

Sanctification 101

Lesson 7

Discipline

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: The Lord expects His church and His saints to be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He has provided several means of accomplishing that sizable task. However, one very overlooked and neglected means of effecting holiness in His saints is church discipline. This is a primary responsibility of the church not only to God but also to its individual members. God has given the church the authority to discipline and deal with sin in the congregation. The amount of Scriptures that deal with this particular subject indicates the importance of its practice. The three key concepts in this process are the giving, dealing, and forgiving of inevitable offenses.

Christ gives a serious warning against giving offense. The obvious goal is to strive not to offend anyone. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. We must strive as much as possible to live peaceably with all men. However, it is impossible but that offenses will come. When the inevitable happens, He has given clearly defined three step process of how to deal with any trespass, sin, or offense in Mt. 18:15-17.

It is the responsibility of the offended to confront the offender because the offender may be completely unaware of the offense. Failure at this first point breaks down the entire process. When there has been a trespass, the offended individual has two options. He can either “*suffer himself to be defrauded*” or confront his brother with the trespass. If the trespass is not serious, the stronger should bear with the infirmities of the weak. However, the usual and improper response is to not confront the brother and discuss the offense with others. This is the key to identifying when you are not able to bear the offense on your own; when you cannot refrain from discussing it with others. We are not ignorant of Satan’s devices. Not dealing with this properly gives him an immediate inroad to tempt to further sin and to sow the seeds of bitterness. Despite the difficulty of confrontation, it is extremely vital to the health and holiness of the church. Much of the disruption in the church could be avoided by maintaining this spiritual discipline. Failure at this point allows these trespasses to go unchecked while the animosity is built up. However, if the reproof is received, the wound is quickly healed before the enemy gains further advantage.

If the offender refuses to “hear” his brother, the second step is to involve one or two more brethren to “establish” every word. After granting opportunity for repentance, this step seeks to establish the validity of the trespass and the proper approach in dealing with it. Because of our sinful nature, it is easy to have our judgment clouded by our own interests. If the impenitence remains, the third step is to take the matter before the church. At this point every possible effort has been made to settle the dispute privately without involving the body of saints. This prevents rash or partial judgment of a few individuals. Likely only the most serious offenses will proceed to this juncture without being resolved. Here the church makes a decision to ignore the accusation or enforce it. The offender has the option to accept the decision of the church or be excluded from the fellowship with the goal of producing repentance and restoration.

Once the guidelines for discipline have been followed the issue of forgiveness arises. Forgiveness is to be diligently sought as soon as there is genuine repentance. We are expected to forgive as Christ forgave us. Only after restoration is the discipline process truly complete.

Definitions: *For English use the Webster’s 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong’s Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong’s number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Discipline** -

Exclude -

Excommunicate -

Greek: (1571) **ekkathairo** *ek-kath-ah'ee-ro*

(1808) **exairo** *ex-ah'ee-ro*

Quotation: “There must be great care taken, that when we seek to pluck up the tares, we pluck not up the wheat also; this may be understood of things, of truths and falsehoods, as well as of persons...in respect of things good or evil, there are some things apparently evil, they are rather thistles and briars, than tares; we may freely pluck them up; but other things, though perhaps they may prove evil, yet they have some likeness to good, so as you can hardly discern whether they be good or evil; Now, saith Christ, take heed what you do then, do not out of eagerness to oppose all evil, to get out every tare, pluck out some wheat too: what if that you oppose with violence as evil, prove to be good? You had better let forty tares stand, than pluck up one wheat.” Jeremiah Burroughs

“There is more confidence needful in a thing that we impose upon others, than in what we practice ourselves. If a thing be to us rather true than otherwise, we may lawfully do it, but this is not enough to be a ground for the imposing it upon others, who cannot see it to be a truth; in such a case we need to be very sure.” Jeremiah Burroughs

“The nature and end of judgment or sentence must be corrective, not vindictive; for healing, not destruction.” John Owen

