

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.
 - a. **(vv. 1-4)** – God’s wisdom offered in His word brings blessings.
 - b. **(vv. 5-8)** – God’s wisdom is at variance with our own and requires self-denial.
 - c. **(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.
 - a. Children of God do not get to pick and choose which part of God’s love they receive.
 - b. 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?
 - I. What is discipline?
 - A. Two common misconceptions:
 - a. **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)
 - b. **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.
 - i. **“For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.” (Proverbs 3:12)**
 - ii. Love (**Proverbs 13:24**); Hope (**Proverbs 19:18**); Salvation (**Proverbs 23:13-14**); Fellowship (**Proverbs 29:15**)
 - iii. **Love – 1 Corinthians 13:6** – does not tolerate evil, so includes discipline.

1. **Hosea 11:1-4** – bands of love...

B. Discipline Defined

- a. English (New Oxford American Dictionary)
 - i. (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*.
 - ii. (2) a branch of knowledge, typically one studied in higher education: *sociology is a fairly new discipline*.
- b. **“My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD” (Proverbs 3:11, NASB).**
- c. **Bible equivalent** – *paideia* (Greek) – **cf. Proverbs 3:11** (LXX, **“chastening”**); **Hebrews 12:5**
 - i. “tutorage, i.e. education or training; by implication, disciplinary correction” (STRONG)
 - ii. “the act of providing guidance for responsible living, upbringing, training, instruction, in our lit. chiefly as it is attained by discipline, correction” (BDAG)
 - iii. “(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)
- d. Included in “discipline” is:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.**
 - e. **An image of discipline** – Parents to Children (God is our Father, and we are His children) – **Ephesians 6:4**
 - i. **“training (paideia) and admonition (nouthesia)”**
 - ii. “(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)
 - iii. **Teach – Encourage Application – Reprove – Correct – Chasten/Punish (action of correction when mere words fail)**
- C. The Dual Nature of Discipline
- a. Instructive (preventative)
 - i. 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**).
 - ii. Importance of instruction – **Hosea 4:6** – ignorance leads to destruction.
 - iii. **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.
 - iv. Self-discipline is key – **1 Corinthians 9:27** – if we all worked hard at this, we would need far less corrective discipline.
 - b. Corrective (punitive)
 - i. Rebuking and warning a brother who has turned to sin – **1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 2:11; 6:1-2; James 5:19-20**

- ii. 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**
- c. **Matthew 18** – A picture of the landscape of discipline.
 - i. **(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.
 - ii. **(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.
 - a. **(vv. 6-7)** – caused by another – severity in consequence.
 - b. **(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.
 - iii. **(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.
 - iv. **(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):
 - a. Go to brother (rebuke, correct).
 - b. Bring two or three witnesses (establish truth of the charges).

- c. Tell it to the church (made public) (more admonition on greater scale) (**elders at helm**).
- d. 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.
 - a. ***This is how Jesus seeks the lost sheep and brings him back!***
- v. **(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:
 - a. **(vv. 23-27)** – King forgives debt of servant through compassion.
 - b. **(vv. 28-34)** – Forgiven servant refuses to forgive fellow servant’s debt to him, king is told, and that servant is delivered to torturers.
 - c. **(v. 35)** – application – we must forgive, or God will not forgive us.

D. 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.

- a. **“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.
- b. **We must know what God says on the matter and have faith to obey it.**

II. Why is discipline important?

A. The Absence of Discipline is Disorder

- a. God is not the author of confusion – **1 Corinthians 14:33**
 - i. *Akatastasia* – “instability, i.e. disorder” (STRONG); “opposition to established authority, disorder, unruliness” (BDAG)
 - ii. **Context** – proper use of spiritual gifts according to the revelation of God’s will **(v. 37)**.
 - iii. **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?
 - a. Such would contradict **verse 33**.
 - b. 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).
 - a. **“Two early mss read is not to be recognized” (fn, NASB)**
 - b. 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.
 - i. **“Law without enforced consequences are merely suggestions.” (Ron Brackin)**
 - c. **Church discipline enforces the order which God has revealed.**
- B. Discipline is the Difference Between Assent and Faith
- a. Saving faith is not mere assent, but loyalty, obedience, fidelity, and commitment.
 - b. **Luke 6:46** – they claimed faith in Jesus’ Lordship but did not practice self-discipline in obeying His words.
 - c. Jesus taught His disciples, and required obedience as a true measure of faith:
 - i. **John 13:13-17** – after washing the disciples’ feet.
 - ii. **John 15:1-2** – regarding all his teaching, discipline, both instructive and corrective (punitive).
 - d. Faith without works is dead (**cf. James 2:26**), and without discipline (instructive and corrective) there cannot be working faith.
 - e. **Church discipline provides for true, Biblical faith.**
- C. Discipline is the Difference Between Reverence and Contempt
- a. **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.
 - b. **2 Corinthians 11:3** – Paul was afraid they had been deceived like Eve.
 - i. **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.
 - ii. **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?**
 - c. **Church discipline produces reverence/fear for God’s word.**
- D. Where There is Community There Must Be Discipline

- a. What are these without discipline? – Home, work, school, society, military?
 - b. **Where there is common purpose among people there must be discipline.**
 - i. **Common purpose requires rules, or laws.**
 - ii. **For the common purpose to be achieved by these rules, or laws, they must be taught and explained.**
 - iii. **The rules, or laws must have consequences or penalties for violation if they are to be implemented throughout the community.**
 - c. *EX: Government* – **Romans 13:2-5** – government codifies and reveals laws, then enforces them with consequences for disobedience.
 - i. This promotes order through the fear of suffering the wrath of the government – consequences.
 - ii. This promotes order for the Christian especially through the conscience – knowing we are to obey as directed by God.
 - d. **What about the church?**
 - i. 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.
 - ii. **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)**
- III. God’s People and God’s Discipline
- A. God has always required faithfulness in His house – **Hebrews 3:1-6**
 - a. **House** – i.e. household – the people – family – GOD BEING THE FATHER.
 - b. **(vv. 2, 5)** – Moses was a faithful servant in God’s house. (Old Testament – Israel)
 - c. **(vv. 2, 6a)** – Christ is faithful as a Son in God’s house – superiority of Christ to Moses.
 - d. **(v. 6b)** – we are a part of that house if we are faithful, holding fast our confidence. (New Testament – the church of Christ)
 - i. **(vv. 7-19)** – give the example of the Israelites as a warning about disobedience in the house – punishment.
 - ii. **(vv. 7-11)** – quotation of **Psalms 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).

