



Lesson 2: Discipline

8/16/15

INTRODUCTION

God is so committed to the defense of His glory and the discipleship of His people through the local church that He armed it with a tool to deal with those who would hinder that—church discipline.

DEFINITION

1. **Broad/informal** — individual correction of sin (i.e., to mutually rebuke, reprove, correct, admonish, exhort, instruct)
2. **Specific/formal** — corporate excommunication from community (i.e., to refuse to affirm his/her profession of faith by publicly removing from membership [not attendance] and barring from the Lord's Table)

MOTIVE

Love

- for Christ — His reputation is being harmed
- for the individual — his soul is being endangered
- for the church — its mission is being compromised
- for the watching world — their reception of the gospel is being impacted

This is what motivates God's discipline of us (Hebrews 12:6-11).

PURPOSES

1. **To expose (1 Corinthians 5:2)** — to bring sin to light so it can be dealt with swiftly

2. **To warn (1 Corinthians 5:5)** — to forewarn of God's ultimate judgment
3. **To save (1 Corinthians 5:5)** — to restore the sinner to righteousness
4. **To protect (1 Corinthians 5:6)** — to safeguard the rest of the flock from corruption
5. **To witness (1 Corinthians 5:1; Matthew 5:13)** — to preserve the attractive distinctiveness of God's people

OCCASIONS

1. **Broad/informal** — whenever a brother/sister sins. We should cultivate a culture of this in our church; we should start by asking questions (like our Lord) to the sinning brother or sister, in order to get facts and soften the conscience.
2. **Specific/formal** — whenever a professing brother/sister sins in such a manner that the whole body looks at it and agrees it is disqualifying (1 Corinthians 5:12; Matthew 3:8; 7:16-20; 12:33; 21:43): *outward, serious, and unrepentant* sin (Leeman).

Pastor Phelps suggests the following three general categories of such sins:

1. **Moral failure (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)**
2. **Doctrinal heresy (Romans 16:17-19)**
3. **Behavioral rebellion (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)**

METHOD (Matthew 18:15-20)

1. **Rebuke** — This should be handled with different speeds and different strategies for different sinners (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15; the simple, fool, and scorner in Proverbs), but this process helps us be intentional, deliberate, and patient.
 - a. **Confidential — individual**
 - b. **Confrontational — several**
 - c. **Congregational — whole**

2. Remove (excommunication/ostracism)

- The church can no longer publicly affirm the profession of faith of the confronted but unrepentant sinner (i.e., it can no longer validate his/her passport). So, the sinner should be removed from church membership (not attendance) and excluded from the Lord's Table via congregational vote. He should be given formal notice of this by the church's leadership.
- Then, "the general tenor of one's relationship with the disciplined individual should markedly change" (Leeman; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9, 11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10). In interactions, the sinner should be dealt with, not casually, but deliberately in conversations about repentance. Family members should continue to fulfill their family obligations (Ephesians 6:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Peter 3:1-2).

3. Restore

- There may need to be some time given so that the fruits of repentance may be displayed in order for the church to responsibly pronounce forgiveness (cf. Acts 8:17-24).
- When repentance is determined, the church should fully restore the individual, publicly pronouncing its forgiveness (John 20:23), reaffirming its love (2 Corinthians 2:5-11), and celebrating its renewal (Luke 15:24).

RESOURCES

Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), esp. chapter 7.

Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).