

Church Discipline

Lesson Text: **2 Thessalonians 3:6**

INTRODUCTION:

A. Lesson Texts:

1. **Acts 20:27** – “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”

(Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders at Miletus.)

- a. The whole counsel of God has not been declared when part of His counsel to man has been avoided.
 - b. The whole counsel of God has not been declared when part of His counsel to man has been changed.
 - c. The subject of church discipline is a part of the whole counsel of God, and thus must be declared.
2. Four major New Testament passages dealing with church discipline:
- a. **2 Thessalonians 3:6** – “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”
 1. A “disorderly walk” denotes conduct that is in any way contrary to the rules of Christ.
 2. The proper idea of the word in the Greek is that of soldiers who do not keep the ranks.
 3. Some Christians do not keep the ranks within the army of God.
 - b. **Romans 16:17** – “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”
 - c. **1 Corinthians 5:9-13** – “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner -- not even to eat with such a person.

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

d. **2 Thessalonians 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.

3. All four of these passages are part of the “whole counsel of God” that must be declared.”

B. East Tennessee School of Preaching & Missions Lectureship in 2000 was the school’s 26th annual lectureship. The Overall theme was “Practical Studies in Church Growth.” Bro. James Meadows taught a series of classes on the subject of “Church Discipline.” His printed manuscript in the lectureship book covers 17 pages. The first two paragraphs read as follows:

“Disciplining members of the church is almost a thing of the past. Old church records will occasionally report that a brother has been disfellowshipped for drunkenness or a sister for dancing. And then a later report shows they have been restored. Disciplining is not an easy task. It has many complications and often more than one person is involved. Members of a family and close kin often react improperly when the church exercises discipline toward a member. Lack of courage on the part of elders often leads to neglect in the matter of discipline. But will these or other problems connected with discipline excuse us for failing to follow God’s word?

No one familiar with the Bible will say that the subject of church discipline is unimportant. Any mature any serious student of God’s word readily acknowledges that this subject occupies a prominent position in the remedial scheme. The Lord gave complete and adequate instruction for the administration of discipline in the church.”

1. In 11 sentences and 164 words, bro. Meadows touches on many aspects of our theme.
 - a. It appears to be mostly a thing of the past.
 - b. Involves complications.
 - c. Often more than one person is involved.
 - d. Family members, and others, often react improperly.
 - e. Many elders and elderships lack sufficient courage to carry it out. Thus, they neglect church discipline.
 - f. The Bible does not excuse us from carrying out church discipline.
 - g. Bible students cannot honestly say church discipline is unimportant.
 - h. Its position in the remedial scheme in the bible is important.
 - i. The Lord gave complete and adequate instructions for it to be done.

C. Discipline is a word which is particularly out of step with our time.

1. Ours is a permissive age.
2. Ours is an indulgent age.
3. Ours is an age emphasizing:

- a. No controls.
 - b. No restraints.
 - c. No limitations.
 - 4. Ours is a day when discipline is lacked in our homes.
 - 5. Ours is a day when discipline is lacked in our schools.
 - 6. Ours is a day when discipline is lacked in the church.
- D. Church discipline is a matter deserving of our careful study and consideration.
- 1. Two extremes are encountered in this matter.
 - a. Misuse . . . which is abuse.
 - b. Nonuse . . . which is abandonment.
 - 2. For some, church discipline has been simply an outlet for personal animosity.
 - 3. For others, church discipline is to be avoided at all costs.
 - 4. Neither of these two extremes is acceptable to God.
- E. In this series of lessons on the subject of church discipline, eleven major questions will be considered and answered.
- 1. What is the Meaning of Discipline?
 - 2. Is Discipline a Bible Subject?
 - 3. What are the Responsibilities of the Elders in Discipline?
 - 4. What are the Responsibilities of Each Member in Instructive (Preventive) Discipline?
 - 5. What is Corrective Discipline?
 - 6. What are the Purposes of Corrective Discipline?
 - 7. Upon Whom is Corrective Discipline to be Administered?
 - 8. What is the Spiritual Procedure in Corrective Discipline?
 - 9. What Should be Our Treatment of One Disfellowshipped?
 - 10. What are Some Objections to Church Discipline?
 - 11. What are Some Suggested Procedures in Discipline Cases?

QUESTION #1 - WHAT IS THE MEANING OF DISCIPLINE?

- A. Definition of discipline.
- 1. Discipline means to teach, instruct, to correct, or train one that he might be strengthened, perfected; to punish or chastise.
 - 2. Webster says it means “training or experience that corrects, molds, strengthens, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character.
 - 3. Broadly speaking, church discipline includes all processes or means by which a church trains and educates its members to “walk in the light.”

4. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”.
 1. The marginal note on “instruction” is “discipline” (Greek, paideian).
 2. Thayer says “discipline” means “whatever in adults cultivates the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions; hence, instruction which aims at the increase of virtue.”
5. While many think of discipline only as corrective, it must be pointed out that discipline is twofold in its nature.
 - a. **Instructive** discipline which is **preventive** in nature..
 - b. **Corrective** discipline which is **chastising** and **penalizing** in nature.
6. Examples of instructive (preventive) discipline.
 - a. **Ephesians 6:4** – “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”
 - b. **1 Thessalonians 5:22** – “Abstain from every form of evil.”
7. Examples of corrective discipline will be examined later in this series.

QUESTION #2 - IS DISCIPLINE A BIBLE SUBJECT?

- A. There are many scriptures which emphasize discipline and why it was emphasized.
 1. **Genesis 17:14** - The uncircumcised were to be cut off, that is, put away from the people.
 2. **Leviticus 2:27; 17:8-9** - Anyone who ate blood was to be cut off, that is, put away from the people.
 3. **Deuteronomy 13:13-18** - Those who engaged in worshipping idols were to be killed.
 4. **Romans 16:17-18** & **1 Corinthians 4:19-21** - Those who caused division were to be pointed out and avoided.
 5. **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** - Fornicators & immoral persons who were brethren, were to be put away and avoided.
 6. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** - The unruly were to be warned.
 7. **2 Thessalonians 3:6-15** - Company was not to be kept with those who refused to work.
 8. **1 Timothy 5:19-20** - “Those sinning were to be rebuked before all.
- B. There are many examples of discipline being exercised in both the Old and New Testaments.
 1. The Old Testament.

- a. The Patriarchal Age.
 1. **Genesis 2-3** - God had told Adam and Eve what they should do and what was forbidden for them to do.
 - a. When they ate of the forbidden fruit, God disciplined or punished them.
 - b. Their disobedience brought on God’s discipline of them.
 2. **Genesis 6** - The disobedience of the multitudes brought on the great flood during the days of Noah.
 3. **Genesis 19** - When it came time for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God told Lot and his family what to do. Lot’s wife disobeyed God and was thus turned into a pillar of salt.
 - b. The Mosaical Age.
 1. **Leviticus 10:1-2** - Nadab & Abihu (two of Aaron’s four sons) offered strange fire before the lord and were devoured by the fire.
 2. **Numbers 15:32-40** - A man caught picking up sticks on the Sabbath Day was stoned to death.
 3. **Joshua 7:1, 19-26** - Achan took of the spoils of the city of Ai and was stoned to death as a result.
2. The New Testament.
 - a. **Acts 5:1-11** - Ananias and Sapphira attempted to lie to God and were struck dead as a result.

QUESTION #3 - WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS IN INSTRUCTIVE (PREVENTIVE) DISCIPLINE?

- A. Elders are a part of God’s arrangement for the local church.
 1. According to **Acts 15:6**, the church in Jerusalem had elders.
 2. According to **Acts 14:23**, Paul appointed elders in the churches at the end of his first missionary journey.
 3. **In Acts 20:17**, Paul summoned the elders from Ephesus to meet with him at Miletus.
 4. **Philippians 1:1** indicates that the church at Philippi had elders.
 5. In **Titus 1:5**, Paul told Titus to ordain elders in every city.
- B. Elders play a vital role in the instructive (preventive) part of church discipline.
 1. **Elders are to feed the flock of God.**
 - a. **Acts 20:28** – “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

- b. **1 Peter 5:2** – “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly. The KJV renders it: “Feed the flock of God which is among you”
- c. In taking “heed” to the flock and “feeding” the flock, Paul place three responsibilities upon the elders from Ephesus (and **all** elders”):
 - 1. They must guard the church from false teachers from without. **Acts 20:29** – “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock”
 - 2. They must guard the flock from false teachers within. **Acts 20:30** – “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”
 - 3. They must be mindful of the flock day and night. **Acts 20:31** – “Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears”.
- 2. **Elders are to be an example to the flock.**
 - a. **Acts 20:28** – “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock”
 - b. “Heed” is from a Greek word (“proseche”) that means “hold to, to apply mind to, to give heed to, to attend to, to observe, to consider, to provide for.”
 - c. In being examples elders are not to be “. . . lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” **1 Peter 5:3.**
- 3. **Elders must take the oversight and rule the congregation.**
 - a. **Acts 20:28** – “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
 - b. **1 Timothy 5:17** – “The elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”
 - c. According to Thayer, “overseer” is a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly.”
 - d. The Bible clearly shows how the oversight and ruling are to be done.
 - 1. “Not under compulsion but voluntarily” **1 Peter 5:2**
 - 2. “Not for dishonest gain but eagerly.” **1 Peter 5:2**
 - 3. Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;
1 Peter 5:3
 - 4. Limited to one congregation. “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you” **1 Peter 5:2**
 - 5. With diligence. Romans 12:8
 - 6. Well. I Timothy 5:17
- 4. **They must watch on behalf of souls.**

- a. **Hebrews 13:17** – “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”
- b. “Watch” is the present imperative of the Greek word “gragareo which means to be awake, to watch, to be alive, to be attentive, to be vigilant. The present denotes “keep on watching.”
- c. Elders must watch with reference to dangers within the church.
- d. Elders are to watch with reference to dangers without the church.
- e. The must watch both:
 1. Individual.
 2. Congregational.
- f. The best physicians are the one who prevent diseases. They are the best bishops who, by their watchful attention to the occasion of falling or apostasy, anticipate and prevent delinquencies.

