

Discipline – Part 2– The Order – Matthew 18: 15-20 (Txt 15-17)

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Fathers and elders must be preemptive有先买权的 in discipline. It is always best to prevent troubles. (Obedience is always better than sacrifice.) In order to do be preemptive, fathers and elders must frequently remind their charges to live faithfully and to avoid sins. I hope that goes without saying. However, sin often raises its ugly head in the midst of the family or congregation and God demands that his leaders act to keep the church pure.

What is significant in God's command to be pure is that God has given specific authority to his church to discipline the delinquent in order that the church might be kept pure. So the church also **has cover** for the discipline it metes out给予to the unrepentant顽固的. I will declare to you the order of discipline that God has established to his church that she must follow.

Our headings are: Verbal Rebuke, Provable Rebuke, and Ecclesiastical教会的 Rebuke.

Our goals are: That you will properly learn how discipline is to take place in the church so you can play your part to make sure it is properly carried out for the good of the offender, the purity of the church, and the glory of Jesus Christ.

Verbal Rebuke

1. Most people think that discipline is for children: You verbally scold them, you take away their privileges, or you physically discipline them. But the truth is **even grown men and women need to be disciplined** sometimes.

2. In the case of discipline, most discipline cases don't begin with the elders coming to someone and disciplining them. No, most discipline cases begin in the interaction between brothers in the congregation (or siblings in the home). And this is rightly so. This is Christ 's directive to you. Those who run to the elders first, or to parents first instead of rebuking the sin, often do so because of laziness-not wanting to be bothered or because of false piety-wanting to look good to the elders or the parents. But Christ said:

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.

This rebuke is not done in order to expose the sin to the world but it is done to **expose sin to the erring brother**.

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.

The word for "tell" is a word that means more in the original. It means to show...to expose...to convince. So you may not take a short cut. You may sometimes have to explain the sin many times because someone may not have understood the sin.

3. This rebuke was also personally done in order to **protect the honor** of your erring brother... No one else would know what that sin was if it were dealt with privately and the erring person repented. You are not to publish the sins of those who are repentant. If you publish the sin then you have become a gossip – speaking unwanted and unnecessary things that hurt your brother or sister in Jesus Christ. Christ forgives the sins of his children and casts them in a sea of forgetfulness. You must do the same.

4. It is true that when someone hurts you, you want to hurt them back or you want to prove you were right. This is a strong urge. But you must **resist that urge to punish or seek personal revenge** by God's grace. As God for the grace not to respond and seek personal vengeance. This is what you see in immature children. A child might say: "If you say I am fibber, then I'm going to tell everyone you are a bed-wetter." Sadly, some grown children do the same to their wives... husbands...and with their brothers and sisters in Christ. As soon as you speak of one of their sins, they remember one of your sins. That is a bad and sinful attitude.

5. You must also **resist the urge to listen to what others say about the sins of others**. When someone comes and wants to gossip, say: "Wait a minute. I know you are hurt by what someone said...or did, but you may not hurt back in return. You don't have a right to do that. You have to go and get the matter resolved with the one who sinned against you."

6. I hope you realize and it goes without saying that you choose the right time, the right place and have the right attitude when you go to correct someone of a sin. A tired and hungry person reacts differently to correction that one who is well rested. A person reacts differently at a wedding reception than after breakfast on a Saturday. A person reacts worse to an "I am better than you" attitude than one who has a humble attitude.

7. Practically now:

- a. If you see a fellow Christian cheating on his taxes, what do you say?
 - b. If you see a fellow Christian cheating on a test in school, what do you say?
 - c. If you know a fellow Christian committing adultery, what do you say to him?
- Would you say: Confess...or I might have to confess for you? Or do you leave him or her alone?

Provable Rebuke

16 "But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

1. If the person you were correcting refuse to listen to your call for his repentance because of the hardness of his heart, you have to ask 1 or 2 others to go with you to him to help him see his sin. You may not say: "I've told him clearly what he did was wrong...now it is his business." It is still "your business." You have to be persistent because your goal is the glory of Christ, the purity of the church, and the good of that erring brother. Christ demands this order...and it is a good order.