B. Discipline in the Old Testament

a. Adam and Eve

- i. **Genesis 2:15-17** – given law with consequences of disobedience.
- ii. **Genesis 3:22-24** – consequences meted out upon disobedience – discipline administered.

b. Disobedient in Noah's Time

- i. **Genesis 6:1-3** – intermarrying between faithful and unfaithful led to total corruption.
- ii. **Genesis 6:5-7** – God destroyed the world.

c. Rebellion of Israel at Kadesh

- i. 12 spies sent into Canaan – Joshua and Caleb had faith, others did not and led people to rebel.
- ii. 40-year sentence of wilderness wandering – **Numbers 14:33-35**
 1. Recorded for our benefit – **cf. Psalm 95:7-11; Hebrews 3:7-19**

d. The Sabbath Breaker

- i. **Numbers 15:32-36** – was stoned as a consequence according to the law for breaking the Sabbath.
- ii. 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.

e. Moses' Disobedience

- i. **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.

f. Achan Taking of the Accursed

- i. **Joshua 6:18** – to abstain from the accursed things.
- ii. Failed to take Ai – **Joshua 7:11**
- iii. Achan exposed, and stoned – **Joshua 7:24-25**

g. **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.

C. Discipline in the New Testament

a. Ananias and Sapphira

- i. They lied about the amount they sold the land for, and what they gave.
- ii. **Acts 5:5, 10-11** – both were punished, and the result was fear on all who knew.

- b. Corinth
 - i. Paul's letter was one of discipline – not only instruction, but rebuke and warning.
 - ii. He warned of punitive discipline – **1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 2 Corinthians 13:1-3**
 - c. The Sexually Immoral Man at Corinth
 - i. **1 Corinthians 5:1-5** – was to be taken away from among them, delivered to Satan.
 - d. Peter
 - i. **Galatians 2:11-13** – Paul withstood Peter to the face for his hypocrisy, and the influence it had on others.
 - e. Hymenaeus and Alexander
 - i. **1 Timothy 1:18-20** – Paul delivered them to Satan – possibly together with the Ephesian church.
 - f. Are we different? – **1 Corinthians 14:36-38**
- D. The Law of Christ Sets Forth a Pattern of Church Discipline
- a. **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.”*
 - b. **Romans 16:17** – *“note those who cause divisions and offenses...and avoid them.”*
 - c. **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.”*
 - d. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** – *“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers...Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord.”*
 - e. **Galatians 6:1-2** – *“if a man is overtaken in any trespass...restore such a one”*
 - f. **Ephesians 5:11** – *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them”*
 - g. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** – *“warn those who are unruly”*
 - h. **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.”*
 - i. **1 Timothy 5:20** – *“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”*
 - j. **2 Timothy 3:5** – *“from such people turn away!”*
 - k. **Titus 1:9-11** – *“exhort and convict those who contradict...whose mouths must be stopped...rebuke them sharply”*
 - l. **Titus 3:10-11** – *“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition”*

- m. **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.”
- n. **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”
- o. **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)
- p. **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.

IV. Our Options with Church Discipline

A. Disobedience

a. As with all commands of God we have the option to ignore and disobey them:

- i. Church discipline is a test of obedience to Christ – **2 Corinthians 2:9**
- ii. 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.

b. Some disobey:

- i. Through ignorance – hasn’t been taught – **Hosea 4:6**
- ii. Through naivete – the issue will resolve on its own – **Hebrews 12:15**
- iii. Through fear – diminished numbers, angry members, litigation, etc. – **Isaiah 8:13** – let God be your fear!

B. Perversion

a. As with all commands of God there is a danger of perverting them, although in attempted obedience:

- i. **2 Peter 3:16** – must have proper teaching and stability to not misuse God’s word.

b. Some pervert (misuse/abuse) church discipline:

- i. Through the wrong motive – **2 Thessalonians 3:15; Galatians 6:1-5**
- ii. Through hastiness – **1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:14**
- iii. Through prejudice, partiality, and inconsistency – **1 Timothy 5:21; James 2:1, 9, 12-13**

C. Faithful Obedience

- a. Of the 7 churches of Asia, Philadelphia was exceptional – **Revelation 3:7-8** – this is what the Lord delights in.
- b. **What can be done to ensure our faithfulness on this subject?**

- i. Seek, and trust in the infallible source – **2 Timothy 3:16-17; Isaiah 55:8-9**
 - ii. 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**
 - iii. Clear teaching on the subject – **Acts 20:20, 26-27**
 - iv. Have faith and courage! – **1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13**
 - v. Cultivate true love – **John 14:15; 1 Corinthians 13:6; 16:14; 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:20**
- V. Divine Objectives in Corrective Church Discipline
- A. Save the Individual (erring)
 - a. A common misconception about the discipline of withdrawal is that we are giving up on such a person.
 - i. **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.
 - ii. **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.**
 - b. The action is an attempt at saving their soul – **1 Corinthians 5:5**
 - i. **“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**
 - a. **2 Timothy 2:24-26** – they are doing Satan’s will.
 - b. 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.**
 - a. It may be that the sinner is so advanced in his worldliness that he wants nothing to do with the Lord, or his brethren.
 - b. 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.
 - a. The social intercourse enjoyed by brethren is a byproduct and blessing of their mutual fellowship with God in Christ – **Acts 2:46**
 - b. **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.**
 - c. Social interaction is tantamount to consent – **2 John 10-11**
- ii. **“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.
- iii. **“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.
 - a. **(vv. 11, 13) – “expose”** – *elegchō* – “to convict, confute, refute, usually with the suggestion of putting the convicted person to shame” (VINE)
 - b. **(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.
 - i. Like Nathan to David – **2 Samuel 12:5-7**