QUESTION #4 - WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH MEMBER IN INSTRUCTIVE (PREVENTIVE) DISCIPLINE?

- A. Each member of the church has a responsibility to himself in instructive (preventive) discipline.
 1. Self-discipline.
 - a. Self-discipline is essential to every worthy undertaking.
 - b. The Christian is under the constant restraint of divine truth.
 - c. Self-discipline involves self-imposed measures on ourselves.
 1. Elders are told to “Take heed to yourselves.” **Acts 20:28**
 2. Paul admonished the younger preacher Timothy to “Take heed to yourself.”
1 Timothy 3:16
 3. Paul practiced self-discipline and said: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”. **1 Corinthians 9:27**
 4. Galatians are told to crucify the flesh with its lusts. “And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”.
Galatians 5:24
 2. Are you keeping yourself faithful to Christ?
- B. Each member of the church has responsibilities to the elders in instructive (preventive) discipline.

1. **1 Thessalonians 5:12** – “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize (“know”, KJV) those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.”
2. **1 Thessalonians 5:13** - “And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.”
3. **1 Timothy 5:17** – “The elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”
4. **1 Timothy 5:19-20** – “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.
Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”
5. **Hebrews 13:17** – “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

C. Every member of the church has a responsibility to all the other members in instructive (preventive) discipline.

1. When Barnabas came from Jerusalem to Antioch and “. . . had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” **Acts 11:2**
2. We are to “increase and abound in love to one another and to all.” **1 Thessalonians 3:12**
3. **Hebrews 3:13** – “But exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”
4. **Hebrews 10:24** – “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”

QUESTION #5 - WHAT IS CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE?

- A. Corrective discipline, or withdrawal, is definitely commanded, in some cases.
1. **2 Thessalonians 3:6** - “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”
 2. **1 Timothy 6:5** – “Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”
 3. **1 Corinthians 5:13** – “But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.””
- B. There are a number of things (false ideas or conclusions) that corrective discipline does not mean.

1. Corrective discipline does not mean that the church is primarily interested in making someone suffer, even though suffering is involved.
2. Corrective discipline does not mean vengeance toward the offender.
Romans 12:19 – “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”
 - a. The Bible is clear about where vengeance belongs . . . it belongs to God.
 - b. It does not belong to elders.
 - c. It does not belong to deacons.
 - d. It does not belong to preachers.
 - e. It does not belong to you.
 - f. It does belong to God.
3. Corrective disciplining does not mean pronouncing or condemning a person to hell.
4. Corrective discipline does not mean merely making an announcement before the congregation.
5. Corrective discipline does not mean that the one withdrawn from become an enemy. **2 Thessalonians 3:15** - “Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”
6. Corrective discipline does not mean that the elders, or anyone else, is putting that person “out of the church.”
 - a. One brother asked: “Are you all going to put me out of the church?”
 - b. The Lord adds obedient believers to the church. **Acts 2:47** – “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”
 - c. Not what some in the religious world call “excommunication.”
 - d. The Lord has added them to the church because of their obedience . . . The church disciplines them because of their refusal to repent of sins committed while a member of the Lord’s church.
 1. When you discipline a child, you don’t put that child out of the family.
 2. When the federal government disciplines a lawbreaker, it doesn’t send them to another country.

C. What does corrective discipline mean or include?

1. **It means to avoid or turn away from.** **Romans 16:17** – “Now I urge you, brethren, note (mark,” KJV)those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”
2. **It means to refuse association or company.** **I Corinthians 5:9-11** – “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner -- not even to eat with such a person.”

3. **It means one does not give encouragement in any way to what the evil one is doing.** One must separate from, to retire from personally and privately (after the church has withdrawn) as well as by public announcement, and to turn away from.

QUESTION #6 - WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE?

