; 2Cor.7:15)

In fear, many would return to the Lord

Church Discipline - Introduction

Discussion:

II. Church Discipline is a N.T. Doctrine and a Commandment of God

A. The Bible pattern

1. (Mt.18:15-17) "...let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."
2. (Ro.16:17-18) "...note those...and avoid them."
3. (1Co.5:1-13) "...purge out ...not to keep company with...not even to with such a person."
4. (Ep.5:11) "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them."
5. (1Th.5:14) "...warn those who are unruly..."
6. (2Th.3:6,14-15) "...withdraw...note that person and do not keep company with him..."
7. (1Ti.3:1-5) "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."
8. (2Ti.3:1-5) "And from such people turn away!"
9. (Ti.1:9-11,13) "...exhort and convict those who contradict...rebuke them sharply..."
10. (Ti.3:10-11) "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition..."
11. (2Jo.1:9-11) "...do not receive him into your house nor greet him..."

These Scriptures leave no doubt

Dealing with sin "our own way"

A church which refuses to accept these divine directives, or through neglect, fails to practice what is required, is rebelling against the revealed will of God.

Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king." (1 Samuel 15:22-23)

III. God's Requirement of Discipline in the Past (Rom.15:4; 1Cor.10:11)

A. Adam To Moses

1. Adam & Eve (Ge.2:15-17; 3:22-24)
2. The disobedient in Noah's day (Gen.6:1-3; 7:21-23; 1Pet.3:18-20)
3. Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.18&19)
4. Lot's Wife (Ge.19:12-17,26; Lk.17:32)

B. Moses To The Church

1. The Spies and Israel's 40 year sentence (Num.13&14; 1Cor.10:1-12; Heb.3)

What Does “Church Discipline” Mean?

I. What Does Discipline Mean?

A. Webster:

1. Discipline: (1.) PUNISHMENT (2.) INSTRUCTION (3.) a field of study (4.) training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character (5.) a: control gained by enforcing obedience or order b: orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior c: SELF-CONTROL (6.) a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity
2. The English word “discipline” is not found in the KJV New Testament, but the Greek noun *paideia* and the verb *paideuo* carry the same meaning.

B. Thayer:

1. 3809 **paideia** (παιδεία): 1. the whole training and education of children (Eph.6:4). 2. whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions; hence a. instruction which aims at the increase of virtue (2Tim.3:16) b. chastisement, chastening,...: (Heb.12:5)
2. 3811 **paideuo** (παιδεύω): 1. to train children (Ac.7:22)(Ac.22:3): to be instructed or taught, to learn (1Tim.1:20): to cause one to learn (Ti.2:12): 2. to chastise; a. to chastise or castigate with words, to correct (2Tim.2:25): c. to chastise with blows, to scourge (Heb.12:7)
3. *paideia* and *paideuo* are translated in the KJV with the English words nurture, instruction, instructing, teaching, taught, learn, learned, chasten, chastened, chasteneth, chastening, chastise, chastisement

C. “Church Discipline” summed up

1. Instruction and Training

It embraces the idea of instruction, learning education, doctrine. Training or experience that corrects, molds, strengthens, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character. To develop by instruction and exercise, to train in self control.

Chastisement

It may also have reference to chastisement inflicted by way of correction, or training by way of suffering; correction or chastisement or punishment for the sake of training — control gained by enforcing obedience or order

All the processes or means by which a church trains and educates it’s members to “walk in the light”

This meaning is exemplified in many NT. passages: (2Tim.4:1,2; Titus 1:9-11; 2:11-15; Heb.5:12-14; 1Tim.1:20)

Church Discipline is Two-Fold

2. Instructive: Preventive in nature

What Does “Church Discipline” Mean?

Prevention is always better than cure, and is always preferable to correction -

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”

a) Remember! Teaching Is Discipline!

3. Corrective: Chastising or penalizing in nature

a) Withdrawal of fellowship is corrective discipline, and is the final resort in trying to restore a person.

D. Three Categories Of Church Discipline

1. To the faithful - Teach

2. To the wayward - Warn

3. To the impenitent - Withdraw

II. Why Is It Necessary For The Local Church To Maintain Discipline?

A. The definition goes a long way in answering this question

1. Without it, there would be no training, correction, molding, strengthening, or perfection of the mental faculties or moral character

2. Without it, there would be no self control gained or correcting of mistakes

B. In any society where people share a common purpose, discipline is a must!

Where there is society, there must be government

Where there is government there must be law

Where there is law there must be a penalty for violating that law

Where there is penalty for violating law, that penalty must be enforced

Otherwise law could not be enforced, government could not be maintained, and society could not be protected.

C. Without discipline in the church...

1. The influence of preaching is lessened or neutralized

2. Confusion and disorder prevail (see 1Co.1&2)

D. Two-fold discipline is necessary to function properly in the...

1. Home - Community - Nation - Church

E. No one can become a Christian without discipline

Instruction - being “taught of God” - is necessary to coming to Jesus! (Jo.6:44-46)

F. No one can remain a Christian without discipline

Being taught Christ’s will is the next step of following Christ after we obey the gospel (Mt.28:20)

What Is The Purpose of Church Discipline?

