

OPERATION RESTORATION

Biblical Church Discipline

INTRODUCTION

- In 1662, many churches in New England embraced the *Half Way Covenant*
- In 1677, Solomon Stoddard introduced the *Half Way Covenant* to his congregation in Northhampton, MA. Stoddard was Jonathan Edwards's grandfather.
- In 1727, Jonathan accepted the call to co-pastor the church along side of his grandfather.
- Jonathan Edward's became increasingly concerned as the number of *Halfway Covenant* people outnumbered the true believers in the church.
- In February, 1749, Jonathan asked the other leadership if he could preach and teach from the pulpit on the topic (a mistake).
- In February 1750, he decided to hold open lectures on Thursday afternoon on this topic.
- This ultimately caused his termination in July of 1750.
- In July of 1750, after 23 years of faithful ministry, 90% of the Church in Northhampton Mass. terminated their relationship with Jonathan Edwards.
- Only 10% of the people supported the Edwards (vote was 230–23).

Leviticus 19:2 “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Matthew 5:8

1 Peter 1:16

Holiness is at the center of God's nature so, if something threatens the holiness of someone or His church, if that is ignored or tolerated, the church will be harmed.

Thomas Watson, *The Body of Divinity*

"A sign of sanctification is an antipathy against sin. A hypocrite may leave sin, yet love it as a serpent sheds its coat but keeps its sting. But a sanctified person can say he not only leaves sin, he loathes it..."

The Belgic Confession [1561]: "The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the ordinances as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church.

The absence of church discipline is generally not even noticed.

- the present generation of both pastors and church members is virtually without experience of biblical church discipline.
- most churches have forfeited any responsibility to confront even the most public sins of their members.

"The church today is suffering from an infection which has been allowed to fester. . . This illness is due, at least in part, to a neglect of church discipline."

- J. Carl Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline*

John Dagg in the Southern Baptist manual *A Treatise on Church Order*: "when discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it."

In his excellent book, *Stop Dating the Church* – Joshua Harris has a list of 10 questions to ask when looking for a church

→ # 9 question to ask: "Is this a church that is willing to kick me out?"

Church discipline is worship and is viewed as such when rightly understood and embraced without shame. For believers that have a right understanding of church discipline, church discipline carried out biblically enhances worship.

→ it reminds us all that Christ died for sin – what price was paid

Church discipline is ordained by God. Church discipline is a gift from God to the body.

Turn to **Hebrews 12:5-13** – God deals with His children because He loves His children

God's loving discipline of His people is His sovereign right and is completely in keeping with His moral character and holiness. His fatherly discipline also establishes the authority and pattern for discipline in the family and discipline in the church.

There are **3 Foundations** of Biblical Church Discipline:

1. Purpose
2. Principle
3. Practice

Today: **Purpose**. Next Week: **Principle** and **Practice**

Proposition : **4 Purposes** of Biblical Church Discipline:

1. **Glorification**
2. **Purification**
3. **Restoration**
4. **Vindication**

So That: We have a right understanding of this important Ministry, this important responsibility
→ Faithful!

1st Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

I. Glorification of God

Point – To glorify God by obedience to His instructions.

- As is commanded, so it is done.

Proof – **Matthew 18:15-22;**

1 Corinthians 5: 1-2:

- city of Corinth was known in the Greco-Roman culture as an immoral, wicked city
- Paul's heart is broken for this church because they are tolerating an incestuous relationship within the church

1 Timothy 5:19-20

- Is an act of corporate body

Galatians 1

- Paul rebukes entire church for tolerating heresy

Titus 3:10-11

- Certain circumstances when there is sin of disunity – gossip, strife, discord – where you have an accelerated form of church discipline.

Galatians 6:1-2

- the heart behind church discipline
- love your neighbor as yourself
- love for God
- love for purity of the church
- love for your brother in sin

To prevent giving cause for God to set Himself against a local church (**Rev 2:14-25**).

Consider this illustration: – **Joshua 7** – the Sin of Achan (v. 19)

- recall in Chapter 6 that God commanded Israel to not take anything – to rescue Rahab and burn everything else
- in Joshua 7, Achan took things under the ban
- because of the sin of one man, all were held guilty of sin
- corporate accountability
- because of this, Israel suffered defeat
- v 19 – Joshua commanded Achan to give glory to God and confess to God
- there were repercussions – they took him, his family, and his belongings outside the city, stoned them and burned everything
- God retreated His anger because Israel purified themselves

This is an Old Testament lesson for today. We must not give God reason to burn in anger at our church.

Discipline is a necessary and natural ministry to the members of the church, and is a means of protecting the doctrinal and moral integrity of the church.

2nd Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

II. Purification of the Church

Point – The Church’s Purity ... Protection ... Credibility

Proof – “**you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect**”

The unblemished nature of God (**Matthew 5:48**) is the standard for all Christians.