A. God has a purpose for everything He asks of His people.

B. Four Purposes of Corrective Discipline.

1. One purpose of withdrawal is **to save the soul of the erring one.**
 - a. In **1 Corinthians 5:5**, the fornicator in the church at Corinth was to be delivered **to** “Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. In **1 Timothy 1:19-20**, Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander unto Satan. “Having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”
 - c. The Thessalonians were to have no fellowship or company with the disorderly “that he may be ashamed.” **2 Thessalonians 3:14**
 - d. Note: It can be clearly seen that one of the purposes of withdrawal is to save the soul of the individual.
 - e. What does it mean to deliver such a one to Satan?
 1. Adam Clarke’s Commentary: “[To deliver such a one unto Satan] It was a species of punishment administered in extraordinary cases, in which the body and the mind of an incorrigible transgressor were delivered by the authority of God into the power of Satan, to be tortured with diseases and terrors as a warning to all; but while the body and mind were thus tormented, the immortal spirit was under the influence of the divine mercy; and the affliction, in all probability, was in general only for a season; though sometimes it was evidently unto death, as the destruction of the flesh seems to imply. But the soul found mercy at the hand of God; for such a most extraordinary interference of God's power and justice, and of Satan's influence, could not fail to bring the person to a state of the deepest humiliation and contrition; and thus, while the flesh was destroyed, the spirit was

- saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. No such power as this remains in the church of God; none such should be assumed; the pretensions to it are as wicked as they are vain. It was the same power by which Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead, and Elymas the sorcerer struck blind. Apostles alone were intrusted with it.”
2. Temporary affliction often leads to permanent salvation . Satan in God's hand becomes, in spite of himself, an instructor of believers. (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)
2. A second purpose of withdrawing is **to save the souls of the other members of the church.**
 - a. It is only as one see the true nature of sin that one will shun the appearance of evil.
 - b. Failure to purge out sin leads to a toleration of sin and blinds one to its true nature.
 - c. The Corinthians were “puffed up.” **I Corinthians 5:1-2**
 - d. “A little leaven leaves the whole lump.” **I Corinthians 5:6**
 - e. It is only by purging out the leaven that the rest of the lump is kept free from contamination.
 - f. It is only as the church does what God commands in these instances that she can escape the condemnation that is sure to come for a refusal to do so.
 3. A third purpose of withdrawing is **to magnify and exalt the Lord and His church in the eyes of the world.**
 - a. Every congregation and every individual has the responsibility to be a light to the world (Matthew 5:14-16).
 - b. Every congregation and every individual has the responsibility to do all the glory of God, (**1 Corinthians 10:32**) and to cause men, by their lives, “to glorify God.”
 - c. **1 Peter 2:12**
 - c. Brethren, church discipline, **if** conducted properly, will increase the respect of men for the church.
 - d. Often church leaders are heard to say they do not exercise discipline because the church will be hurt in the eyes of the world if the world learns there is trouble in the church.
 1. **Please listen carefully: The world will have a lot more respect for the church if it is trying to keep itself clean than it will have for a church which tries to hide its sins.**
 2. People magnified the church and believers were added to the Lord because of the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira.
 - a. **Acts 5:11** – “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.”

- b. **Acts 5:14** – “Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”
- 3. When a man of the world can truthfully say that he lives a better, cleaner life than the average church member, or he can truthfully say that there are too many hypocrites in the church, we may know that the church is not exercising discipline as it should.
- 4. A fourth purpose of withdrawal of fellowship is **to cause the rest of us to examine our own lives.**
 - a. In **1 Timothy 5:20**, Paul told Timothy, “Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.”
 - b. If all members were informed as to what to expect when sin is allowed to rule in their lives, very little corrective discipline would ever be needed.

QUESTION #7 - UPON WHOM IS CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINING TO BE ADMINISTERED?

- A. Broadly speaking, **all that walk disorderly are to be disfellowshipped.**
 - 1. **2 Thessalonians 3:6** – “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”
 - 2. A disorderly person is any church member that is walking contrary to the truth.
 - a. **John 17:17** - “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”
 - b. The Bible is truth! Thus, walking contrary to anything the Bible teaches for us today is walking disorderly.
 - c. Examples of what the Bible Tells a Christian not to do.
 - 1. Not to forsake the assemble (Hebrews 10:25). To do so is to walk disorderly.
 - 2. Not to commit adultery (Matthew 19:3-9). To do so is to walk disorderly.
 - 3. Not to sow discord (I Peter 3:8). To do so is to walk disorderly.
 - 4. Not to sin wilfully (Hebrews 10:26). To do so is to walk disorderly.
 - 5. Not to steal (Ephesians 4:28). To do so is to walk disorderly.
 - 6. Not to get drunk (I Corinthians 6:10). To do so is to walk disorderly.
 - c. Examples of what the Bible tells a Christian to do.
 - 1. Should study the Bible (II Timothy 2:15). Failure to do so is to walk disorderly.
 - 2. Should give as God has prospered them (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Failure to do so is to walk disorderly.

3. Should obey the government (Romans 13:1-4). Failure to do so is to walk disorderly.
4. Should set a good example (Titus 2:7-8). Failure to do so is to walk disorderly.
5. Should love the brethren (I Peter 1:22). Failure to do so is to walk disorderly.
6. Should sing and make melody in their heart (Ephesians 5:19). Failure to do so is to walk disorderly.