I. What is the design or purpose of corrective discipline (withdrawal of fellowship)?

A. To Save Their Soul (1Co.5:5)

“That his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1Co.5:5)

“For the destruction of the flesh” (1Co.5:5)

The works, deeds and desires of the flesh (Ga.5:19-21) (He.12:14-15)

(2Co.7:1)

“That he may be ashamed” (2Th.3:14)

Ashamed: to turn one upon himself and so produce a feeling of shame, a wholesome shame which involves a change of conduct. (*W.E. Vine*)

“That they may learn...” (1Ti.1:20)

Learn not to sin

Learn to repent

(1Co.5:5) Delivering One To Satan Means...

“...that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you...”

(v.2)

“...purge out the old leaven...” (v.7)

“...not to keep company with...” (vv.9,11)

“...put away from yourselves the evil person”(v.13)

B. To Save The Church (1Cor.5:7)

“That you may be a new lump” (1Cor.5:7)

“the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Co.5:8)

“...that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ep.5:27)

C. To Establish Fear (1Tim.5:20)

“That the rest also may fear” (1Ti.5:20)

1. Such action causes us to examine our own lives. If all knew to expect discipline, very little would be necessary

D. To Magnify, Exalt And Maintain The Honor Of Christ And His Authority

1. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co.5:4) (cf. 2Th.3:6; Mt.28:18; Co.3:17; 1Pe.2:12)

Notes:

Who Should Receive Church Discipline?

I. Who should receive corrective discipline?

A. Only brethren (1Co.5:9-13)

The local church's duty in corrective discipline is only toward those who are "named a brother."

The local church has a duty to preach the gospel to the lost but it has no duty in the realm of corrective discipline toward the world.

B. Those who are guilty of sinning against a brother (Mt.18:15-17)

Lying, cheating, gossiping, etc.

C. Those who practice the works of the flesh (1Co.5:11)

(1Co.5:11) "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.

(cf. Matt.19:9) "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

(cf. 1Co.6:9-10) "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

(cf. Gal.5:19-21) "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, **and the like**; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

(Eph.5:3-4) "But fornication and **all uncleanness** or covetousness, **let it not even be named among you**, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."

D. False teachers and all who cause division (Rom.16:17-18)

(Rom.16:17-18) "...note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple."

(1Tim.6:3-5) "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is

Who Should Receive Church Discipline?

obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”

(**Titus 1:9-11**) “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.”

(**2Jo.1:9-11**) “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

(**cf. Pr.6:16-19**) “These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.”

E. Elders who continue in sin (1Ti.5:20) (cf. Ac.20:29-30)

What sin? Any sin of which they will not repent.

Blameless is not sinless perfection but is an attitude and response to sin in his life.

F. All who walk disorderly (2Th.3:6,15)

Disorderly: *ataktos* (ἄτακτος) - signifies not keeping order; it was especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate; it is used in (1Th.5:14), describing certain church members who manifested an insubordinate spirit,... (W.E. Vine)

(1Thess.5:14) “unruly” - same word - not willing to be ruled.

Not subordinate to the authority of Christ (Matt.28:18; 7:21-23)

Is forsaking the assembly “disorderly” or “out of order”? (Heb.10:25)

Guilty of willful neglect of the Lord’s Supper, contribution and edification of others.

Notes:

Who Is Responsible to Take Action?

I. Who is responsible for taking action in matters of corrective discipline?

A. The Individual

1. Toward self first (Mt.7:1-5) (Lk.17:3) (Ac.20:28) (1Co.9:27) (2Co.13:5)
 - a) This is what weakens so many on effectively disciplining others
 - b) This eliminates the need for church action
2. Toward a brother (Mt.5:23-24) (Mt.18:15-16) (Ga.6:1) (Js.5:19-20)
3. Love prompts this spirit (1Co.13:6)
4. Examples of this in God's people
 - Samuel for Saul (1Sa.15:35)
 - Ezra for Israel (Ez.10:6)
 - Moses for Israel (De.9:18,25)
 - Paul for the Jews (Ro.9:1-3; 10:1-3)
5. This love for our brother is essential...it fits us to restore him (Ga.6:1-2)

B. The Elders

1. "Take heed...to all the flock" (Ac.20:28)
2. which is among you" (1Pe.5:1) (Ti.1:7-13)

C. The Church

1. "Tell it to the church" (Mt.18:17)
2. when you are gathered together...purge...withdraw...note and avoid"
(1Co.5:4,5,7,13; 2Thess.3:6-15; Rom.16:17-18)
3. If some in the church refuse to withdraw themselves then they are refusing to submit to the elders and by extension, refusing to submit to Christ. They are, themselves, disorderly and must be disciplined.

Notes:

Are Family Members Required to Withdraw?