“Prudence must be exercised in the proceeding, lest we do more hurt than good... we should deal humbly even when we deal sharply.” Richard Baxter

“The proper inward effect that accompanies this ordinance (excommunication) is inward affliction and distress of conscience by Satan, which of all afflictions is the greatest punishment...This we see in the excommunication of the Corinthian; whose excommunication is said to be a delivering up unto Satan in the name of the Lord Jesus. He was to be cast out by a commission from Christ, which going forth in His name, when they published it on earth, He signed it in heaven.” Thomas Goodwin

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 26: Of the Church - paragraphs 7, 12, 13-15

Chapter 27: Of the Communion of Saints - paragraph 1

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. What is discipline a primary responsibility of the church towards its members?
2. What are the three key concepts involving church discipline?
3. What are the three steps of church discipline?
4. What is the key to determining whether you are able to bear with a particular trespass?
5. Why is the offended brother the one expected to confront the trespass?
6. What is the result of the failure to maintain this spiritual discipline?
7. Who will take advantage of our failure to deal with offenses properly? How?
8. When the offender will not hear his brother why is it necessary to be taken before one or two witnesses?
9. When the offender will not hear the two or three, why is it necessary to take it before the church?

10. What is the ultimate goal of all church discipline?

Key Scriptures: (*Look up these verses and fill in the blank*)

Leviticus 19:17 God's people have a responsibility to _____ one another and to not allow each other to fall into _____.

Deuteronomy 19:15 When confronting a person publicly it is necessary to have _____ or _____ witnesses to establish the truth of the matter.

Psalms 141:5 When the righteous smite each other it is a _____.

Proverbs 25:9-10 We must take our offenses to the individual _____ and not reveal it to _____.

Luke 17:3-4 If your brother _____ against you, _____ him and if he repents _____ him. Even if he sins against you _____ times a day and repents, we are to forgive them.

Romans 14:7 Our sin affects other people because none of us liveth to _____.

Romans 14:13 We should not be judgmental toward each other but strive not to be a stumbling-block or cause a brother to _____.

I Corinthians 5:4-5 When Paul instructed this church how to discipline a member, he told them to do so in the _____ and _____ of our Lord Jesus Christ. The act of church discipline is very serious because it is to _____ them to _____ for the destruction of the _____ so that the spirit may be _____ in the day of judgment.

I Corinthians 6:6-8 There were members of this church suing each other in a secular court. Paul said they were at _____ for doing so and told them instead that they should _____ the _____ and allow themselves to be _____.

Galatians 6:1 When dealing with a man _____ in a fault, we are expected to _____ the repentant man in the spirit of _____ lest we should be _____ in the same way and fall.

Ephesians 4:32 When dealing with the brethren we are to be _____, tenderhearted, and especially _____ EVEN AS God for Christ's sake hath _____ you.

Colossians 3:13 We are expected to forbear with one another and be _____ to one another EVEN AS Christ forgave _____ which is absolute forgiveness.

I Thessalonians 4:6 We are forewarned against defrauding our brother in any _____ because the Lord is the _____ of such.

II Thessalonians 3:6 We are expected to _____ ourselves from _____ brother that walks _____

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II Thessalonians 3:14-15 If any refused to obey the word of God we should _____ that man and have no _____
_____ with them that they may be _____ . However, we should never count him as an _____
_____ but _____ them as a brother.

James 5:19-20 If a brother errs from the _____ and you are able to bring them back, you are able to save his
soul from _____ and can _____ a multitude of sins.

Key Chapter(s) (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

I Corinthians 5

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: Matthew 18:15

Personal definition: (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Church discipline -

Personal confession: (*Study the confessions and summarize them in your own words*)

Church discipline -

Meditation question: (*be prepared for discussion*)

How do you determine if your brother has “heard” you or “forgiven you”?

Extra credit: Identify an unresolved offense you have and follow the rules of Christ to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.