

Worship

God

In

Spirit & Truth

What is Church Discipline?

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Christians are in fellowship with Christ and should be with all others who are in Christ. They are equal in God's love, their salvation and all benefits derived from being in Christ. However, being human they all differ in abilities, intellect, knowledge, wisdom and maturity in both physical and spiritual worlds. Therefore, there will be conflicts of varying degrees that must be resolved.

There will also be differences in understanding and personal interpretation of the scriptures. Some may attempt to force their interpretation on others as a condition of fellowship which is contrary to Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 8. In addition, there will be those who teach their belief that is foreign to the Bible.

The purpose of congregational disciplinary action is to bring back a Christian who has wandered away and no longer living a life pleasing to God. It is intended to prevent loss of one's soul, prevent contamination of the Body and to display God's love, justice and mercy to the World.

Discipline must never be over some personal interpretation one requires to be accepted by all to be in fellowship. Hebrews 12:5-7 – "My son, do not think lightly of the Lord's discipline (chastening) or give up when you are corrected by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he punishes every son he accepts." What you endure disciplines you: God is treating you as sons. Is there a son whom his father does not discipline?"

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training (instruction) in righteousness."

Hebrews 12:11 – "For the moment all discipline (chastening) seems painful [not necessarily physical pain] rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Ephesians 6:4 – "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up by training and instructing them about the Lord (discipline and instruction).

The inspired Word instructs us in the steps needed to maintain faithfulness, unity and fellowship with God and man:

1. Christians who sin against you or God are to be approached by their Christian brethren to explain why their actions are sinful so they can mend their ways.
2. Discipline must begin immediately, not tomorrow, not next week, not next month or not next year.
3. Discipline must be consistent and continue until repentance occurs or until every opportunity for repentance is exhausted.
4. Discipline must never be exercised on hearsay. This is why the parties involved must attempt resolution first. They know the facts but may understand them differently.
5. Discipline must be administered to rich and poor, man and women, and elderly and young without partiality.

6. Love must always be foremost.

Discipline By Local Congregational

The most effective method to train/instruct and bring about change is the one-on-one method. “If your brother sins against you, **go and tell** him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (Matthew 18:15).

When one-on-one does not produce change then others must become involved. A few, perhaps two or three, Christians respected by the offender and the whole congregation should go with you to the offended, not your buddy who always agrees with you, to discuss his situation (Matthew 18:16).

“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-29).

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

God’s people are to correct their brethren sometimes in what may appear to be extreme punishment. “**Purge** (cleanse) out the old leaven” (V7) “do not to **keep company** (associate) with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of” (v 11) [the practice of] sin. The whole congregation, those assembled, need to confront him in person, not by letter, e-mail, text message, tweet, phone call or public announcement. It is not the elders’ problem it is the whole congregation’s problem and all are to be involved (1 Corinthians 5 and Matthew 18:17).

What does not associate with or keep company with entail? Is it shunning, not speaking to, not giving aid to, prohibit from assembling with, not eating or sleeping with family and the ceasing of close companionship? The purpose of discipline is to cause a change in action back toward reconciliation with brethren and God. No association of any kind prevents communication thus defeating the purpose of disciplinary action. Stopping all close companionship; such as, not eating the communal meal, agape meal, when the Lord’s Supper was observed, is the intended action.

Success of Disciplinary Action

As stated earlier the purpose of discipline is to produce a change from the practice of sinning and for reconciliation to God. The assembly’s action following repentance is critical. Reread Paul’s admonition “But if anyone has caused grief, he didn’t cause me any grief. To some extent—I don’t want to emphasize this too much—it has affected all of you. This punishment by the majority is severe enough for such a man. So, forgive and comfort him, or else he will drown in his excessive grief. That’s why I’m urging you to assure him of your love” (2 Corinthians 2: 5-8). Love will prevent him from feeling he is a secondclass Christian. He is a returning servant. His Lord wants him to be a worker in the kingdom. All other Christians must encourage and assist him in becoming a faithful and productive servant of God. If the repentant reconciled brother is not allowed to function in Christ Body, the Body is impaired and not united.

Willful sin

Is there any difference between the practice of sinning and a willful sin? Is it impossible for one who does either to be restored to God? Hebrews 10:26. "For if we go on sinning deliberately (willfully) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."

John 8:34 "Jesus answered them – 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.'"

Does yielding to temptation make one a slave or is it the practice of sinning that determines one's status? It is not the yielding but the practice of sin, the desire to continue and the refusal to change, that produces slavery to sin. It is a lifestyle. Thus while still assembling with the saints; the unrepentant sinner is to be isolated during the eating of their communal meal (agape meal or love feast) the eating from the table of the Lord, an act reminding them of Christ's blood sacrifice given for their forgiveness.

Questions

1. The purpose of church discipline is to bring a brother back into reconciliation with God.
 - True
 - False
2. When a brother sins against you what is the initial process of restoring your relationship?
 - Take your friends and confront him
 - Tell the elders of the church
 - Tell the whole church so they can withdraw fellowship
 - Go to him and calmly discuss the problem
3. Not keeping company with a sinning brother who refuses to repent means having no contact of any kind.
 - True
 - False
4. What action must a Christian take when a brother who had abandoned God repents and returns?
 - Welcome him but restrict what he can do
 - Welcome him but have little fellowship
 - Welcome and encourage him to find a function form him
5. What sacrifice is available for a Christian who continues to sin deliberately?
 - None
 - None unless they change their attitude and lifestyle to be pleasing to God

Answers to Questions

1. True
2. Go to him and calmly discuss the problem
3. False
4. Welcome and encourage him to find a function form him
5. None unless they change their attitude and lifestyle to be pleasing to God