

THE MISSING LINK

BIBLICAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE – Part 2

INTRODUCTION

A missing link in much of Christianity today is the ministry of the church – of God’s local church when dealing with sin.

Sad reality is that most Christians within the church have little experience of true corporate Biblical church discipline.

God’s holiness is the foundation.

Man’s position before the Lord and God’s gift of Biblical church discipline to the church and to the individual Christian within the church is something we need to have a right understanding of – know God’s will through scripture.

We are never more like Jesus Christ than when dealing with sin in our own lives and as a church

Proposition: 3 Foundations of Biblical Church Discipline

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

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

Review from Last Week:

1st Foundation of Biblical Church Discipline:

I. Purpose

1st Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

1. Glorification of God

Point – To glorify God by obedience to His instructions.

2nd Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

2. **Purification** of the Church

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

The identity of the church as the people of God is to be evident in its pure Doctrine of Christ, its bold proclamation of the Gospel, and its moral holiness before the watching world.

➔ To deter others from sin (cf. **1 Timothy 5:20**).

3rd Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

3. **Restoration** of the Sinner

Point – To rescue a sinning brother

Purpose is not to kick them out ... it is to keep them in!

4th Purpose of Biblical Church Discipline ...

4. **Vindication** of the one sinned against

Point – God’s Honor, the one sinned against
To vindicate the non-sinning party

Read **Matthew 18: 12-22**

Proof – **Matt 18:18-20** (Expect to open Bible here and see bleeding from gaping wounds of abuse and misuse of these passages)

- this passage is about church discipline – demonstration of love and forgiveness (vv. 21-22)
- v.18 - When you have collection of believers with Godly qualified leadership, seek in faith and humility, trusting God and relying on the authority and sufficiency of His word, to rightly deal with unrepentant sin and you come to a conclusion, what you bind on earth will already be bound in heaven

- Conversely, what has been loosed on earth has already been loosed in heaven – if you have a truly repentant sinner welcomed back into church after discipline

Consider this illustration: I was involved in a church discipline situation once involving a church leader in an adulterous relationship. I became involved in the second step – he did not repent of his sin. The church was made aware and called him to repentance and he still did not repent. Finally, he was removed from the church. However, his wife remained in the church, is still involved and thriving because the church surrounded her with love and support. They did not cast judgment on her for his sin. She was the one that was deserted by her husband. That is part of the gift of church discipline from God – to vindicate the sinner.

What about heresy or other cases where there is not have an obvious person sinned against? Incorrect to think no one has been sinned against – the entire church has been sinned against. We are to protect the purity of the church

Application: be obedient to God and minister rightly out of love for:

- God
- His Church
- the sinner
- those sinned against

Another example: I was involved in another situation involving myself and two other pastors from two different churches dealing with the accusation of a serious sin (one involving a serious criminal offense). At one point in the meeting, one of the pastors spoke about how the police were going to get involved and he made the comment that “We are not to judge”. I lovingly asked him to reconsider his approach to this

- **1 Corinthians 6** - Paul warns against going to the ungodly and letting them be the judge – we need to judge ourselves – God has given the authority to the church to deal with sin.

- God has given government as the authority to protect the innocent and punish the wicked (criminal offenses) – this is right and appropriate
- this doesn't remove the responsibility of the church to deal with it at the more important spiritual level!

2nd Foundation:

II. Principle of Biblical Church Discipline

What are the sins that elevate to the church discipline level?

- We know that God says through Peter in from **1 Peter 4:8** that love covers a multitude of sins – we do not go chasing down every little sin
- We know from OT through NT - dealing with the purity of the church is of utmost importance

How to break it apart to practice it in the church?

Point

- We want to speak the Truth → God commands us to have Biblical belief
- We want to live the Truth → God commands Biblical behavior

Focus is then on → Unbiblical **Belief**, Unbiblical **Behavior**

What do we mean by unbiblical belief?

Galatians 1:8-9 – “if any man is preaching a contrary gospel”

1 Timothy 6:3-5 – “if anyone advocates a different doctrine”

Titus 1:9 – outlines qualifications of an elder - “exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict”

2 Thessalonians 3:6 – warns against people who would come against tradition - “not according to the tradition”

2 John 9-11 – “who does not abide the teaching of Christ”

God warns all Christians to watch out for this (Gal 1)

- this applies to entire church, not just the elders
- if you are a Christian, God gives this charge to you

Unbiblical Behavior

Galatians 6:1-5; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

2 Thess 3:6 –“every brother who leads an unruly life”, **14-15**

2 John 9-11

- doctrine and deeds – tied together

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Break it down even further for clarity (not absolute)

→ church discipline usually comes in 3 sins God explicitly hates:

Heresy, Impurity, Disunity

Belief – **Heresy (Unbiblical Belief)**

Behavior – **Impurity, Disunity (Unbiblical Behavior)**

1st Sin God explicitly hates...

1. The Sin of **Heresy**

Point – Call to repentance professing believers who knowingly and rebelliously continue in doctrinal error.

- Every New Testament author explicitly warn of the dangers presented to the church in the form of false prophets and heretics
- **Jude 3-4**
- **2 Peter 2:1-3**
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5, 11:3-4** – picture of true spiritual warfare – Paul is talking about weapons of sword of the spirit – true spiritual warfare is doctrine at its heart – Paul is waging this war against heresy for 3 chapter of 2 Corinthians (10-12)
- **Galatians 2:11 and on** – Paul comes against Peter who, in his weakness, is being influenced by false teaching

Application:

- **Acts 17:11** – Paul calls us to be a Berean;
- **1 Peter 2:2** – long for the pure milk of the word;
- **1 Thessalonians 5:17** – “examine everything carefully”

All of us have this privilege and burden to love others and love the church. Failure causes confusion and compromise.

2nd Sin God explicitly hates...

A. The Sin of Impurity

Point: Sex, Society, thinking infected the Church

... Jim Baker, Swaggart, Haggard, ...

The visible community of the true church is to be evident in its moral purity. Christians are to be exemplary in their conduct and untarnished in their testimony.

Proof :

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 – Paul gives charge to sanctify yourselves in moral and sexual purity – v.3 – begins with plural “you” as in the church – in v.4-8 – talks to individual “you”

1 Corinthians 5; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11;

2 Corinthians 12:21 – impurity is very serious – God demands us as a body to deal with those sins

Illustration – Came to a situation in the past where wife had deserted her husband – unbiblically divorced her husband after committing adultery and was happy member of another church (sister church to the one where her sin took place) – she and her new “husband” had been receiving counseling from a woman counselor from a whole different church. Unbelievable level of confusion and ungodly and unbiblical behavior. Meanwhile, back at the church I had just come to, the husband had the “stamp of divorce” on him. I was heartbroken to see this – sinners not called to repentance and those sinned against still suffering from the wounds of a church not dealing rightly with it

→ Church utterly failed in ministry to restore

- Purity of church was greatly stained
- Church failed the non-sinning spouse

3rd Sin God explicitly hates...

B. The Sin of Disunity

Point – The integrity of the church is also dependent upon the true unity of its fellowship.

- one of the most repeated warnings found in the entire Bible, Old and New Testament, is the warning those who spread strife. The unity of the church is one of its most visible distinctives—and most precious gifts.
- It is at the heart and soul of the second greatest commandment taught by Jesus Christ where he is quoting from Leviticus 19

Proof – **2 Corinthians 12:20** – in this verse is disunity – gossip is a radical evil

James 3 – power of destruction of the tongue

Romans 16:17–18; Titus 3:10–11

Proverbs 6:17-19 – of the things the Lord hates, 3 are tied into the sin of disunity.

Proper response by a believer toward a professed believer in behavioral error

- **2 Samuel 12:7** – Nathaniel confronted David as God’s mouthpiece
- **Exodus 18** – Jethro rebuked Moses and Moses received it rightly
- **Acts 5:1-11**

In all things, we have not yet attained the goal and we always need to guard ourselves and say:

- Lord, how can I love my neighbor as myself as you command me to do through Christ and in Leviticus 19 by making sure that I am willing to do the right, hard thing and go to them and speak frankly to them?

- Lord, how can I love my neighbor as myself by not committing the sins of gossip, strife, slander, spreading discord and things of that nature?

Illustration – Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also called Lou Gehrig’s disease, is a progressive disease that weakens and eventually destroys motor neurons (components of the nervous system that connect the brain with the skeletal muscles).

A person with ALS usually presents with problems in dexterity or walk resulting from muscle weakness, or with difficulty speaking or swallowing. Patients become paralyzed. Loss of respiratory function is ultimately the cause of death.

Application: In the same way, if sin is left unchecked individually and corporately as a church, it has the same effect. It will weaken, paralyze and result in death:

- loss of fellowship
- loss of credibility
- loss of witness