B. Discipline is to be exercised toward **those who will not work.**

1. These were the disorderly ones in the church at Thessalonica.
 - a. Paul had commanded work. 2 Thessalonians 3:12
 - b. Paul had set a personal example before them. 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8
 - c. **2 Thessalonians 3:11** - “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies.”
 - d. **1 Timothy 5:8** – “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”
 - e. Legitimate work is honorable in the sight of God.
2. Brethren who will not work are brethren who need to be confronted.

C. **Those that teach things contrary to sound doctrine** are to be disciplined.

1. **Romans 16:17** – “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”
2. Sound doctrine and doctrine that sounds good may be two separate doctrines.
3. Defend the truth against false teachers.

D. **One who habitually forsakes the assembly** is walking disorderly and should be withdrawn from.

1. **Hebrews 10:25** – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”
2. A fellow evangelist said: “Forsaking the assembly is not the worst” sin among brethren, but it is probably the most widespread.”
3. Forsaking the assembly is usually one of the first steps toward involvement in other sins. Check it out!
4. Faithful brethren will endeavor to attend all the services.
 - a. A least once on Sunday because worship on the Lord’s Day is commanded.

- b. Failure to attend the other services is to disobey the elders who established other meeting times in addition to the main service (Sunday morning).
- c. Failure to attend on Sunday night, Wednesday nights, or during Gospel meetings, etc. is walking disorderly.
 - 1. **Hebrews 13:17** – “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”
 - a. Are you obeying the elders when they schedule services and you willfully do not attend. If so, how are you obeying by staying away.
 - b. Are you being submissive to the elders when they ask you to attend and you deliberately do not do it? If so, how are you showing submission?
 - c. When we give our account for you we will have to tell God what He already knows . . . you would not obey the elders who were endeavoring to watch for your soul.
 - d. We cannot do that with joy considering your deliberate failure and refusal to attend.
 - e. The Hebrew writer said, that a report that has grief, and not joy, “would be unprofitable for you.”
 - f. Remember, God is the one that told you to obey and submit, because elders are trying to help you reach Heaven.
 - 2. Brethren, think about these things. I have read to you from the Bible. Repent and stop walking disorderly in this and all other matters.

E. Bro. Ed Smithson authored a book entitled, *The Forgotten Commandment*. It has to do with the subject of this series of lessons on church discipline. Of its fourteen chapters, two (chapters 6 and 7) have to do with those who should be disfellowshipped. He lists these:

- 1. Those who trespass against a brother and will not repent. Matthew 18:15-17; Matthew 5:23-24
- 2. Those who are immoral in their conduct. I Corinthians 5:1-5
- 3. Those who walk disorderly (II Thessalonians 3:6). He lists six areas:
 - a. Lying. James 3:14
 - b. Profane and foul speech. Colossians 3:8
 - c. Heretics. Titus 3:10
 - d. Busybodies, Tattlers, and backbiters. II Thessalonians 3:11
 - e. Covetousness. Romans 1:29
 - f. Forsaking the assembly. Hebrews 10:25

QUESTION #8 - WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL PROCEDURE IN CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE?

A. First, the certainty of the guilt or innocence of the accused must be established.

1. In the Old Testament we read that if charges were made against the inhabitants of a city (such as serving other gods) they were to be smitten.
2. **Deuteronomy 17:2-7** tells what should be done before the smiting takes place

"If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel,

then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you."

- b. This passage illustrates the importance of the principle of making a proper inquiry.
- c. **Brethren, any time the purity of the church and the will of God is put in jeopardy by the misconduct or possible misconduct of a member of that congregation, the church has a right to inquire.**

B. Second, the disorderly must be warned and vividly impressed about his conduct.

1. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** – “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”
2. **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.”
 - a. Matthew 18 deals with resolving private matters between brethren.

b. Nonetheless, the principle of warning is again presented.

C. Third, **there must be a diligent effort to restore the individual.**

1. **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.”
2. **James 5:19-20** – “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”
3. Many types of efforts:
 - a. Visits
 - b. Cards
 - c. Letters
 - d. Telephone calls
 - e. Email
 - f. Fax
 - g. Etc. Use what is at your disposal to try and reach them for Christ!

D. Fourth, **the Lord’s discussion of private and public offenses reveals some steps involved in corrective discipline.**

1. While Matthew 18:15-17 deals with private matters between brethren, it does offer up some steps helpful in dealing with corrective discipline.
2. **Matthew 18:15-17** – “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.
 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.'
 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.”
3. The situation described in Matthew 18 starts out as a private matter, but may grow into a public matter.
4. Remember that every step taken is for the purpose of gaining the brother.
5. If all efforts fail then “let him be to you as a heathen and a publican.”

E. If after guilt has been established, warning has been given, efforts to restore have been exerted, the disorderly refuse to repent, then fellowship must be withdrawn as the final effort to lead one to repentance.