2. But why go to the next step of bringing others into the middle of that trouble?

- a. If the person does not repent upon your call to him, before you bring in others it might make you think whether the sin is real or whether you are overreacting to a problem.
- b. If the person does not repent upon you showing him his sin, **two other people would add weight to your call for repentance.**
- c. If the person still does not repent, the testimony of the 2 witnesses would be used against the erring one when the matter goes before the elders of the church.

3. The job then is the same: To show the erring one his sin. The man might not initially want to listen, but you must be patient. You may have to meet with him more than once.

Ecclesiastical Rebuke

17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

1. You 3 witnesses are not to immediately call for the elders to come and "get" the offender, like you might call a dog to go and get the bad burglar. Dealing with an erring brother in Christ is uniquely different. If he would not listen, your love for the erring, with the concurrence of the 2 witnesses, would move you to call on the elders so that they might be more forceful in their rebuke. No elder or minister is to even entertain any accusation without asking the member if he has talked with the one who has sinned and confronted (with the help of others) the erring brother about his sin.

2. If the offending person does not want to amend his ways as he was called to do by the 3 witnesses, then the elders' final step...which is a long step... must begin. The elders must evaluate to make sure the 3 witnesses were right in their call to repentance, and if so, they must also call the sinner to repentance. Part of this call to repentance is to show the guilty person his sin, pray for him, visit him, encourage them, and ultimately threaten him with excommunication if he would not repent.

3. If he doesn't listen to his elders to whom he vowed he would listen, they may excommunicate that delinquent person from the church of Jesus Christ. And this is a repeated theme.

1Corinthians 5: 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

Titus 3:10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

4. Practical details of how the elders work in this giant step in the United Reformed Churches:

- a. If there were no repentance after calls to do so, and encouragements and warnings to do so, the elders will suspend that unrepentant one from the Lord's Table.
- b. If there is still no repentance after some time they will announce to the congregation that someone is under discipline without mentioning the name of the person so that the congregation might pray. This is to protect the honor of the person and encourage prayer.
- c. Then they would seek the advice of elders in neighboring churches, explaining the details so that a wider body of church leaders would evaluate the facts...
- d. Assuming the neighboring elders agree, if there still were no repentance they will eventually mention the name of the person and explain the sins. So the congregation may encourage this unrepentant person...and pray for him all the more.
 - 1Timothy 5:20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.
- e. After some times has passed, the local church may then excommunicate 开除 the unrepentant from the church of Jesus Christ.

5. Our church order form says: In this way: that, according to the command of Christ, if any under the Christian name show themselves unsound either in doctrine or life, and after several brotherly admonition do not turn from their errors or evil ways, they are complained of to the Church or to its proper officers; and, if they neglect to hear them also, are by them denied the holy sacraments and thereby excluded from the Christian communion, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ... And we need this order just as you need to learn order to escape a fire.

6. The person who is excommunicated is not welcome to eat at the Lord's table, and does not have the close fellowship with believers as believers have with each other. How can he? He shows himself to be outside of Christ. Excommunication kills closeness. To treat an excommunicated person as a brother in Christ is to show contempt for Christ. It is treating as clean what Christ calls unclean. The congregation is expected to treat an excommunicated person that way, not because of meanness, but because they want to see that person repent and be restored.

2Thessalonians 3:14 And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

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.

Conclusion:

Discipline: 1. You must verbally rebuke the offender for the right reasons and in the right way. 2. If that fails, that you must secure a provable rebuke, adding witnesses, to add weight to the personal rebuke. 3. If that doesn't work, you must get ecclesiastical rebuke – which is attached with prayer, teaching, and admonition) to add weight. The elders also call the congregation to pray for the offender and ask them to encourage the unrepentant to repent. If there is no repentance, they must move to excommunicate.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The church that is polluted with leaven will not last long. It may survive in form...she may still sing songs...and have some form of worship...but it just soufflé. It will not stand up to the scrutiny of God's judgment. Don't be part of a church that refuses to discipline. Accept discipline. Pursue discipline. Thank God for discipline. Love discipline. Christ did not save you and leave you in a disorganized body. He wants order so you can live at peace, your neighbor can be restored when he has sin, and Christ your Savior will be glorified.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, you still owe Christ total obedience. He is your Creator. But unless you accept Christ's life and his death for you, you will be unable to live in obedience. So the call is clear. Come to Christ. Ask him to count his obedience as yours. Ask him to count his death as yours. If you do, you will find new life and new hope, and you can begin to live in obedience to him.