

## The Church Church Discipline

A very often neglected area of a church's responsibility is that of exercising discipline towards members that are in gross sin. You may even hear someone joke about "churching" somebody. This is a very somber duty that the church is supposed to exercise in (hopefully) rare cases.

- I. The On-Going Discipline of Discipling
  - A. Anyone else never realize how close the two words are? Hope I'm not the only one!
  - B. Christ's mission for the Church is three-fold (Matthew 28:19-20)
    1. Teach all nations - preach the Gospel
    2. Baptizing them - establish churches
    3. Teaching them - discipling, growing as Christians
  - C. As a group of believers have organized themselves together as a local church and endeavor to glorify Christ, they must be growing in the Christian Faith, which is discipling.
  - D. Hosea 4:6 - "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."
    1. It is possible to ignorantly do wrong, though it really doesn't lessen its effect
    2. This is why there is a need to educate, train, and disciple new or weaker brothers
  - E. Romans 14:1
    1. There is no such thing as a "super-Christian", but there is such a thing as a weak Christian who needs to be aided in their spiritual growth.
    2. It is the duty of the stronger in the Faith to help the weaker.
  - F. Hebrews 4:12
    1. The preaching of the Word of God as the church meets is a form of discipling
    2. Part of the work of the Word of God is purifying the church - Ephesians 5:25-27
  - G. Ephesians 4:12
    1. Part of the work of God through the church is the "perfecting", or "completing", of Christians.
  - H. I contend that the observance of the Lord's Supper does much in dealing with issues of church discipline - I Corinthians 11:27-32
- II. The Example of the Church at Corinth
  - A. The Corinthians were a church full of issues (aren't they all?), but one extreme case is brought out. - I Corinthians 5:1
  - B. This man's sin was so heinous that even unbelievers were shocked!
  - C. Paul takes a very strong stand - I Corinthians 5:13
  - D. The church seems to have exercised discipline and the man appears to have repented.
  - E. However, the church appears to have gone too far and Paul has to teach them about the purpose of discipline - II Corinthians 2:1-11
- III. Exercising Church Discipline

- A. The purpose of church discipline is to help bring a wayward believer back into the right paths - Galatians 6:1
  - 1. It is not to harm, belittle, or run off any one.
- B. Some Causes for church discipline
  - 1. Rejection of Fundamental Christian doctrine - Galatians 1:8-9, Titus 3:10
  - 2. Gross sins that bring reproach to the name of Christ - I Timothy 5:20
  - 3. Personal offenses that individuals will not resolve - Matthew 18:15-17
  - 4. Divisive behavior or actions - Romans 16:17
- C. A Biblical Method for Church Discipline
  - 1. A private, personal effort should be made to address the issue - Matthew 18:15-17
  - 2. If this fails, bring the issue to two or three others (probably best to be a pastor, deacons, etc.) and seek their aid in addressing the issue. - Deuteronomy 19:15
  - 3. If this fails, the issue needs to be escalated to bringing it before the church.
    - a) Before discipline may be exercised, there must be a church vote.
- D. Results of Church Discipline
  - 1. The disciplined can be removed from the church rolls and denied privileges (voting, holding office, etc.)
  - 2. Request of membership transfer or even minister reference can be denied.
  - 3. The disciplined may be barred from church services.
  - 4. Fellowship by church members with the disciplined should be limited
    - a) It's ok to be kind and say howdy
    - b) In most cases going the Amish route and shunning them is overboard.
  - 5. If the disciplined repents and seeks reinstatement, the church will devise a plan and vote thereupon.

PLEASE NOTE:

This is a very complex issue that hopefully none of us will experience any part of. There are many differences of opinion out there, and really every case and situation is different. Church discipline is an extreme measure that should only be exercised in extreme cases. The goal should always be to restore the weaker brother to fellowship and strengthen them, but also to maintain the church's ability to bring honor and glory to the name of Christ.