

Discipline 1–The Purpose of Church Discipline-Part 2

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Based on the response I have received from the 1st sermon in this series on church discipline it seems that it was helpful to you, as it was to me as I prepared to preach it. I thank God for that and trust that you will continue to be blessed as we examine this critical topic. Now today we will continue to examine 3 more purposes for church discipline. Next week, Lord willing, we will examine the order of church discipline.

Our headings are: You Discipline to Show Love, You Discipline to Restore the Sinner, and You Discipline to Honor God.

Our goals are: That you will understand the need for discipline in the church of Jesus Christ, that you will accept discipline if you need it, and that you will call for discipline for others if they need it.

You Discipline to Show Love

1. It is relatively easy to hug someone who has done something good for you. You receive love so you show love. You have probably saw people waving at the hearse 灵车 that was carrying the body of the fallen soldier last week. He loved you enough to fight for you, so you respond with love. In those situations it is easy to love. But there are times when it is quite difficult to show love...like when you are required to discipline others. But brothers and sisters, discipline is one of the highest forms of love. It is true that most children will disagree with this assertion 主张 but it is true. ("If you love me you will not discipline me" is the mantra.) But disciplining shows love to children in the home and children of Christ in his church. The writer of Hebrews made it abundantly clear that God disciplines from love.

Hebrews 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation 劝告 which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise 鄙视 the chastening 惩罚 of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges 鞭 every son whom He receives."

Jesus gave a good example of how discipline (starting with rebuke) is an example of love to the one who has strayed 走离 from Christ's path. (Matt.18) And he demands that his church make the effort to rescue the straying Christian.

2. True love crosses boundaries where fear would have stopped dead in its tracks. Love causes you to risk offending someone or it may cause you or the person you are correcting to feel uncomfortable. But you are still called to love this way.

Proverbs 27:5 Open rebuke is better Than love carefully concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Solomon's simple words encapsulate 总结 the need for and the command to discipline. Open rebuke is a better love than a secret love. Wounding a sinful straying friend is greater love than kissing your friend.

3. Since church discipline shows true love and church discipline flows from true love, the one (or the church) who does not discipline delinquent 违法的 members is lacking in love. Consider what the Scriptures teach about discipline in the family setting.

Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Certainly this is true in the church family setting as well. You will remember the case in the Corinthian church from last week that did not discipline the adulterer. Their toleration of a gross sin was actually a lack of love to the sinner. Maybe they thought they were being nice...and open minded...but it was truly a lack of love. Consider this: Who looks at his wife across the table on their anniversary and say: Sweetheart, I tolerate you? No, a man is expected to love his wife, and if there is a problem, they need to work it out and be restored. In the case of the church, the Bridegroom demands that his Bride, you, change her ways and return to him. After all, the Bridegroom of the church does not sin! And based on who he is and what he had done for you, he demands a good, pure relationship.

4. If Christ did not love you...if he hated you, he would give you over to reprobate 恶棍 minds – leave you on own. Just like if you don't love your child you will take no time to discipline him.

Romans 1: 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased 贬值 mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

And you only stop disciplining a child when there is no more hope and you put the child out of the house or the delinquent person out of the church.

You Discipline to Restore the Sinner

1. The one who sins and remains in his sins will not and cannot listen to the voice of God. He is so preoccupied with his own

pleasure and profit that God's Word is necessarily blocked out. This is self-love. The job of discipline is to clear that impediment 障碍 from his life so that he might worship and pray as he should. This is what is meant when you are called to "purge the old leaven" from your life. Leaven is sin. This means of course that you must necessarily point the offending person to Christ and show the offending person his own sinfulness. For it is only by trusting in Christ is he able to live that pure clean life. Let me illustrate: Israel was required to go through their houses before the Passover, which pre-figured Jesus Christ, and make sure they removed all leaven from their residences. This is what the church must do regularly: search and remove sin.

Exodus 12:15 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

2. Discipline is not to desire your "pound of flesh." In other words, discipline is not to satisfy your desire for revenge. It is for the gaining of your brother...to win him to the side of right.

Matthew 18: 15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Discipline is aimed at the heart. The one who uses discipline for revenge is often committing a greater sin. This is what Paul warned Corinthians church about...after they finally placed the adulterer under discipline. It looks like they refused to restore him upon repentance.