Purity marks **God's Word**.

Psalms 12:6 – “the words of the Lord are pure words”

Psalms 119:140 – “The Word is very pure”

Purity is demanded of **God's people**.

Philippians 4:8 – “whatever is pure ... dwell on it”

1 Timothy 5:22 – “keep yourself free from sin”

Purity qualifies **God's shepherds**.

1 Timothy 3:2; 4:12

Purity distinguishes **God's church**.

2 Corinthians 11:2 – “present you as a pure virgin”

Ephesians 5:27

Colossians 1:22

Paul is spiritual father of the church in Corinth

→ duty to preserve and protect the purity of bride

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

Consider the illustration – *The Farmer's Almanac* – "One bad apple can spoil the whole barrel."

and

Consider the illustration: – making bread → amazing how little yeast is required to leaven a loaf of bread ...

Recall **1 Corinthians 5**: Paul was outraged that the Corinthian Christians would tolerate the horrible sin of incest.

2 Corinthians 7:1 – “Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of fear of God.”

- Running thread of purity of body in the two letters to the Corinthians – both individually and the church body

Personal Illustration: – My Staph Infection – I had a laceration on my arm from MMA that became infected. I took the prescribed pills as directed and returned to the doctor in the hope of getting a clean bill of health. However, the doctor looked at my arm and said “you’re in trouble buddy”. I was sent right to the hospital and given IV infusion of antibiotics. If this infection had been untreated, it would have spread throughout my whole body and possibly killed me.

→ In the same way ...open sin left untreated in the body of Christ will kill the body.

Application:

- Long for purity in yourself
- Pray for purity in yourself
- Long and pray for purity in this church

Application – You are part of this!

→ Step 1 → Step 2 → Step 3 → Step 4

We can't remove all the tares from the church. We can at least set up a fence between the field that is primarily wheat and the field that is primarily tares... to warn others away from sin (1 Tim 5:20)

3rd Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

III. Restoration of the Sinner

Point – To rescue a sinning brother

Tom Pennington – pastor at Countryside Bible Church in Southlake, Texas

First and foremost, I believe it's an issue of obedience. As elders, we must display submission to God's will before our people. Every Sunday we exhort the church to respond to the word of God in obedience. What kind of model is set if we are not faithful to the difficult commands of Scripture? It comes down to a basic form of discipleship that we are modeling for our people: that Christ is the head of the church, we're under His leadership, and we're going to follow all of His commands. We cannot ignore God's commands simply because they are difficult or countercultural. Secondly, we must consider the priority of maintaining church purity through restoration. Church discipline is the tool God has ordained to restore an individual who has chosen a rebellious path back to Christ and to His church. What pastor or group of elders don't want to see that happen? Christ Himself put this plan in place and the goal is always restoration.

Proof – **Turn to: Galatians 6:1-2**

“Restore” – ‘katartidzo’

“spirit of gentleness”

“bear one another’s burden”

“fulfill the Law of Christ” → what is??

→ Love the Lord ... → Love your Neighbor

This is a Ministry to the offender

“Restore” is a Command!

→ We can't pick and choose – doctrine – practice

Matthew 18 – “won your brother”

When Christians sin, their sin is to be confronted by the church in obedience to God's will. The goal is the restoration of a sister or a brother, not the creation of a public spectacle. One of the greatest dangers to the church is the toleration of sin, public or private. Conversely, one of the greatest blessings to the church is the ministry of biblical church discipline

Personal Illustration – When my son, Jadon, made a death-defying jump off a swing, he broke his arm

- *katartizo* in Gal 6:1 – to mend, restore, set right, like a broken bone
- imagine if I didn't have his arm fixed??? How that would have harmed him!

Not confronting sin is NOT an act of love → it is an act of self-love!

Church Discipline is an act of love

Application– Gift of the body is to mend ... the broken of sin

- by winning a brother or sister, rescuing them from their sin

1 Corinthians 5 ... 2 Corinthians 2

- your desire is for the professing Christian in sin to receive God's blessings – not God's judgment
- there is joy in Heaven when a sinner turns from his sin
- lead to repentance – **2 Timothy 2:25**

We will continue with the 4th Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline next week.

Conclusion:

A great responsibility of a local church is to prove itself to be a genuine church as revealed in the New Testament—proving its authenticity by a demonstration of pure faith and authentic community. We must regain the New Testament concern for fidelity of doctrine, purity of life, and unity of fellowship. We must recover the missing mark.

With God's Word as our Teacher and the Spirit of God as our Counselor and Guide, may we walk alertly in ways that bring glory to Him. Let us constantly work toward the purity of Christ's church, which He purchased with His own blood.

There will always be people in church who get caught in sin. May God give us grace to confront their sins in love so that they may be restored to fellowship with the Lord and continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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