

# ***Church Discipline***



## **468) Who did God put in charge of the local church?**

- A. Any organization of men needs a leader. Whether in a family or in the church, without a designated leader there would be confusion and chaos. God has set leadership in the church to serve both God and men.

"Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

1COR 11:3 NIV

- B. God has set Christ as the head of the church. In His physical absence, God has given "gifts" of leadership to the church to lead and guide it.
- C. These "gifts" of leadership are the five-fold ministry: Apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Assisting these leaders, God raised up supporting leadership such as elders and deacons.
- D. While God is the great shepherd, the pastor is the under-shepherd responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the local church.
- E. In today's multiple ministry churches, the senior pastor is responsible to provide overall leadership to the church. He would also have other staff ministers and volunteers to assist him in doing the work of the ministry.

"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."

EPH 5:23 NIV

"This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." ... [11] It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [12] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13] until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

EPH 4:8, 10-13 NIV

#### 469) What is a disciple?

- A. A disciple is one who willingly submits himself to Christ by submitting himself to God's designated leadership in the church. He learns the disciplines necessary to become a useful and productive servant.
- B. An integral part of training is correction, discipline, and if required, punishment.

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

JOHN 15:8 NIV

"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, [6] because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.' [7] Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? [8] If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. [9] Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! [10] Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. [11] No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

HEB 12:5-11 NIV

#### 470) What is church discipline?

- A. The Biblical concept of discipline incorporates the principle of teaching and training with correcting and (if need be) rebuking.
- B. Teaching would cover not just areas of Biblical doctrine, but also moral and social (secular and church) behavior.
- C. Church discipline includes setting the rules and regulations for the local church and enforcing those rules.
  - 1. Being part of a local body is a privilege, not a right. With the privilege comes the responsibility of submitting to the church leadership and the church rules.
- D. Church discipline is directed at those who claim to be Christians.
  - 1. The unsaved cannot yet be held to the high standards of Christ.
  - 2. After they are saved and they become a new creature, they must be trained in righteousness.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MATT 28:19-20 NIV

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17] so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2TIM 3:16-17 NIV

"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

HEB 13:17 NIV

#### 471) What is the purpose of church discipline?

A. To train the ignorant.

1. Some people violate God's commands because they don't know any better. As people sit under the Word of God, they learn what God expects of them and are given an opportunity to obey and be blessed.

"They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. [9] Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, 'This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.' For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law."

NEH 8:8-9 NIV

B. To maintain order.

1. When a group agrees to an orderly set of rules, more can be accomplished and more people can benefit from the presentation. If a worship service is chaotic, everyone misses out.

"Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. [40] But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

1COR 14:39-40 NIV

C. To protect the sheep.

1. Not everyone who comes to church wants to worship God and bless the body of Christ. Some come to exploit the innocent. Church discipline provides the leadership with a means to protect the unsuspecting.

"They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,"

2TIM 3:6 NIV

"But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -bringing swift destruction on themselves. [2] Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. [3] In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping."

2PETER 2:1-3 NIV

D. To restrain the rebellious.

1. Church discipline can turn a rebel from his foolishness and save him much pain at the hands of an angry God.

"Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their

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iniquities."

PSA 107:17 NIV

"The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother."

PRO 29:15 NIV

E. To maintain moral purity.

1. When a church allows moral compromise within its midst, it risks the spread of sin throughout its entire membership.

"Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?"

1COR 5:6 NIV

"For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."

JUDE 1:4 NIV

F. To maintain doctrinal purity.

1. There are many who, for their own reasons, do not want the truth to be taught. If they are not dealt with, the church will be side-tracked and falsehood will be spread.

"Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. [4] This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. [5] We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."

GAL 2:3-5 NIV

"As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer [4] nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work-which is by faith."

1TIM 1:3-4 NIV

"If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, [4] he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions"

1TIM 6:3-4 NIV

### 472) What is the difference between private and public discipline?

- A. When we sin against God in private, God will give us opportunity to repent and settle the issue privately. If we steadfastly refuse to deal with our private sin, God will expose us publicly.
- B. If our sin becomes known publicly, we must deal with it in a public manner. Not only must we repent privately before God, but we must publicly repent, apologize and take whatever steps are necessary to set the issue right.

1. If you offend your family, you must apologize to your family, but not to the world. If you offend your spouse in front of a group of friends, your apology needs to be shared with that group. If your offense was broadcast on national TV, you need to apologize to the nation.
2. If you are a public official or personality caught in misconduct, your apology needs to be public. Failure to deal with your sin publicly will discredit not only yourself, but all those who share your position or level of influence.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16] But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'"

MATT 18:15-16 NIV

"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. [3] What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs."

LUKE 12:2-3 NIV

#### 473) What methods are used in church discipline?

- A. Preaching the word of God.
1. The simple preaching of the word is a powerful way to influence and change the hearts of men.

"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction."

2TIM 4:2 NIV

- B. Supervision
1. Many problems can be solved if the issue is addressed when the problem arises. One title of a church elder (bishop) is "overseer." Leadership is to watch over the flock to protect and correct.
  2. This may involve removing a person from their place of responsibility for a time until the issue of concern is properly addressed.

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

ACT 20:28 NIV

- C. Direct, loving confrontation
1. Many times a brother can be turned around by simply confronting him with his sin. If he refuses to hear you, Jesus instructed us to return with others and try again.

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

GAL 6:1 NIV

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16] But if he will not listen, take

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one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

MATT 18:15-16 NIV

"So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. [4] If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

LUKE 17:3-4 NIV

- D. Put the person out of the church.
1. If a person who claims to be a born again Christian refuses to obey after repeated requests, it may be necessary to put the person out of the local church.
  2. This action is called by many different names: disfellowship, shun, excommunicate, "deliver over to Satan." It involves telling the person that because of their unrepentant attitude, they are no longer welcome in the local church.
  3. This removal from the church has the following effects.
    - a. The person is not allowed to take part in any aspect of church life. This removal from the local body will bring a sense of shame to the person.
    - b. The covering of protection that the church provides is removed. As a result, they become more vulnerable to the attack of the devil. That is why the Apostle Paul called it "handing" him "over to Satan."
  4. The purpose of such extreme measures is not just to punish, but to see repentance, reconciliation and restoration take place. Certain people fail to recognize the seriousness of their misbehavior until they face serious repercussions. The hope is that during their isolation, like the prodigal son, they will repent and return to the Father.
    - a. The church must be willing to receive the truly repentant back into the fellowship.

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

MATT 18:17 NIV

"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."

ROM 16:17 NIV

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. [2] And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? [3] Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. [4] When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, [5] hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful

nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."

1COR 5:1-5 NIV

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! [18] I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. [19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' [20] So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

LUKE 15:17-20 NIV

#### **474) How is church discipline applied to a church leader?**

- A. When a church leader falls into sin or doctrinal error, he should be dealt with by the church leadership. It is not the duty nor responsibility of the congregation to discipline a leader.
- B. Accusations against a leader should be taken seriously by both the congregation and the leadership.
  - 1. No accusation should be received against a leader unless it can be substantiated by the testimony of two or more people. Those people must be willing to publicly make the accusations. This guards against a disgruntled person waging an anonymous smear campaign.
  - 2. Legitimate accusations should be investigated and if they are found to be true, appropriate discipline administered. If they are false, appropriate apologies should be made, or if necessary, discipline should be administered to those who made the false accusations.
- C. The church is more important than our being right or wrong. If we are not satisfied with how an issue was settled, we are not to act in such a way as to split the church or scatter the sheep. If we do, we will answer to God for a far larger sin. It would be better to quietly leave the fellowship than to harm the body of Christ.

"When Peter came to Antioch, I (Paul) opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. [12] Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. [13] The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. [14] When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

GAL 2:11-14 NIV

"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. [20] Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning."

1TIM 5:19-20 NIV

"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."

PSA 105:15 NIV

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"But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD'S anointed and be guiltless?"

1SAM 26:9 NIV

"Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. [2] It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."

LUKE 17:1-2 NIV



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group Leaders: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Homework for Chapter 31

**Please answer the following questions from the textbook in full sentences and return to your Group Leaders next week.**

1) What is Church Discipline?

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2) What are the six purposes of Church Discipline?

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3) What is the difference between public and private discipline?

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4) Name two methods of church discipline.

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5) What does it mean to "deliver a person over to Satan?" Why would it be used?

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6) How is discipline applied to a church leader?

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