2 Corinthians 2: 5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe. 6 This punishment which was inflicted 造成 by the majority is sufficient for such a man, 7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed 吞食 up with too much sorrow. 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. 9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

And notice Paul's last point. Cruel discipline is a device of the Devil.

3. So if your Christian brother borrows your money and does not return it, you go to him to do what?

Require your money? No. You go to him to urge him to live obediently to God and repent of his sins. **As a result of that he will want to return you money.** That is what you must do when men sin. If you simply wanted to demand that he gives you your money back...and then go and complain to the church that he won't give you your money back, you have failed to have the proper goal in discipline. It must always be to restore the guilty man to the right path.

4. Consider the other Bible passage that teach that restoration is the goal of discipline.

Hebrews 12: 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

So the goal of discipline is righteousness.

Galatians 6: 1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

So the goal of helping the sinner is to restore him to a right relationship with God.

Psalms 141:5 Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it...

So the goal of helping the sinner is to heal him...like oil heals. Discipline to him healthy.

5. Again, in the case with the Corinthians that we looked at already, because the church did not demand repentance 悔改 it meant that the man had no forgiveness and the burden of his sin remained. But consider what Paul said about that sinner...

1Corinthians 5:5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

The purpose of the ultimate discipline – excommunication – was with the hope that the one who

was put out might suffer enough, see his sins, and return to beg Christ's pardon.

6. This purpose is well illustrated in the fact that sometimes shepherds had to break the leg of a sheep to keep him from straying into danger and becoming a meal for a wild animal. When the sheep's leg was broken it then learn to stay at home while it healed.

7. Thus, discipline requires great control. You are not to discipline out of anger or a desire for revenge, but for restoration. Just like you would not expect a parent to discipline a child because he is angry with the child, but because he wants the child to go in the way of the Lord.

Discipline to Honor God

1. Sometimes the church does not discipline because a man may be an **important man** in society. (The RC's said they would ban any pro-abortion politician from the Mass, but they just backed away from that threat because they wanted important people in their churches.) Sometimes the church does not want to discipline a **rich man** because the elders are afraid of losing his tithe. Or the church won't discipline an **educated man**. Or maybe the church refuses to discipline a person because the church is **afraid that his relatives might leave the church**.

2. When churches do these things, they dishonor Christ. This would be treating the member as more **important than God** and treating the member as if he were the god of the church. But churches will do well to remember that the church is Christ's and none else. He died for her. He owns her.

3. And as you heard last week, the lack of discipline robs the church of purity. A church that is not pure cannot honor a perfectly holy God. Your worship will be affected. There would be grumblings and dissatisfaction in the ranks. Elders will fight against each other. And when the elders fight, guess what will happen to the congregation? How is God honored with in-fighting? Consider what Charles Hodge wrote about the consequences of sin: "A single sin, however secret, when indulged diffuses its corrupting influence over the whole relationship with God – it depraves our consciences, it alienates us from God, it strengthens other temptations to evil, and it does all this as it destroys the power of the Word to draw us back to him." Let us guard against spreading sin.

Conclusion:

Hard as it may be to accept, especially if you are on the receiving end or if you don't like to hurt a fly, discipline is one of the highest forms of love that you can show to someone. The church must never forget that. It is not love to tolerate sin. Second, the goal of discipline is not to satisfy your anger or to get even. The goal of discipline is to restore the sinner to a righteous God. And third, the church needs to discipline in order to honor Christ. A wounded bride is of little value to the Bridegroom.

Brothers and sisters: Everyone of you must examine your heart-whether you discipline a child or a member of the church. You must always have the right motive...love for the sinner...restoration of the sinner...the honor of God. What is missing here? You. Discipline is not about you...but about the glory of Christ. When you love the sinner Christ is glorified. When the sinner is restored Christ is glorified. When the Father is honored, Christ is glorified. So love discipline...pursue discipline when it is required. Remember, you belong to Christ by blood and baptism. Live like it.

Finally, if you are not a Christian you do not have the joys of being disciplined. Rather you will have the experience of punishment in hell for your sins. But you don't have to stay on that side. Christ calls you over. "Come," he says to you today. He paid your entrance fee into the kingdom... He paid with his blood. Won't you accept him and do it today?