- ii. **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.
 - 2. **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).**
 - iv. **“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.
 - v. **“that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5).**
- B. Save the Church
 - a. Christ’s will for the church – **Ephesians 5:25-27** – no spot, wrinkle, blemish, but holy.
 - b. 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.
 - c. The sin was noted as being **“among you”** – **1 Corinthians 5:1** – this brought a personal tone to the situation.
 - i. The sexually immoral man did not stand independent of the church.
 - ii. **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**)
 - d. One member’s sin, left unchecked/uncorrected/undisciplined, will inevitably affect the whole – **1 Corinthians 5:6** – as it did in Corinth.
 - i. 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”**)
 - ii. **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.**

- iii. **At the very least, violence is done to the truth and our view of it when the guilty are not disciplined.**
 - e. Church discipline purifies the church from sin/leaven – **1 Corinthians 5:7-8**
 - f. Church discipline saves the vulnerable from the corrupting influence of sin and error – **Titus 1:9-11**
 - i. **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.**
 - ii. **Matthew 18:7** – offenses may come through influence of an unrepentant sinner, **but also THROUGH NEGLIGENCE OF FAITHFUL BRETHREN TO ACT IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE.**
 - g. 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)
 - h. 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.
 - i. If all knew with certainty what discipline they would receive upon committing sin, fewer would give in to the temptation to do it.
- C. Glorify God
- a. 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**
 - b. The head is not glorified when the body is acting independently – **Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:21** – thus, God is not glorified.
 - c. We glorify God and Christ by submitting to their will for us – **cf. John 17:4**
 - i. **Psalms 19:1** – the heavens declare His glory through their magnificence, and functionality according to the will of the Creator. (cf. **Genesis 1:14** – for signs and seasons, days and years)
 - d. Failure to glorify God in Israel:
 - i. **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.

- ii. **1 Samuel 15:2-3, 22-23** – the command to Saul was for punishment of sin, and his decision failed to glorify God.
 - e. When we do what Christ tells us to do we glorify Him.
 - f. **When we do not do what Christ tells us to do we fail to glorify Him.**
 - g. *Some argue that church discipline is ineffective – we should not do it because it likely won't bring the sinner to repentance.*
 - i. This manifests a severe lack of faith in Christ's plan.
 - ii. THIS ALSO MISSES THE GREATEST POINT – faith does not test the reasonableness, or effectiveness of a command of God, BUT ACTS IN OBEDIENCE.
 - iii. **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!**
 - h. 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.
 - i. The only way to glorify Jesus is to do as He says.
- VI. Recipients of Church Discipline
- A. Anyone Named a Brother
 - a. **“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)**
 - b. In the Corinthian letter, Paul makes a special note concerning this fact – **1 Corinthians 5:9-13**
 - i. **(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.
 - ii. **(v. 11)** – anyone named a brother – **cf. Ephesians 2:19-22** – i.e. one who has been added to the kingdom/household of God.
 - iii. **(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.
 - a. **“So you shall put away the evil from Israel” (17:12)** – to avoid spread of corruption.
 - i. (vv. 6-8) – leaven leavens the whole lump.
 - b. (v. 2) – **“from among you”** – the action by definition cannot be accomplished toward one who is **“outside” (v. 12)**.
 - c. Children of God who are willfully sinning are in especially grave danger – **Hebrews 10:26-27** – **“go on sinning willfully” (NASB)**
 - i. This describes the very point at which one would be withdrawn from as a last measure to save them.
 - ii. **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.
- B. The Disorderly
- a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. **2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14** – the **“disorderly”** or **“anyone [who] does not obey”**
 - i. **Disorderly** – *ataktōs* (adverb) – “(1) disorderly, out of ranks (often so of soldiers) (3) deviating from the prescribed order or rule” (THAYER)
 - ii. **“unruly” (1 Thessalonians 5:14)** (adjective)
 - iii. (v. 14) – shows what standard determines the disorderliness. (**2 Thessalonians 2:15**) (cf. **Acts 2:42** – **“apostles’ doctrine”**)
 - d. I.e. those who are insubordinate, disobedient, not submitting to the authority of Christ – **Colossians 3:17**
 - e. ALL SIN IS DISORDERLINESS/UNRULINESS – **1 John 3:4** – sin is lawlessness – acting without law.
 - f. **This is important because it covers all sin – any which is not repented of, and continued in makes the offender subject to corrective discipline:**
 - i. Forsaking the assembly? – **Hebrews 10:25**
 - ii. 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.

C. The Interpersonal Offender

- a. Many sins are interpersonal – i.e. relational, between two or more people.
- b. **Matthew 18:15-17** – specifically addresses an interpersonal sin starting on a private level.
 - i. Such may escalate through lack of repentance to involve church action of withdrawal.
 - ii. **May include lying, slander, gossip, cheating, stealing, wounding of conscience, etc. – anything done by one against another.**
- c. 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**
 - i. **Sticks and stones wisdom** – may be good in helping children keep control of their emotions, but not in saving souls and churches.
 - ii. **“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!
 - iii. 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.
 - iv. **NOTE: Matthew 18:15 is a COMMAND THAT WE MUST OBEY – none are bigger than this.**
- d. Interpersonal sins are harmful by definition – **Romans 13:8-10** – by definition, a sin against another is doing him harm.
- e. Interpersonal sins are still sins against Christ – **1 Corinthians 8:12** – at the end of the day, all sin is against God.
- f. **Interpersonal sins always threaten the unity of the body:**
 - i. **1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 11:17-18** – divisive spirit.
 - ii. **Galatians 5:14-15, 26** – envy, conceit.
 - iii. **Philippians 4:2-3** – not getting along.
 - iv. **Ephesians 4:1-3** – the unity is in the Spirit’s revelation but takes proper attitudes toward brethren to be preserved.
 - v. **Part of church discipline is to protect the church, and interpersonal sin is a great threat to the unity of the church.**

D. The Sower to the Flesh

- a. 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**
 - i. These were those who had been changed, and were not to live that life any longer – **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