I. Are family members required to withdraw?

- A. "Church" is a collective word involving every member
 - 1. "shepherd the church" includes "all the flock" (Ac.20:28)
 - 2. All included unless specifically excluded (Co.3:20)(Ep.6:1-2)
 - 3. Are evangelists or deacons excluded?...Then they are included!
- B. The church is commanded to withdraw
 - 1. "...the church" (Mt.18:17)
 - 2. "gathered together...put away from yourselves"(1Co.5:4,13)
 - 3. Are evangelists, elders, deacons or family members excluded?
- C. Husband to Wife or Wife to Husband
 - 1. Specifically excluded by Necessary Inference (Mt.5:32 ;19:3,9)(1Co.7:1-5)
- D. Parent to child
 - 1. Are they members of the church? - Then they are included
 - 2. Are they Specifically excluded?
By Command? No.
By Example? No.
By Necessary Inference? No.
Some say yes?? - By special relationship
Parents relationship to children:
Mothers - Love children & manage the home (Titus 2:4-5)
Fathers - Love and discipline (Ep.6:4) Provide for (1Ti.5:8)
 - 3. Same relationship from the beginning - no change
 - 4. This relationship did not prevent discipline under the Old Law (De.21:18-21)
 - 5. Child not living at home (Independent)
What relationship would prohibit withdrawal of social interaction?
 - 6. Child living at home (dependant)
If too young to live alone then young enough to correct by force (Pr.22:15)
(Pr.23:13-14) (Pr.20:30)
If you won't restrain the child then you are guilty (Pr.13:24)
If too old to correct then old enough to be independent and withdrawn from.
- E. Child to Parent
 - 1. Obey (Co.3:20)
This wouldn't prohibit withdrawal because their obedience to the parent is to be "...in the Lord" (Ep.6:1)
 - 2. Honor (Ep.6:2) (Mt.15:4)
Honor: (5091) "Primarily a valuing" (*W. E. Vine*)
Honor: "To prize, i.e. fix a valuation upon; by implication to revere (*Strong*)

Are Family Members Required to Withdraw?

3. Can you “value” or “esteem” and still withdraw? Yes! (1Ti.5:1,17,19-20)
The motive of discipline is the “value” of the soul!
4. Would “honor” prohibit a child from arresting a parent and sending them to jail for a crime which would obviously end their social relationship with that parent? NO!
5. “Honor” does not prohibit a child from withdrawing fellowship
6. A social relationship (i.e. shopping together, football games, hunting, Thanksgiving dinner, etc.) is not required of a parent and child in order to be righteous.

If my father was drunk every time my family was around him, I could choose to end a social relationship with him in order to protect my family from his influence.

If a young couple gets transferred to another country with their job and does not have the money to travel back to spend social time with their parents, they have not sinned.

F. Principal concerning parents and children

1. (Mt.10:34-37) (Lk.12:51-53) (Mk.3:31-35)

G. Special Relationships carry special obligations

1. These obligations are not a matter of choice
2. If there is a special relationship that prohibits withdrawal then it is a sin to do it!
3. If there is not a special relationship then it is required!

Notes:

How Are The Disorderly to Be Treated?

I. How are the “disorderly” to be treated?

- A. “...let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” (Mt.18:17)
1. Jesus knew their culture, tradition and law. (Jo.18:28)(Ac.10:28 ;11:3)
Jesus knew that His listeners would understand this to mean total social separation
- B. The pattern explains the action:
1. (Ro.16:17-18) “...note those...and avoid them.”
 2. (1Co.5:1-13) “...not to keep company with...not even to with...”
 3. (Ep.5:11) “And have no fellowship with...”
 4. (2Th.3:6,14-15) “...withdraw...do not keep company with him...”
 5. (2Ti.3:1-5) “And from such people turn away!”
 6. (Ti.3:10-11) “Reject...”
 7. (2Jo.1:9-11) “...do not receive him into your house nor greet him”
- C. “...Admonish Him As A Brother.” (2Th.3:15)
- We must not forget about this one who we have withdrawn from. We must continue to try to admonish.
- This is one reason that some brethren have been ineffective at restoring those that they have withdrawn from - they don't follow up with continued admonition and affirmation of their love.
- Is this a loophole for social interaction?
- All other passages exclude social interaction.
- This passage doesn't bring in anything but admonition.
- Must we have social interaction to admonish???
- D. A Divine explanation of the action (1Co.5:9-13)
- It is so severe that if you practiced it with every unrighteous person, you would have to “go out of the world”!

Conclusion:

II. A good test for every situation

- A. Are You...
1. ...Punishing him (2Cor.2:6) as a brother and not as an enemy? (2Th.3:15)
 2. ...Avoiding them? (Ro.16:17)
 3. ...Not keeping company with them, not even eating with them? (1Co.5:11)
 4. ...Having no joint participation with them? (Ep.5:11)
 5. ...Withdrawing from them? (2Th.3:6)
 6. ...Turning away from them? (2Ti.3:5)
 7. ...Rejecting them? (Ti.3:10)

