

Sermon Notes

**The Doctrine of the Church:
Church Discipline
Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13**

Discipline, both informal (formative) and formal (corrective), is a vital part of life in covenant with each other. “Discipline is, after all, is one dimension of discipleship.” Tom Schreiner

I. A Proper Understanding of Church Discipline Begins with a Proper Understanding of the Church

“A properly organized church consists of disciples who have professed their faith in Christ by baptism.” (J.L. Dagg, 268).

- A. Disciples are those who believe in and follow Jesus as Lord (Lk. 6:46-49).
- B. They profess to be on the narrow way (Matt. 7:13-14)
- C. They profess a life of repentance towards God (2 Cor. 7:10)
- D. They make this profession within a covenant community of other who make the same profession (Acts 2:44).

II. It is the Responsibility of Disciples, gathered and covenanted together in a local church, to grow spiritually and persevere in the faith.

- A. Disciples are to be growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)
- B. Disciples are to be growing in their love for one another (1 Thess. 4:9)
- C. Disciples are to be fighting the good fight of faith (Eph. 6:10f; 1 Tim. 6:12)
- D. Disciples are to be enduring in the faith (Jas. 1:12; Heb. 12:2)
- E. Disciples fight the fight and endure together (Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25)

III. Discipline then, both informal and formal (formative and corrective), is a part of discipleship in the church.

- A. We should engage in informal (formative) discipline with each other
 - 1. Informal discipline (formative) is simply the “one-anothers” in action!
 - 2. Informal discipline is simply mutual accountability
Eph. 5:21; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:15; James 5:16
 - 3. Informal discipline sometimes requires confrontation
Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1, 4; Eph. 4:15



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- B. When informal discipline is ineffective, formal discipline is necessary
1. Formal discipline is necessary when a person is unrepentant.
Matt. 18:15-17
 2. Formal discipline is necessary when the impenitence reflects that they are spiritually a danger to themselves or others (1 Cor. 5:5-6)

IV. The Purposes of Formal Discipline

- A. The paramount purpose in discipline is not restoration, but rather, the honor of Christ in His Church.
1. Faithfulness to the Word honors Christ
 2. Laboring for the purity of the Church honors Christ
- B. The second and vital purpose of discipline is that as a means of grace, it restores the offender. This is love.
Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:11
*It is the prodigal come home. We know that joy!
- C. The third reason is that discipline is a redemptive and sanctifying process for the body ~ 1 Cor. 5:6-7
- It promotes humility (Gal. 6:1)
 - It serves as a warning (1 Tim. 5:19-20)
 - It also strengthens the faith of those who help restore (Jas. 5:19-20)

V. The Methods of Formative and Corrective Discipline

- A. Matt. 18:15-17 gives the basic pattern, it is not the only pattern
- B. Step One – show him his fault (15)
- C. Step Two – if he fails to repent (16)
- D. Step Three – if he fails to listen to them, tell it to the church (17)
- E. The Promise (18-20)

VI. A Word about the Restoration of a Repentant Offender

This appears to be the case in 2 Cor. 2:5-11

- A. Restoration often begins with the removed offender reaching out to the elders.
- B. This begins a deliberative process, where we try to determine the reality and fruit of the repentance.
- C. The church is then informed of the repentance and there is restoration.

Conclusion

Church discipline is a means of grace. We need the formative discipline. If we begin to wander and stray, in our clear moments, we want to be pursued if we walk away from the Lord.