QUESTION #9 - WHAT IS TO BE OUR ACTION TOWARD AND TREATMENT OF ONE DISFELLOWSHIPED?

A. First, **the whole church must administer and support the action.**

1. **1 Corinthians 5:4-5** – “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, 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.”
2. The whole congregation was required to be involved, for discipline was to be ministered by the entire body.
 - a. Not just the elders.
 - b. Not just the deacons.
 - c. Not just the Bible class teachers.
 - d. The entire congregation.
3. Since the church is expected to concur in the action taken, every mature member is entitled to know the facts in the case.
4. The elders will have the facts well in hand, and even witnesses if necessary, to present to the congregation.
5. Once the case is presented and proven, God expects every member to support the action so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

B. Second, **he is to be treated as a heathen and a publican.**

1. **Matthew 18:17** – “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” (“publican,” KJV).
2. In other words, when all efforts have failed to restore him and fellowship is withdrawn, he is to be treated as we properly treat men of wicked habits.

C. Third, **he is to be avoided.**

1. **Romans 16:17** – “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”
2. Our action toward such a one should leave no doubt that we love him, but fellowship cannot be restored without repentance.

D. Fourth, **we are to have no company with such a one.**

1. **2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** – “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.
Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”.

2. Keeping company means to feel, enjoy, and have delight.
3. The withholding of fellowship so dear to the hearts of men brings forcefully to the offender’s conscience a sense of guilt which he must feel before he is willing to repent.
 - a. In view of the fact that our action is for the purpose of bringing the disorderly one to a sense of guilt, we are not to regard him as an enemy but as an erring brother who in an unrepentant state is his own worst enemy.
 - b. Accordingly, we are to admonish him, not as an enemy, but as a brother whose soul is precious in our sight, as well as in the sight of God.
 - c. We can admonish and exhort with tenderness, sympathy, conviction, and humbleness, but at the same time with a firmness in adhering to the word of God is shown by our refusal to share companionship and association with the fellow who has broken ranks as well as might a soldier in an army.

E. Fifth, **we cannot engage in a social meal with him.**

1. If you think you can, then consider **1 Corinthians 5:11** – “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner-- not even to eat with such a person.”

F. Sixth, **we must stand ready to forgive and receive him back into fellowship when he repents.**

1. Paul, talking about the same brother of 1 Corinthians 5, gives this inspired admonition recorded in **2 Corinthians 2:6-8** – “This punishment which was inflicted 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 up with too much sorrow.
 - 8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.”
2. Be prayerful for their return.

QUESTION #10 - WHAT ARE SOME OBJECTIONS TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

A. Objection #1: **Some eldership refuse to practice corrective discipline for fear of “trouble” in the local church.**

1. Brethren, we must obey God regardless of the cost. **Acts 5:29** – “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

2. We must have faith and courage to obey God regardless of the opposition.
3. We must have faith that our brethren will not “run off” if properly taught about discipline and the case is handled right.
4. We must realize that if a member constantly opposes obedience to God’s will on this point, even after proper teaching, such a one will probably oppose some other point with which he does not agree.

B. Objection #2: **Some argue that withdrawal is not necessary . . . just simply refuse to use the brother.**

1. Such an objection reveals total ignorance about the nature and purpose of discipline.
2. Although you should not use an unfaithful member in a responsible role in the congregation, certainly you would not use one who has been withdrawn from and has refused to repent.

C. Objection # 3: **When one ceases to assemble with the saints, he has withdrawn himself and the church does not need to take any further action.**

1. The purpose of discipline fails when this attitude is followed.
2. While the choice to leave is his, the responsibility of the church does not end there. It must now do its part.
3. Certainly, some by this time do not care what the church does toward them.
4. Remember, even though one has withdrawn himself, he is still lost.
5. Failure to withdraw from one who has withdrawn himself is failure to obey God’s commandment..
6. **It is the church that withdraws . . . not the sinner.**
7. Bro. Bobby Wade, in the Firm Foundation, July 18, 1967, lists seven things that are not accomplished when the disorderly “withdraws himself.”
 - a. One: The offender does not know he has been withdrawn from.
 - b. Two: He does not realize that he has been delivered “back to Satan” 1 Corinthians 5:5
 - c. Three: The faithful members of the church do not know he has been withdrawn from and may even disobey a divine command.
 - d. Four: He is not ashamed, but usually is “puffed up.” II Thessalonians 3:14
 - d. Fifth: The primary purpose of all discipline is not accomplished. I Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-7
 - f. Sixth: The church is subjected to corrupting influences. I Corinthians 5:2
 - g. Seventh: The world doesn’t know he has been withdrawn from. So far as they know, **our silence equals condoning his behavior**, and like

David of old, we have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

8. To leave those alone who have withdrawn from us, is to remove the last hope for them who are in the throes of hell.

D. Objection # 4: **“We are not to judge.”**

1. They refer to **Matthew 7:1** – “Judge not, that you be not judged.”
2. There are certain types of judgment commanded by God.
 - a. Matthew 7:15-20 - Judging fruit . . . meaning true doctrine and false doctrine.
 - b. Romans 13:4 - Government judging evil and evil doers.
 - c. II Timothy 4:1-4 - False teachers and false doctrine.
 - d. Matthew 15:9-13 - Men doing what God has not authorized.
3. Matthew 7:1 condemns judgment by one doing the same things. **Romans 12:1** – “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.”
4. Judging the right or wrong of what others are doing by our own likes and dislikes is forbidden. Romans 14
5. Judging the motives behind the deed is forbidden.

