

2 Corinthians 2:3-11

One of the most difficult aspects of church life is practicing spiritual discipline. The world regards it as an intrusion upon individual liberties and rights. Today, even many Christians question its validity or simply just give it a passing nod. The Bible leaves us in no doubt, however, about its importance.

Summary

In 2 Corinthians 2:3-11, Paul was relieved to hear that strong disciplinary action had been taken by the church, but he was now concerned lest the repentant offender be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow and so he urges the Corinthian believers to turn and reaffirm their love for the offender.

1. Summary Overview
2. Seven Principles

1. Summary Overview

The church's responsibility is not to judge those outside the church, but those inside. (1 Cor 5:11-13).

Church discipline takes seriously the pervasive power of wrong influence in the church (1 Cor 5:6, 7). It aims to promote the health of the whole church.

After giving his advice in his first letter, Paul became aware that the Corinthians had probably been too severe in their discipline.

We are uncertain of the individual's identity in this chapter.

It may have been the person mentioned in 1 Cor 5.

On the other hand, the person may have been someone who had made Paul the target of personal insults and about whom Paul had written in the letter that may have been lost to us (2 Cor 2:9-10).

Church discipline is an essential aspect of pastoral care. It begins with applications for church membership and is an important ground for establishing a church membership, rather than a casual relationship of belonging together.

Every family requires discipline of some kind and needs to recognize which members of the family are to administer it. In the natural family it is usually parents, the father and the mother. In the church family, it is the church itself led by its elders.

2. Seven Principles

We may deduce a number of principles from this passage about church discipline.

First, the exercise of church discipline must be in the context of corporate grief about sin but with our feelings under control.

Secondly, church discipline requires a majority judgement and decision (**v. 6**).

The mention of 'the majority' implies that a church must be in substantial agreement about the necessary action.

At the same time, lack of complete unanimity must not preclude church discipline.

Thirdly, church discipline requires applying an appropriate punishment (**v. 6**).

One of the tasks of those exercising church discipline is to determine the most appropriate punishment.

Fourthly, the exercise of church discipline must have in view repentance and restoration, so that forgiveness and comfort may ultimately be given to the offending believer (**v. 7**).

There are two obvious dangers in church discipline: it may be too little or too much. If it is too little, it may not achieve the intended purpose.

If it is too much, it may lead the offender to total despair.

Fifthly, church discipline must have before it the hope of exercising Christian forgiveness, a forgiveness practiced by all its members (**v. 10**).

In view of the person's repentance, now was the time to forgive and comfort him (**v. 7**). They needed to reaffirm their love to him (**v. 8**).

Sixthly, in exercising church discipline, we are to forgive as we have been forgiven (**vs. 10**).

It is to be done in a way that honors the Lord Jesus and reflects the manner in which he has already graciously forgiven us.

Seventhly, church discipline must be exercised with care, so that we do not give Satan an opportunity to outwit us (**v.11**).

If church discipline is insufficient, Satan is delighted because sin is then minimized and perhaps even encouraged.

If church discipline is too severe, however, it may lead the offending individual to desperation and perhaps apostasy.