- ii. From homosexuality and idolatry to the covetous and the revilers – **there is not a sin that is exempt from this measure of discipline.**
 - b. **Ephesians 5:3-4** – no work of the flesh is to be **“named among [the saints].”**
 - i. **“not even named among the Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 5:1)**
 - ii. Not that it is not spoken of, or is not something they have heard of.
 - iii. **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”**
 - iv. Rather – **(vv. 11-13)** – they are to be exposed/reproved, bringing those practicing such to shame.
 - c. **Galatians 6:1-2** – this is an example of “church discipline.” (not the final stage of withdrawal)
 - i. 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.
 - ii. **“overtaken in any trespass”** = committing ANY work of the flesh.
 - iii. **“you who are spiritual”** = submitting to the Spirit’s revelation.
 - iv. **(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.
- E. The False Teacher and the Divisive One
- a. 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.
 - i. Such must be stopped because they destroy the faith of some – **2 Timothy 2:16-18; Titus 1:9-11**
 - ii. **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.**
 - iii. **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.**
 - b. 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.
 - i. **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.
 - ii. **Interpersonal sin which sows discord/division – slander, gossip, lying, etc.**
 - iii. **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)
 - a. Does not necessitate the teaching of doctrinal error.
 - b. Simply divisiveness from selfish ambition.
- F. The Elder Who Continues in Sin
 - a. 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**
 - i. There is not more leniency for them, and it is not a different pattern.
 - ii. Only the elder who does not repent should be withdrawn from.

- iii. **“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.
 - b. **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.)
- VII. Participants in Church Discipline
- A. The Individual
 - a. Self-Discipline
 - i. **1 Corinthians 11:31-32** – self-discipline consistently applied makes corrective church discipline unnecessary.
 - ii. Discipleship is predicated on self-discipline – **Mark 8:34**
 - iii. 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).
 - iv. **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.
 - b. Interpersonal Discipline
 - i. **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.)
 - ii. **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.
 - iii. 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**
 - B. The Elders
 - a. God’s organization of the local church includes elders – **Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5**

- i. 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.
 - ii. **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)
 - iii. **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]”
- b. Taking heed to, overseeing the flock among them – **Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2**
- i. **“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)**
 - ii. **Titus 1:7-13** – this would include the responsibility of protecting the flock from sinful influence and error.
 - iii. 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**
- c. **Matthew 18:15-17** – while not explicitly mentioned, the involvement of elders is necessarily implied in this passage.
- i. **“tell it to the church” (v. 17)** (cf. **1 Corinthians 5:4-5** – **“when you are gathered together... deliver such a one to Satan”**)
 - ii. How would scripture dictate this action to be taken?
 - iii. **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).**
 - iv. **“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.

C. The Church

- a. **Matthew 18:17** – telling the church is for the purpose of involving them in the effort of restoration.
 - i. **(vv. 15-16)** – manifests a progression in disciplinary effort to bring the brother to repentance.
 - ii. **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)**
 - iii. **(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.”**
- b. **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.
 - i. **“when you are gathered together” = “when you come together as a church” (11:18)**
 - ii. 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)
 - iii. The command to note and avoid the divisive ones is given to **“brethren,”** i.e. members of the church – **Romans 16:17-18**
- c. 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**
 - i. 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**

D. Must family members withdraw from each other?

- a. **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).**
- b. Foundations for answering the question:
 - i. Love for the Lord must be more than love for family – **Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37**
 - ii. 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.**

- iii. The Lord warns that following Him may bring conflict to the family relationships – **Matthew 10:34-36**
- iv. Nobody must show partiality in observing this command – **James 2:1; 1 Timothy 5:21**
- c. The church is commanded to withdraw – **Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14**
 - i. **“Church”** is a collective word including every member.
 - ii. 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.
- d. **“every brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:6) includes “every brother” who is a physical family member as well – if not, why not?**
- e. **Exceptions?**
 - i. ***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.**
 - ii. **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):**
 - a. Are they Christians? If yes, then they are included.
 - b. Like marriage, same relationship from beginning to now – **cf. Deuteronomy 21:18-20** – was not excluded before.
 - c. Grown children – independent – what would prohibit withdrawal of social interaction?
 - d. 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):**
 - a. Their obedience is to be **“in the Lord”** – **Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1** – would not prohibit obeying the command to withdraw.
 - b. **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?
 - a. **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.
 - b. **Numbers 12** – Aaron and Miriam were Moses’ brother and sister and were not spared from discipline which affected his relationship with them.
- f. **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!**
 - i. 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**
 - ii. **Family will have the greatest impact!**
- g. **The command of church discipline includes the participation of family members.**

VIII. The Procedure of Church Discipline

A. Before the Withdrawal

- a. Establish the Guilt with Certainty
 - i. The New Testament pattern for a “spiritual” one (one who is not sowing to the flesh, is following the Spirit, is faithful) implies they can judge what is sin – **Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 2:15-16**
 1. Not a situation of hurt feelings, differing opinions, etc.
 2. The law of Christ has been transgressed – **1 John 3:4**
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 5:1, 3** – **“actually”** – “pert. to being really so, with implication of being generally known, actually, in fact” (BDAG); and Paul could easily judge on the matter from afar.
 - iii. Old Testament law required guilt to be established before punishment, and had laws in place to prevent a false, or unsure accusation:
 1. **Deuteronomy 17:2-6** – accusation and diligent inquiry precedes punishment, and punishment is not without 2 or 3 witnesses.
 2. **Deuteronomy 19:15-21** – one witness insufficient, false witnesses investigated and punished.
 - iv. **Matthew 18:15-16** – the witnesses are not “eyewitnesses,” but there that **“every word may be established.”**
 1. **“the mouth”** (*stoma* – the mouth); **“word”** (*rhēma* – “an utterance”)