E. Objection # 5: **The parable of the tares teaches that both wheat and tares are to grow together until the harvest.**

Matthew 12:24-43

1. Friends, this parable has nothing whatsoever to do with the withdrawal of fellowship.
2. Furthermore, the field in which both good and bad seed were sown, and the kingdom out of which both were gathered, are the same; but the field is the world, and therefore the kingdom is the world.

F. Objection #6: **We all sin, therefore no one has the right to cast a stone at another.**

1. They base that statement on John 8:7.
2. An individual that is practicing the sin that he condemns in another does not have the right “to cast a stone” and is without excuse according to Romans 2:1
3. The law of Moses made provision for those who sinned through ignorance (Leviticus 4:2, 13, 22, 27; 5:15-19), but the soul that sinned presumptuously was to be cut off (Numbers 15:24-31; Deuteronomy 17:12). David asked for forgiveness for secret sins, but asked to be kept back from presumptuous sins. Psalm 19:12-13

4. Even an envious divided church like Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) was to exercise discipline which they could not have done if this objection be true.
5. Those who confess their sins daily (I John 1:9) and recognize their own weakness (Galatians 6:1) not only have the right to “inspect fruit”, but are commanded to do so (Matthew 7:13-15).

G. Objection #7: **Some believe that the lack of elders relieve brethren of the responsibility of practicing church discipline.**

1. No responsibility of the church can be neglected simply because a congregation does not have elders. I cannot think of a single command the Lord would set aside under such circumstances.
2. Many congregations have existed for years without elders.
 - a. They are just as scriptural as those with elders, provided they are striving and working toward qualifying men to serve.
 - b. However, maybe not as complete, but scriptural.
 - c. Certainly scriptural qualifications must be met before elders can be appointed.
3. Should a brother ask, “When you have do not have elders, how do you take care of such matters?”
 - a. Answer: In the same manner you take care of other matters in the church.
 - b. You take care of church discipline in exactly the same manner other business of the church is cared for.
4. Perish the thought that because a congregation lacks elders:
 - a. The gospel is not preached and souls led to Christ.
 - b. The church fails to meet for worship.
 - c. Benevolence is not practiced.
 - d. Church discipline is not practiced.

QUESTION #11 - WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTED HELPS OR PROCEDURES IN DISCIPLINE CASES?

- A. Review visits, letters, announcements to the congregation to help, time frames, etc. These decisions fall in the realm of expediency.
- B. Suggestions regarding the final visit before the actual withdrawal takes place.
 1. “Bro. or sis. _____ it has been _____ months since you attended the services.” “Bro. or sis. _____ your conduct has, and continues to bring reproach upon the Lord and His church.”

2. “You realize that as a Christian, you have a responsibility to God and to the church.”
 - a. Answer: _____
 - b. They should answer yes. If not, they need to explain their answer.

3. “Do you consider yourself a faithful Christian?”
 - a. Answer: _____
 - b. If proper efforts have been taken, he should be fully conscious that he’s very unfaithful.

4. “How many people have contacted you or been to see you and talk with you about your unfaithfulness?”
 - a. Answer: _____
 - b. By the time this question is asked, if the elders, the preacher, and the mature members have done their job, he should be able to name several.

5. “Have we failed you in some way? Have we been patient with you?”
 - a. Answer: _____
 - b. He may name something that the church has done or not done that’s been a stumblingblock. If valid, try to correct it. Enough time should have elapsed that it is obvious patience has been manifested.

6. “Do you know what the Bible teaches about the church’s responsibility if you continue your present course of action?”
 - a. Answer: _____
 - b. Some will know and some won’t.

7. “We would like to read a few verses from the Bible with you.”
 - a. Deuteronomy 13:14 “There is no doubt about your guilt, is there?”
 - b. I Thessalonians 5:14 “How many times have we warned you and exhorted you?”
 - c. Galatians 6:1 “We have tried time and time again to restore you.”
 - d. James 5:19-20 “We have tried to convert you from the error of your way.”
 - e. Since all these efforts have failed you, then, if you continue your present course, we must obey these scriptures:
 1. Read: I Corinthians 5:5, 11-13
 2. Read: II Thessalonians 3:6
 3. Read: II Thessalonians 4:15

8. “Do you want us to withdraw fellowship from you?”
 - a. Answer: _____
 - b. If *no*, then ask him when he plans to change his life and be restored. Get a definite commitment.
 - c. If *yes*, or *I don’t care*, then tell him that he leaves us no choice.