2. **“BY THE MOUTH (stoma) OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT (rhēma) MAY BE CONFIRMED.” (NASB)**
3. **“that every charge (rhēma) may be established by the evidence (stoma) of two or three witnesses.” (ESV)**
4. These witnesses are there to establish by mouth every word/charge/fact in the effort to restore.
 - a. It may be discovered in the meeting that there has not been sin involved.
5. **If sin is confirmed, the witnesses act in two ways:**
 - a. **“And if he refuses to hear them [witnesses]” (v. 17)** – the witnesses, having the facts established, will seek to persuade the brother to repent.
 - b. **“tell it to the church” (v. 17) – “by the mouth...every word may be established”** – they bear witness to the fact of the sin, and the meeting to confront the sinner – their unwillingness to repent – THIS MUST BE IN PLACE FOR THE CHURCH TO BE TOLD.
- v. **1 Timothy 5:19** – reputation of elder at stake – must be certain.
 1. **“receive an accusation”** – NOT SAYING one who has witnessed an elder sin cannot confront the elder alone. (**Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15**) (this is not a loophole for elders)
 - a. Someone, particularly an evangelist, cannot **“receive” (to accept as true)** an accusation without 2 or 3 witnesses (would seem to be eyewitnesses).
 - b. Protects the evangelist from taking part in another’s sin (**v. 22**).
 - c. Protects the elder from disgruntled members who want to tarnish their reputation.
 2. This further confirms the importance of guilt being certain.
- b. Warn the Unruly
 - i. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** – they need to be warned about their spiritual condition.
 1. They may not know.
 2. **Galatians 6:1** – may have been overtaken, and not fully aware of the severity.
 - ii. **1 Corinthians 5:5** – **“deliver such a one to Satan”** is not the first time they are made aware they are serving Satan.

1. **2 Timothy 2:24-26** – trying to make them come to their senses by warning them.
 - iii. **Matthew 18:15-17** – they are being warned here – individual, individuals, the church.
 - iv. **Titus 3:10-11** – there have been multiple warnings and efforts to restore.
- c. Practice Longsuffering
- i. Longsuffering is a part of the Christian’s character which must be present in all things, especially disciplining a brother – **Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Corinthians 13:4**
 - ii. **Longsuffering** – *makrothymia* – “state of being able to bear up under provocation, forbearance, patience” (BDAG)
 1. “provocation” implies negative action (sin) or inaction (lacking repentance) – “suffering” is indicative of provocation.
 2. “to bear up” implies continued activity – reacting to the provocation of sin and the inactivity of lacking repentance. (**similar concept in *hypomonē*, patience, perseverance**)
 3. **I.E. LONGSUFFERING IS NOT INACTIVITY BETWEEN ACTIONS TAKEN, BUT THE CHARACTERIZATION AND TONE OF ALL THE ACTIVITY IN SEEKING TO RESTORE A SINNER.**
 - iii. **Longsuffering implies that something is being put off (the next step of discipline), but it does NOT imply inactivity.**
 - iv. **We are to love as God loves, and we are to be longsuffering as God is longsuffering. How does God’s longsuffering look?**
 1. **Romans 2:4** – the longsuffering of God was meant for the Jews to come to repentance.
 - a. **Romans 10:21** – stretching out the hand all day long.
 - b. **2 Chronicles 36:15-17** (before Babylonian captivity) – God did not just wait, but persisted in sending prophets to rebuke, and call to repentance.
 - c. **Cf. Matthew 21:33-46** (Parable of Wicked Vinedressers) – sent servants (prophets, beat/stoned/killed), more servants (same), son (Jesus, killed Him) – National Israel judged and cut off from God for good, Jerusalem destroyed.
 2. **2 Peter 3:15** – God’s longsuffering is our salvation.
 - a. **2 Peter 3:9** – beckoning people to repent.

- b. **2 Peter 3:10** – warning.
- c. **2 Peter 3:14-15, 18** – instructing and teaching.

3. LONGSUFFERING IS NOT TOLERANCE!

- v. **Longsuffering involves giving time, but the time must be used scripturally (admonition, warning, instruction), and judged accurately (Incorrigible? Rebellious? Presumptuous?) – Revelation 2:21 (time given implies no repentance initially, continually, ever)**

1. The longsuffering is not a matter of merely “how long is long enough,” but what is the quality of the time (what has been done with the time) on the basis of the righteous (calling to repentance, admonition) and the unrighteous (are they being reasoned with, are they moving toward repentance).

2. **“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.” (Jude 22-23, NASB)**

- a. **Manifests that the length of “longsuffering,” among other things, is relative to the case.**
- b. **(vv. 16-19)** – false teachers, and exhortation to stand for truth. **(v. 4** – like all error will involve the effect of immorality)
- c. **“have mercy on some, who are doubting”** – the error has made them waver, raised questions – influence, but in a state to be reasoned with.
- d. **“save others, snatching them out of the fire”** – they are heavily influenced, and are in the fires of error/sin/God’s wrath – urgency, aggression, etc.
- e. **“on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh”** – some are so polluted they can only be pitied as we treat them as one given fully to the flesh.
 - i. **“have mercy”** – show pity. **(cf. 1 Corinthians 5:2)**

vi. **Longsuffering involves judgment, but the wrong, uninformed judgment lacking scriptural wisdom can lead to negligence, harm, and sin.**

vii. While longsuffering is commanded, it must not conflict with God’s call to exercise justice and carry out His discipline in an appropriate and effective fashion – **1 Corinthians 5:2**

viii. **Ecclesiastes 8:11** – ***longsuffering used as an excuse to delay what needs to happen will lead to further problems.***

d. Inform the Erring of the Intent to Withdraw

- i. **1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:14** – the action is intended to save him, bring shame upon him, cause him to repent.
 - 1. This implies his knowledge that the action is going to take place...
 - 2. ...as well as the reason why.
 - 3. **If he is not informed, it leaves room for his confusion about the following treatment by his brethren and will hinder the effectiveness of the action.**
 - ii. **This also acts as a last warning which might cause them to repent before it is carried out.**
- B. The Withdrawal
- a. The Setting and Tone
 - i. This “final step” must be followed when one has been given time to repent, and they have neglected to do so – **Revelation 2:21; Matthew 18:17**
 - ii. The scripture reveals it is to take place in the assembly – **1 Corinthians 5:4-5**
 - 1. Public action involving the entire congregation.
 - 2. Not the first time they’re hearing about the case of sin – **Matthew 18:17**
 - 3. However, the final stage is clearly being enforced upon the congregation – they know what and why.
 - 4. The public nature of the discipline is meant to strike fear (**cf. 1 Timothy 5:20**).
 - iii. The tone is to be commensurate with the circumstance – **1 Corinthians 5:2** – **announcement of death, and formal severance of a cherished relationship.**
 - b. The Public Congregational Action
 - i. As has been stressed, this is an action involving the whole church – **Matthew 18:17**
 - ii. **As Paul does in 1 Corinthians 5, the reasons for the action should be explained (not taken for granted), and the responsibilities of all should be explained (not taken for granted).**
 - iii. **NOTE: This may very well be a teaching opportunity for those less mature in the faith.**
- C. After the Withdrawal
- a. No Fellowship
 - i. **Ephesians 5:11** – we are not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. (those practicing them, **vv. 6-7**)
 - 1. **2 Corinthians 6:14-16a** – these do not go together, and such is to be reflected.

- ii. **1 Corinthians 5:5** – this is an acknowledgment and objective reaction to what is already true – severed fellowship (**cf. 1 John 1:5-6**), serving Satan (**cf. 2 Timothy 2:26**).
 - iii. Now our relationship to them has changed, and our actions must not imply our condoning of their sin, nor that they are in right standing with God:
 - 1. They are no longer members and cannot be utilized or treated as such – **cf. Acts 9:26-28 (cf. 1 Timothy 2:8; Romans 12:6-8; Revelation 2:20)**.
 - 2. They are no longer in fellowship with God, and we cannot be guilty of sharing in their evil deeds (fellowship) through actions which condone/tolerate their sin – **2 John 9-11** – must not be treated in a way to feel they are right with God or their brethren.
 - b. No Company (social ostracism)
 - i. **1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14** – our relationship has changed, and socializing with them is prohibited.
 - c. Continual Admonition (upon opportunity)
 - i. **2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** – there is a change in relationship, but not a change in love.
 - 1. Love dictates something different since the relationship has changed.
 - 2. There must be continued efforts to admonish them to restore them.
 - ii. **Admonition may come by circumstantial opportunity – bump into them, etc.**
 - iii. **Admonition may (and should) come by deliberate effort – reaching out to them, proactive admonition.**
 - d. Regular Remembrance
 - i. The command to admonish those who have been withdrawn from (**cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:15**) implies that efforts should be taken to avoid them being forgotten.
 - ii. **How many congregations have forgotten about those they have disciplined?**
 - iii. **How many congregations make concerted effort to remember them?** – Regular reminders, and encouragement to the congregation to reach out.
 - iv. **Human judgment will be involved in determining measures taken to remember, but they should be taken** – documentation of the disciplinary process kept, regular letters sent, regular (periodic?) announcements made, etc.
- IX. The Procedure When One Returns
- A. Forgive and Comfort

- a. Parable of the Unforgiving Servant – **Matthew 18:21-35** – spoken by Jesus directly after the commanded pattern of church discipline.
 - i. **(vv. 22-27)** – Servant owes king tremendous debt, begs mercy, king forgives.
 - ii. **(vv. 28-30)** – same servant is owed much smaller debt by own servant, refuses to forgive and treats terribly.
 - iii. **(vv. 31-34)** – king is told, and that unforgiving man is delivered to the torturers until he can repay his own debt.
 - iv. APPLICATION – **(v. 35)** – we MUST forgive those who have sought forgiveness with genuine repentance.
- b. The sexually immoral man Corinth withdrew from repented – **2 Corinthians 2:6-7** – they were instructed to forgive and comfort him.
 - i. If we neglect to do so the reverse affect is accomplished.
- B. Reaffirm Love
 - a. **2 Corinthians 2:8** – they were to reaffirm their love to him.
 - b. In addition to restored fellowship in spiritual matters, social interaction resumes – **cf. Acts 2:46**
- C. Rejoice
 - a. We should be rejoicing as God rejoices that a lost one was found – **Luke 15:7, 10, 31-32**
- X. Objections and Questions Concerning Church Discipline
 - A. **“do not reject the discipline of the LORD” (Proverbs 3:11).**
 - a. **Motivations behind questions and statements can be the difference between rebellion and growth** – between seeking to understand church discipline to obey it fully, and rebelliously seeking to poke holes in the biblical pattern and find loopholes to avoid obedience.
 - i. **Questions can be good** – **Luke 8:8-9** – they were wanting to understand, and that is why they asked.
 - ii. **Questions can be bad** – **Luke 10:29** – his question was not in honest pursuit of truth, but in stubborn pursuit to justify his actions.
 - iii. **Objections can be good** – **Matthew 15:1-3** – Jesus objected to their traditions because they contradicted God’s commandment.
 - iv. **Objections can be bad** – **Isaiah 30:9-11** – Judah rejecting the Lord and having confidence in the flesh (Egypt).
 - b. **Our concern** – **Colossians 3:17** – reject what is not authorized and submit to what is required no matter what.
 - B. Objections to Church Discipline
 - a. *The parable of the wheat and tares suggests we cannot separate from the unfaithful through withdrawal, but such separation is to be left to the Lord at the end of time. (Matthew 13:24-30)*
 - i. The parable and Jesus’ explanation – **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

ii. **Fundamental rules:**

1. **When Jesus gives the explanation of a parable, our interpretation is specifically limited by His explanation.**

- a. EX: Reason given for objection – “We’re not to make such a separation lest the wheat (faithful) be mistaken for tares (unfaithful) and uprooted with them.”
 - i. (vv. 27-28) – does not indicate “mistakenness,” but certainty. (As is required in church discipline anyway.)
 - ii. (v. 29) – does not suggest possibly mistaking wheat for a tare, but the roots intertwined together uprooting both – yet Jesus does not even comment on this detail in His application.
- b. Yet, Jesus’ explanation did not make application of that detail of **verse 29**. (Not all details in parables have significance – a story to explain a specific truth.)
- c. The point – (vv. 40-43) – the final separation in judgment will not be at a time before the **“end of this age.”** (Parable – before harvest time.)

2. **The word of God does not contradict itself.**

- a. Just 5 chapters later Jesus commands that withdrawal occur in matters where a brother is not gained – **Matthew 18:17**
- b. **The parable cannot have application in church discipline – the whole subject matter is the judgment at the end of time.**

iii. **Objection** – assumes the **“kingdom of heaven” (v. 24)** and **“His kingdom” (v. 41)** is in reference to the church (comprised of the righteous and wicked? – **cf. 2 Timothy 2:19**).

1. Jesus said, **“the field,”** where both the **“good seed”** and **“tares”** are sown, **“is the world”** – (vv. 24-25, 37-38) – i.e. not the church.
2. (vv. 40-42) – **“His kingdom”** is parallel to **“the world” (v. 38)** since **“the field”** is where the tares were sown.
3. **Kingdom – does not always refer specifically to the church, but sometimes generally to Christ’s rule.**
 - a. Church – **Matthew 16:18-19**
 - b. General rule (cf. **Matthew 28:18**) – **Luke 19:12, 14, 15, 27** – His rule includes them, but they refuse to submit.

- c. **General rule in parable** – **Matthew 13:38, 41** – **“sons of the kingdom”** (i.e. those who have submitted), **“sons of the wicked one”** (i.e. those who have resisted and submitted to Satan) – **“out of His Kingdom”** (world, **v. 38** – where His rule extends).
4. Does not contradict pattern of church discipline, but fits it – **cf. 1 Corinthians 5:10, 12-13** – not done to the world, but God will take care of that – done to brethren.
- b. *It doesn't do any good.*
 - i. On what basis is the conclusion reached?
 1. **They don't come back?**
 - a. Is the church protected? – **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**
 - b. Is Christ obeyed, thus, glorified? – **1 Corinthians 5:4; 2 Corinthians 2:9**
 - c. **Has the discipline been administered scripturally?** (It may be that we are the reason why, not that the pattern itself is flawed.) – Clear teaching prior to sin, admonition upon sin, impartial discipline, consistent discipline?
 2. **It drives people away?**
 - a. What people? – the gospel itself drives people away – **John 3:19-20; 2 Timothy 4:3-4**
 - b. This was the effect when Ananias and Saphira were punished – **Acts 5:11-13** (those who were devoted to living faithfully weren't about to join them)
 3. **How can we reach them to get them to repent if we cut them off?**
 - a. The purpose is to bring them to repentance – **1 Corinthians 5:5**
 - b. While social interaction is prohibited, the communication of admonition is not – **2 Thessalonians 3:15**
 - ii. **Saying a command of God doesn't do any good is to manifest a lack of faith** – **Isaiah 55:10-11** – God's word always accomplishes its intended purpose.
- c. *We didn't withdraw from so and so before, so how can we withdraw from others now?*
 - i. **What other commands would this work with?**
 1. I didn't do WHATEVER before, so how can I do WHATEVER now?
 2. Singing? Lord's Supper? Contribution? Evangelism?

3. Part of growth is accepting that we WERE ignorant/mistaken/disobedient, and then putting that to an end.
- ii. **King Josiah found the book of the Law in the house of the Lord, and tore his clothes when it was read because they weren't keeping the covenant – 2 Kings 22:13**
 1. They hadn't obeyed before, but they were going to start now.
 2. **2 Kings 23:1-3** – had the word read, and vowed to obey.
- d. *We all sin, so why are we focusing on this one member.*
 - i. We may sin, but sin is never excused – **1 John 2:1-2**
 - ii. Our sins that aren't repented of lead to death – **1 John 5:16-17**
 - iii. The progression of church discipline focuses on that sinner who is not repenting – **Matthew 18:15-17**
 - iv. **NOTE: This is an objection which is raised at times due to the partiality in the exercise of church discipline – not treating all sin the same, or showing favoritism to certain members.**
 1. We MUST be impartial and consistent.
- e. *Church discipline will tear the church up.*
 - i. Following the Lord's commands never tears up the church, but makes the church what the Lord desires it to be – **Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Thessalonians 3:6**
 - ii. We must evaluate the church by the Lord's standard, not by our own – **Revelation 3:1, 17**
 - iii. Sin is what tears up the church, and getting rid of it strengthens the church – **1 Corinthians 5:7-8**
- C. Questions About Church Discipline
 - a. *How can we know that we have been longsuffering enough to move forward in the process of church discipline?*
 - i. **This cannot be answered in reference to specific time, as much as in reference to circumstance.**
 1. I.e. when the erring brother is admonished, what does his reaction show? – Confusion, sorrow (and then what type), anger, retaliation (turning blame on you), rebellion, stubbornness, etc.
 2. Different circumstances may call for different amounts of time – **“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.” (Jude 22-23, NASB)**
 3. **Cf. Titus 3:9-10** – it becomes obvious they are stubborn – not of your doing, but “being self-condemned” by actions.

- ii. **Involves judgment, but judgment can be negligent, or sinful** – **cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1-3** – Paul’s whole point is their judgment to not take action was sinful, and he **“already” (by this time)** made the judgment from afar. (**DON’T FOOL YOURSELF.**)
 - iii. **The whole process is a process of longsuffering** – **Matthew 18:15-17** – they are not withdrawn from immediately, but *our “longsuffering” must not get in the way of progress that might finally lead to their repentance.*
- b. *What about the Christian who has fallen away but was not withdrawn from when they should have been? Do I have an obligation toward them as an individual?*
- i. Certainly, there are churches where the leadership has been negligent, and refused to follow the Lord’s commands on this matter.
 - ii. **Does this mean I do not have a responsibility toward the erring brother as an individual?**
 - iii. Several possible scenarios:
 - 1. Friend or relative who is unfaithful, attends another congregation that doesn’t discipline.
 - 2. One moves away, becomes unfaithful, and then moves back – no repentance, not been disciplined by prior congregation.
 - 3. Member at current congregation falls away, but they are not disciplined as they should have been.
 - iv. **Three important things still certain despite the failure to discipline:**
 - 1. Their soul is in need of being saved – **2 Timothy 2:26**
 - 2. Your soul can be corrupted – **1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 John 11**
 - 3. God’s boundaries of fellowship still apply – **1 John 1:3, 7; Ephesians 5:11**
 - v. The scriptural method of how to treat the erring who are not responding to God’s word in repentance remains the same – **2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** – ***this is the only way we might gain them while protecting ourselves.***
- c. *What if the erring Christian withdraws from us (or leaves) before we can withdraw from them?*
- i. This question is often raised as a form of objection, or loophole in regard to taking any action.
 - 1. “They left, so there’s really nothing we can do about it.”
 - 2. “They withdrew from us, so how can we withdraw from them?”
 - ii. Possible scenario:

1. A brother decides they don't believe the truth anymore, and wants to go to a denomination, or an unfaithful/unsound church promoting the error they believe. They notify the congregation that they are leaving, and for what reason. *Are we to throw up our hands and just let them go?*
 2. A brother is confronted for their sin and does not wish to change. Before the progress of church discipline can reach the final step of withdrawal they leave, perhaps saying they intend to attend elsewhere. *Is this a magic action that raises a forcefield that keeps us from being able to do anything?*
- iii. **Scripturally, withdrawal is only an action spoken of as being taken by the church (faithful).**
1. Every scripture regarding withdrawal is commanding an action taken by the church, NOT something done by an erring brother.
 2. What do the erring do when they leave? – **Hebrews 2:1; 3:12; 6:6** – drift, depart, fall away – NOT WITHDRAW.
 3. Did their action fulfill our responsibility? NO! – **1 Corinthians 5:4-5** – YOU do this.
 - a. **2 Thessalonians 3:6** – YOU BRETHERN (faithful) do this!
- iv. **Is this not the scenario Jesus referred to in His shepherd illustration?** – **Matthew 18:12-14** – does the shepherd say, “Well, they left me and the flock, so what am I supposed to do?”
1. The shepherds of Israel were rebuked for this mindset – **Ezekiel 34:1-6**
- v. **Does their accountability change just because they don't want it, and are trying to avoid it?**
1. **Hebrews 13:17** – they are under the eldership of the local church who are looking out for their souls.
 2. Parallel – Child says to parent, “You can't tell me what to do, you aren't the boss of me.” Does that change anything? Is not that action itself rebellious? (**cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:6** – such an action is disorderly in itself).
 3. **If we just let them leave without doing anything though we are aware of their sin, WHO IS LOOKING OUT FOR THEIR SOUL? – this is, in fact, why they left, so they don't have anyone “looking out for them,” i.e. painig their conscience.**

- a. **Has an action been taken to save their soul?**
(cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5)
- vi. **Has their decision to declare their “withdrawal,” or to simply leave changed anything concerning their spiritual state, and our responsibility to them as brethren?**
 - 1. Is the sin still there? No repentance?
 - 2. Are we still their brother? **(cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:15)**
 - 3. Isn't their decision to leave as an action to evade discipline simply them adding sin to sin?
- vii. Will we say the same about the sin of forsaking the assembly?
(cf. Hebrews 10:25)
 - 1. They simply stopped coming.
 - 2. Are we to do anything about it?
- viii. **If an erring Christian decides to leave the congregation of which they are a member, they are simply adding sin to sin by refusing to repent and shirking their responsibility. They must still be disciplined according to the scriptural pattern.**
- d. *Does one congregation have to accept the withdrawal that another congregation has practiced?*
 - i. No. Each church is autonomous, and must submit to Jesus regardless of what another congregation is doing or not doing – **1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28**
 - ii. It is possible that a church is wrong in withdrawing from someone – **cf. 3 John 9-11** – Diotrephes sought to avoid fellowship with apostles and was wrong in doing so.
 - iii. **HOWEVER, each congregation is responsible for due diligence in determining the lawfulness of fellowship in the circumstances of each individual – cf. Acts 9:26-28**
 - 1. Based on the information we can gather, are they right with God, or are they in sin?
 - 2. Autonomy does NOT mean there can be no communication between congregations – **cf. Romans 16:1-2, 17-18; Philippians 2:19-24**
 - iv. ***Autonomy does not mean we can accept anyone into our fellowship, but it does mean the responsibility of determining such is our own.***
- e. *What can a church do who has not practiced discipline at all in the past, or who has been inconsistent or mistaken in their practice of church discipline in the past? Are they supposed to backtrack, and withdraw from everyone they neglected in the past?*
 - i. Churches can, and must repent upon discovering sinful action or inaction – **Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19**

- ii. **Repentance does not require the impossible** – it would not be possible to go back and discipline all who have been gone for years and years.
- iii. **However, repentance requires fitting fruit – cf. Luke 3:8, 10-14** – stop doing what you have been doing wrong, and start doing what God requires.
- iv. **In the case of church discipline being neglected, admit wrong, and start carrying out the Lord’s will:**
 1. Example of such: “there was a congregation that had not practiced discipline in thirty years. After a series of lessons on church discipline, the elders made a public confession and statement about the matter. Their public statement was something like the following: ‘As elders of this church we are not responsible for the failure to exercise discipline for the past thirty years, but we are responsible for the time that we have been elders. We acknowledge our sin in not leading the church in this matter. We ask God and you to forgive us of this wrong. We cannot go back and undo the past. We cannot go back and withdraw from someone who should have been disciplined years ago. However, we can start where we are now. There are some in this church who are walking disorderly. We plan to do what is right and withdraw from them.’” (Rader, Donnie V., A Study of Church Discipline, pg. 108)

Conclusion

1. A part of our relationship with God as His children is discipline – **Proverbs 3:11-12** – we must not despise it!
2. The way God disciplines His children, in part, is through the church.
3. “Church discipline” is a fundamental doctrine of scripture which involves everything we do as members of the church. (preaching, teaching, singing, warning, correcting, rebuking, withdrawing)
4. While this action can be painful and difficult, it is a necessity which will bring tremendous blessings through faithful observance (**cf. Hebrews 12:11**).
5. Let us submit to the Lord’s will on this matter!