9. Leave three important thoughts with him.
 - a. Unless you are restored and change your life in _____ days/weeks, etc. (set a definite time) your name will be read publicly and withdrawal will take place.
 - b. If this step becomes necessary, we want you to know that we still love you and will be praying for your restoration. I Corinthians 5:1-5
 - c. We will stand ready to receive you back into fellowship . . . but the next step is up to you.

C. After this final visit is made and before withdrawal takes place, let the congregation know.

1. Inform them of the efforts put forth toward the erring brethren.
2. Ask the congregation to try and reach them.
3. This procedure does several things.
 - a. It obeys the Lord’s command to tell the church. Matthew 18:15-18
 - b. It gives every member an opportunity to put forth an effort and one might succeed where others fail.
 - c. It keeps down later criticism such as “I wish I had known about it. I believe I could have led him back.”
 - d. It lets the congregation know that all efforts are being exhausted to lead a brother or sister back to Christ.

D. If at the end of the time given the brother or sister, and he still has not repented and been restored, a public announcement of withdrawal is made, and the congregation is urged to support the action in the hope that the brother or sister might be brought to repentance.

CONCLUSION:

- A. I Corinthians 5 contains the best definition and actions of church discipline by the church found in the entire New Testament.
1. One: It tells us what church discipline is. Verses 2, 5, 7-13
 2. Two: It tells you that church discipline is to be exercised with urgency. Verses 3 & 7
 3. Three: Church discipline is to be exercised by the authority of Christ. Verses 4-5

4. Four: Church discipline is to be exercised by the church and that publicly. Verse 4
5. Five: The purpose of church discipline is clearly set forth—the salvation of the erring brother’s soul. Verses 5-7
6. Six: It was also for the purpose of keeping the church pure and preventing sin from spreading. Verses 5-7
7. Seven: It clearly tells you upon whom discipline is to be exercised. Verses 9-11
8. Eight: It tells you what our treatment should be toward those who are disciplined. Verses 9-10
9. Nine: All objections raised on the exercising of church discipline are clearly answered in this chapter.
10. Ten: It, along with 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, shows clearly that church discipline will work.
11. Eleven: It, along with 2 Corinthians 2:6-8, shows the treatment we should extend to those who return.
12. Twelve: It makes it very clear that discipline is a test or proof of us before God.

B. In all these scriptures, the apostle Paul teaches that Christians cannot afford to fellowship wicked men in the church.

1. That some, by their sins, become unfit for the association of the Christian.
2. They are to be put away from among Christians to the end that they understand they are no longer accepted in the company of God’s people. Notice I said “accepted” not “welcomed” if they repent.
3. They have cast their lot with the devil.
4. This attitude of the Christian toward a sinful brother is for the purpose of putting him to shame and bringing him back to repentance.
5. So long as his sins are overlooked by his brethren in the Lord, he is not likely to feel the need to turn from them.
6. He must be made to understand that he will be lost if he does not repent.
7. The church must be kept pure. Sin left unrepented of can contaminate the congregation.
8. Brethren, truth must never be compromised in this or any other matter.
9. When there is a general disregard for authority in the world, eventually it will find its way into the church. Is that not true today?
 - a. Many couples living openly in sin while the church sits back and does nothing about it. “Touchy subject”
 - b. One of the reasons why they are so free about their practice of that which is not right is that they know no one is going to try to do anything about it. Brethren, this must change.

C. An elder once said: “I just cannot bring myself to withdraw fellowship. It is not my nature.”

1. With all due respect, he should resign or, if he does not, he should be asked by the other elders to do so.
2. Church discipline is not a matter to be accepted or rejected as we please.
3. It is a command in the Scriptures, and if a man who serves the church as an elder cannot obey all commands, he is out of place.

D. Brethren & friends, in this series of lessons we have asked eleven important questions regarding church discipline.

1. What is the Meaning of Discipline?
2. Is Discipline a Bible Subject?
3. What are the Responsibilities of the Elders in Discipline?
4. What are the Responsibilities of Each Member in Instructive (Preventive) Discipline?
5. What is Corrective Discipline?
6. What are the Purposes of Corrective Discipline?
7. Upon Whom is Corrective Discipline to be Administered?
8. What is the Spiritual Procedure in Corrective Discipline?
9. What Should be Our Treatment on One Disfellowshipped?
10. What are some Objections to Church Discipline?
11. What are Some Suggested Procedures in Discipline Cases?

E. Now, that all of these questions have been asked and answered, let me ask one more: “Where do we go from here?”

F. God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation