

You and Church Discipline

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It's kind of sad and it's kind of good—we're finishing up our series on the Church. I'm glad because I wanted to preach a whole series on every sermon, and I've been having a nightmare every week trying to not say everything I wanted to say. I'm glad I can just go back into Luke and creep through the passage at a snail's pace and not have to worry about saying everything there is [to say] on a particular subject.

This morning we're looking at you and church discipline, so if you have your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew 18, which is where we're going to launch from, [and] which I'm sure a lot of you know as “the church discipline passage.”

It was about five years ago when we started looking for a music pastor at Calvary Bible Church. We had a process [with] a committee that would screen people and then send them on to me. I'd talk to them, and I'd send them down the line to the elders. I talked to several men, and I was amazed at how little they knew about worship. I was pretty floored about it, actually. I would ask them basic Bible questions about worship and what that meant. These men were pastors of churches and [yet] didn't seem to have a clue about worship. I thought, “Man, is this how they all are?” [I] start[ed] getting discouraged after a while. They had no idea [what] shepherding [is]. Their goal [seemed to be just] to have professional-sounding music and drama. So anyway, we were going through [this process, and]

I was looking for somebody with a biblical philosophy of ministry, [who] understood what worship was, understood key verses and the basics about worshipping, and shepherding, and how [it] works.

Well, in the providence of God, God brought us the name of one Edward Willis. I called him up. He [didn't] know me, [and] I [didn't] know him. I said, "Hey, I'm Pastor Jack Hughes," and I told him a bit about Calvary Bible Church. Almost the first thing out of his mouth [was] a question. What do you suppose that question was? "Do you guys do church discipline?" I want you to know, when he asked that, I thought, "Oh, yes!" Now, I tried to hold it all back, and [said calmly], "Well, yes, we do." But inside, man, I was like, "Oh! This is the guy! I know it is! We've got to get him!" Why? Why did that question, "Do you guys do church discipline?" excite me? [First, it's] because it told me that Edward wanted to obey all [of] the Bible. You may think, "Well, yeah," [but] most churches don't.

Second, it told me that he wanted to be involved in a church that actually loved people. Third, it told me that he wanted to be involved in a church that loved holiness and purity. Fourth, it told me [that] he wanted to be involved in a church that wanted to worship in Spirit and truth [see John 4:23–24]. Finally, it told me he wasn't a man pleaser. That one question is so critical. If you go shopping for churches, if you have to move somewhere, that is the question [you should ask] because it draws a line and separates about ninety percent of the churches out of consideration.

If you are sitting out there, [wondering], "How do you get all that out of that question?" you're going to find out this morning. Before we look at the whole subject of church discipline, [however], what I want to do is define two key concepts. These are pretty easy, but I want to get [them] out here because a lot of times if you don't understand these, then you're confused about everything else. The first is sin. What is sin? Sin is to violate the revealed will of God in either thought or deed to any degree. It's not just murdering, committing adultery, and robbing banks. [People often think] those are sins, but the rest [aren't] a big deal. No, any violation to any degree of God's infinite standard of holiness is a sin. So, that's what we

know about sin. Romans 14:23 says: “Whatever is not from faith is sin.” If your conscience is going off and you do it anyway, you’re sinning. James 4:17 says: “Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.” [If] you know what’s right [and] you do what’s wrong, it’s a sin. First John 3:4 says: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” [Sin is] any violation of God’s Word.

We know from past sermons in this series that all Christians sin. We saw that from 1 John 1:8, 10. All Christians sin. John actually says, “If you say you don’t have any sin, by the way, you’re a liar and the truth is not in you.” So does that mean, when we talk about church discipline, [that] everybody should be disciplined out of the church because we’re all sinners? Who’s going to be here on Sunday? This is the confusion that a lot of people have when we start talking about church discipline, because they [think], “Well, sinners are to be disciplined, and I’m a sinner. Hit me, I’m the guy.” This is what you need to understand: There’s a difference between Christians who sin, confess their sin, repent of it, and pursue righteousness and the person who sins, enjoys it, maybe hides it, enjoys it some more, doesn’t confess it, [and] doesn’t repent of it. That person is [in] what is called “unrepentant sin,” and he is the candidate for church discipline. This morning, when we talk about the person in sin, that’s who I’m talking about, not just your average Christian who sins all the time, and confesses it, and pursues righteousness.

Turn to Matthew 18, if you haven’t already. You can find a Bible in the pew if you don’t have one. It would be good to follow along as we go. [Look at] Matthew 18:15 and following:

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED**. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the

church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. [18:15–17]

Here we have a very clear, simple, but inclusive text on church discipline—probably one of the clearest [regarding] steps and procedures found anywhere in the Bible. From this text, we learn about three different categories of truth that you need to understand. First we learn about the people involved in church discipline; [second,] the process of church discipline; and then [third,] the motive, or purpose, of church discipline. Let's look at these three and then hopefully by the end [of this sermon] you'll have a better understanding of church discipline.

Look at [Matthew 18:]15, where we begin to understand [who] the people [are who are] involved in the whole process. “If your brother sins,” now just stop there. Notice that the first person you need to see is your brother. This is the person who sins. Obviously he's not talking about somebody who sins and confesses; he's talking about somebody who sins and doesn't confess and repent of it. Otherwise there would be no need to confront him. We are all in the boat of sinning, but we're not all in the boat of sinning and not confessing or repenting of it. So, the first person is the sinner. The second person mentioned in the text is “you.” Look at the beginning of verse 15: “If *your* brother sins, go show him his fault in private; if he listens to *you*” [emphasis added]. You are the second person. That means all of you, that means me, that means every one of us. It is our job to do church discipline whenever we see our brother in sin.

There's something here that I need to talk about just because I know if I don't there will be fifty of you after the service [coming to ask me about it]. Your Bible might read, if you don't have the New American Standard Bible, “[If your brother] sins *against you*” [emphasis added]. That [translation] is a little bit different because [you might think], “I don't need to do anything unless it's a direct sin against *me*.” See, if you see your brother is in sin, if it's any sin, a generic sin, then [you're] responsible for [him if he] sins in any way that [you] see and [that he] won't turn from. But if it's “against

you,” then you don’t have to deal with it—[a generic sin]—because it’s not about [you].

So, it makes a huge difference as far as the interpretation of this passage [goes], and the question is: Why would all these other versions translate it “sins against you,” and yet the New American Standard translates it “sins.” This is why: If you look up in verse 6, and you look at the whole context of the passage, this is what you see. First, the disciples are talking about who is going to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus basically says [that] the humble person who becomes like a child [will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven]. “And, by the way,” he says, “if anybody causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better if he put a millstone around his neck and jumped into the sea.” The whole point here is that you need to humble yourself to be great, and that you need to make sure you don’t cause one of God’s little ones, that is, a fellow believer—“who believes in Me”—to stumble because you’re going to be in trouble if you do. Go try putting a millstone around your neck—a very large stone—and throwing it into the depths of the sea, and you’ll have an idea of how much trouble you’ll be in. That’s what He’s saying here. Obviously in this statement here, the little one—the believer—is being sinned against by somebody else. So that’s one reason why [other Bible translations] put [“against you”] in here.

Second, if you look at verses 7–11, it talks about stumbling blocks—those people who sin against other people by leading them into sin. That’s what a stumbling block is, literally a “skandalon,” somebody who, by their behavior, or words, or tempting, leads one of God’s little ones into sin. They sin against you. Not only that, if you look down to verse 21, right after our text, “Then Peter came and said to Him, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’” And so we say, “Ah ha! I remember last week; I remember the bridge illustration and I remember [that] if [the water is] coming this way toward the bridge and it’s going that way after the bridge, then it’s going that way under the bridge.” So, we should put in “sins against you.” Why wouldn’t the NASB do that?

This is why: Because all [of] the oldest and most reliable manuscripts don't have that phrase. Mmm.

[This] get[s you] into one of these difficulties where [you wonder], "Uh, should I go with the ancient manuscripts, or should I go with the context?" Well, not only did [the NASB translators] leave it out because of the ancient manuscripts, but if you look at [Matthew 18:]12–13, there is this little parable:

What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray.

Then [Jesus] talks about God not [wanting] any of His little ones to perish. So, in verses 12–14, the clear, implied, immediate near context [to verse 15] is going after sheep who stray, and that is why the NASB translated it [as just "sins" instead of "sins against you"], which I think is best. If you ever have to go with the near context or the immediate near context, the immediate near context always carries more weight.

The good thing is [that] the Bible teaches both views. So, regardless of how you interpret this text, you're not off the hook, as we shall see. You don't get to say, "Well, I don't have to deal with anybody unless they sin against me personally," because we will see from other texts that, yes, you do. But I think this text is talking about sins in general. There are other reasons, [and] I'll give them to you in a minute.

We have this person who sins and we have you, the person who sees [that] a sin has taken place and [that] the person hasn't turned from it. Maybe they have some habit, maybe they have some deed, maybe something you've come across, [and] you realized, "Man, that guy is in sin, and he doesn't seem to be turning from it or [to be] bothered by it. He's still doing it." There is a third group of people [that] is involved sometimes [in

church discipline]. Look at [Matthew 18:]16: “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you.” Here you have these “one or two more with you,” which makes two or three, including yourself. This is just a couple other people who are brought in to keep it private, keep it small, to deal with the person who is in unrepentant sin. What’s interesting is [that] the text actually quotes from Deuteronomy 19:[15], which creates another problem because Deuteronomy 19:15 is talking about a court of law. [It is saying] that you cannot convict anybody by one verbal testimony. You have to have the verbal testimony of two or three to convict [someone] in a court of law. Jesus quotes this verse and there is a question about its application. Is Jesus quoting this verse because He’s saying, “What I want you to do if you see somebody sin [is] go find somebody else who saw the same thing and bring them”? No, Jesus quotes this verse because He is saying, “Make sure there are two or three witnesses who testified to the second step of the confrontation.” That’s what the text is talking about. Jesus is saying [that] it should be on the testimony of two or three witnesses that the person has been confronted a second time.

Look at [Matthew 18:]17. It says, “If he refuses to listen to them,” which tells us something else. It tells us that not only [do] these one or two extras come to witness the confrontation, they’re participating in it because now the guy’s not listening to “them” plural, not just you. So all three [of the witnesses] are saying, “Brother, you need to turn, you need to turn. This is what the Word of God says. Turn, turn, turn.” So, really, the question of the person being in sin is not being denied, it’s just that [he’s] refusing [to listen]. Then, notice, verse 17 also [says]: “If he refuses to listen to them,” the one or two more you take with you, “tell it to the church.” Of course, the [members of the] church don’t all have to be first-hand witness[es] either—they wouldn’t be. But they all are witnesses to the confrontation and they all become participants in the confrontation process. So these are the people [involved in church discipline], just to have it clear in your minds: the person who’s sinning, the person who sees it and goes to [the person in

sin], if [the person in sin] doesn't repent, [you bring] one or two more, if [the person still] doesn't repent, [then you bring in] the church.

There is another group, which we'll look at in a minute that's kind of implied. We'll get there as we move on to our second [category of truth]: Understand the process of church discipline. You may be thinking, "I think I have it down." Well, we'll see. When we look at the process, there are things in the text here, which are kind of implied, but which are not stated explicitly. We're going to go down through the text and make a scenario that you can picture in your mind because this is really critical. A lot of times churches don't do this right. People are disciplined out of churches, and they say, "Yeah, they didn't even tell me what my sin was. They just told me I was kicked out." Then [that church has] sinned against [the person they were disciplining]. Or, [someone being disciplined would say,] "Yeah, somebody saw me doing that, and then they went to talk to the elders, and then the elders read my name and there was no second step." See? The procedure according to the Scriptures [has to be followed]. Otherwise you end up sinning against the person who is in sin.

Look at [Matthew 18:]15: "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." Here is the first step of church discipline. When you hear people talk about church discipline, what do you think of? You think of one of the elders coming up after the service, and me saying, "There's an announcement," and the elder comes up and gets out a piece of paper.

You're thinking, "Oh, no."

Then the elder says, "We're really sorry to tell you this this morning, but so-and-so has fallen. . ." and there's a big, somber, damp-rag type of announcement at the end of the service. Everybody leaves, [saying], "Ooo." That's what most people think about church discipline—this final step. But really, all church discipline, except for minor cases, happens when you see your friend, and you say, "Hey, you know what? That's not right."

He says, "Really?"

You say, "Yeah, the Scriptures say this."

He [says], “Man, I need to stop.”

You [say], “All right,” [and] you’ve done church discipline. Whenever you talk to anybody about anything in his or her life that is contrary to the Word of God, you’re doing church discipline. What should come to your mind when you hear “church discipline” is, “Oh, yeah, I have to make sure I go to people in gentleness and kindness and confront them when I see them in sin.” That’s church discipline. That’s what happens here all the time. It’s only the rare exception that [the person in sin] is so stubborn [that] he won’t turn after the one [person confronts him], after the [two or] three [witnesses confronts him], and then it has to come to the entire church.

Let’s just say there’s this new believer. The guy is growing by leaps and bounds, but he still has a lot of worldliness clinging to him. You hear him out [on the patio], and he’s using “Jesus,” and “God,” and “Lord” in irreverent ways, as filler word[s], and as an exclamation mark. So you go up to him, and you say, “Do you realize that you use the Lord’s name this way and that, and say, ‘God!’? This doesn’t honor God. This is irreverent. This is really to take or use the Lord’s name in vain.”

The guy says, “Really? Man, I’m sorry. I’ve just always done that. I never really thought about it. I’m going to try to not [do that]. Could you hold me accountable?”

“Yeah, I’ll hold you accountable. If I hear you do it, I’ll tell you.”

He says, “OK.” It’s over. You’ve done church discipline. It’s over. That happens here all the time. Praise God!

Look at [Matthew 18:]16: “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.” Let’s say you go to the guy, and you talk to him, and he says, “Listen, I don’t mean anything by it. I used to put all sorts of expletives on the end [of my sentences], but man, those have completely dropped off. You seem like you’re being a little judgmental. God knows my heart. Judge not, lest you be judged,” and he walks away. Then what? He walks away, and he’s thinking, “Well, I shut him down. He was kind of in my face, you know? I mean, I’ve got my freedoms.”

That usually causes you to do something, which is [to think], “I have to go get some more people here.” You have to go deal with it more. You usually examine your own [heart], and say, “Lord, do I have any beams in my eye [see Matthew 7:3–5]? Am I walking around with this huge beam, this big sin, that I’m not confessing in my life?” It really causes you to examine yourself. If you ever get involved in this, the first thing you think [is]: “I’m a sinner, too. I’m imperfect. I haven’t sinned until three minutes ago.” This is good because it causes you to examine your own heart. Then you do, you get right with the Lord, and then you’re going to go after the guy. You find a couple more people, and you all come to the guy, and say, “We’ve been hearing you say this. I talked to you last time, and you didn’t respond very well. Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11 say, ‘You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.’” Maybe you go to some other Scriptures that talk about not treating God holy or not reverencing Him or His name.

You give him that information, and the other people say, “You know, he’s right. You need to stop this. This isn’t good. It’s really a bad testimony. It’s worldly. You need to quit.”

The guy [says], “Man, I know you’re right because after the first confrontation my conscience has really been bothering me. I’ve been thinking. Man, I was just being prideful. I was being stubborn. I am sorry. Would you forgive me? Please help me so I don’t do that [anymore].” It’s over. You’ve done church discipline. It’s you and one or two other people and that’s all. It’s over. This happens all the time. Those two first steps are what happen all the time, and you never hear about them, and that’s good.

But what if the guy gets angry? He says, “What? What are you guys doing now, ganging up on me? You guys are legalists. Man, you’re Pharisees. I have my liberties in Christ. Besides, the Old Testament doesn’t even apply anymore! That’s your interpretation of those verses. I disagree,” and he walks away.

Then what? Look at [Matthew 18:]17: “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.” Now, in order for this to happen, you need to get the leadership involved, since the leadership is given charge to rule, manage, give oversight [to], [and] shepherd the flock. You have to go to the elders and then the elders, because they are there to make sure things are done in a proper and orderly way, investigate. They’re going to ask questions, they’re going to talk to you, they’re going to talk about the confrontation, they’re going to talk about the sin, what you told him, what he said, how he responded. They’re going to go to that person, and they’re going to say, “Hey, did these people come to you? Did they show you this?” Usually it involves another confrontation because if the elders find out [that] it’s true, and it’s not just a bit of legalism or a misinterpretation of Scripture, then the elders [say], “You do need to turn [from this sin].”

If the person says, “No, I’m not going to. I’m going to speak any way I want and you can’t tell me what to do,” then the elders set a date and they come up before the church.

They say, “Hey, we have a brother in Christ and this is his sin. These are the Scriptures it’s violating, and now we’re telling you.” The question is: Why? The man clearly falls into the example of the parable of the wayward sheep, because at this [point], when [a person] starts getting that much heat, what does he do? He quits coming to church; he quits answering his phone. He hides. He is a sheep that has gone astray. Now the church is involved in fetching him back. The entire church is to get involved, not just the elders. The elders just make the announcement.

This is where a lot of people get confused because they think that church discipline is something the elders do to people. No. Church discipline is something all of us do because we love each other. When the elders come up here and they make an announcement, that person who is in sin should get, in a church this size, 600 [to] 800 e-mails, and cards, and notes, and letters, and visits. He should be bombarded by a whole army of people—a legion of them, saying, “Brother, this is wrong, and we are praying for you. We love you. Please turn from your sin.” His mailbox should be jam-packed every

day with bundles of letters, and notes, and cards. His answering machine should be stuffed full every time he comes home. “Oh, ninety-five messages!” He turns on his cell phone and he’s got a voice mail—no, he’s got seventy-five [voice mails] all from loving people with encouraging words, exhorting him to repent, and confess, and turn from his sin. This is why the elders tell it to the church. Not so you can go, “Ooo, a dainty morsel,” and talk about it after church. “Ooo, that person is in sin. Mmm. Mmm.”

Not too long ago, we had to practice church discipline—the fourth step, or third, if you don’t include the elders. We told you [who] the person [was], we told you his sin, and we told you to get involved. The question is: Did you? If you didn’t, you sinned. You sinned against your brother, you sinned against the Lord, you sinned against this Body, and you failed to love that person. You hear people saying things like, “Church discipline doesn’t work.” You know what doesn’t work? The congregation. That’s who doesn’t work. God knows what’s best. His methods are perfect, so when He says, “This is the best way to restore somebody,” and you never see it work, it’s because it’s our fault. That’s why—the congregation is lazy, the congregation doesn’t make the effort. Each person—every husband, every wife, every high schooler, every junior higher—I don’t care who you are, I don’t care if you know the person or not, every single person contacts, calls, e-mails that person so he hears the full voice of the full church, and he’s hit by hundreds, literally hundreds, of loving, encouraging exhortations to repent. I’m telling you, that is powerful.

We’ve done it here. There have been times when people have come back [to the church]. I talked to them, and they said, “Man, I kept getting these letters from people. They kept coming. Every day I’d get them in my mailbox. I’d have this big wad. I never [used to get] any letters, [but all of a sudden] I got a whole wad day after day. At first, I was just going to throw them away, but I thought I better read them. Every time I read them, man, I just wept. I wept. Then I didn’t want to stop my sin and I’d get another batch the next day, and another batch the next day. People were calling me,

and stopping by my work, and saying, ‘Man, we’re praying for you, brother. Turn from it.’ Finally, I broke.”

The reason [this step of church discipline] usually doesn’t work is because the congregation doesn’t work. That’s what’s broken. So, when the elders get up here and make an announcement [like that], you take action because now it’s your responsibility as an entire congregation to take action. All you have to do is get out a little card, a little note, anything, and just write on there, “Hey, so-and-so, I know I don’t know you, I don’t think we’ve ever even talked, but I’m praying for you, brother. I know that God’s will is best for you. I’d encourage you to turn from this sin, and come back to church. Maybe I can get to meet you for the first time. Maybe we can have lunch together or something. Please turn back to the Lord.” Sign your name and put it out there. We’re not talking about some big treatise, [some] big volume, just write him a note. Just let him know you know his problem, you’re praying for him, and encourage him to do what’s right. I’m telling you, that kind of church discipline works. It works big time.

G. Campbell Morgan said in his commentary on this text:

Any Church of Jesus Christ is weak in the proportion in which its members allow false pity or sentiment to prevent their being faithful to this great work of attempting to show an erring brother his fault in order that he may be restored.¹

I know a lot of you have done this, and I praise God for that, but not near enough [people have participated in this aspect of church discipline]. It’s always the exception, the small minority, the remnant of faithful people. We want full-force involvement. That’s what works, not when everybody hears the announcement, and goes, “Whoa. He’s in sin,” and [then they] forget about it. “I guess he won’t be coming here anymore.” That’s not loving; that’s selfishness.

¹ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, Co., 1986), p. 232.

What happens if the person gets bombarded, [receives] hundreds of letters, and calls, and e-mails, and visits and still hardens his heart? Then what? Look at the middle of [Matthew 18:]17: “And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” The word “Gentile” is a reference to a heathen, pagan, godless person. A “tax collector” was a Jew who, like Matthew himself who [wrote] this, bought into the Roman franchise of collecting taxes so he could exploit and rob his own countrymen. Both terms describe a godless person who needs salvation—otherwise he’d never be what he is. He’s not saying, “OK, treat him as a Gentile and tax collector. Go be mean to him, scorn him, turn your nose up at him when you see him on the street.” No, Jesus called Matthew, [He] called Zaccheus, He sent Paul to preach to the Gentiles because they were godless and they needed salvation. This is made clear in 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15, where Paul, speaking of church discipline, says this:

If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Here we’re told that when someone refuses to repent of his sins when he’s caught in some trespass, “Listen, don’t associate with him anymore. Don’t fellowship with him as a fellow believer.” [That’s] qualified [with], “Don’t treat him as an enemy.”

You’re thinking, “Should I not talk to him anymore?” No, you still talk to him, but when you do talk to him, you admonish him as a brother. If you come in contact [with him], yes, you admonish. That’s what we’re supposed to be doing. This is the process of church discipline. A person is in sin, you go to him in private. [If] he doesn’t repent, [you bring] one or two more. [If] he doesn’t [repent], take it to the elders. If he still [won’t repent], take it to the church. If he still [won’t repent], you say, “This guy is not even a Christian. He needs Jesus,” and you try [to] witness to him, evangelize him,

but you don't have fellowship with him as if he's a fellow believer because he's obviously not. He doesn't love the Lord.

[The] third [category of truth is]: You need to understand the *purpose* of church discipline. This is probably one of the most misunderstood aspects of church discipline. What is the purpose? What is the motive? You talk to people, [and they say], "Church discipline sounds kind of mean, and unloving, and judgmental. Why do we do this?" Well, it's not so the elders can give an announcement and you can all go away with a bit of information. If that was it, then why do it? No, the first and primary reason is to restore somebody. Look at Matthew 18:15 again. It says right there, "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother." The first priority is obviously not punitive, not judgmental, you aren't punishing somebody; you're trying to correct his errant behavior. That's why [Matthew] says, "If he listens to you, you have won your brother." Won him what? Won him back to obedience, and righteousness, and following the Lord again. That's obviously the key purpose of the whole thing.

Turn to Galatians [6] and we'll see that there. In Galatians [6], Paul gives a single verse on church discipline, but what's great is [that] it is just loaded. This one little verse tells us a lot of great things. Galatians 6:1—notice here: "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." Restoration is obviously in view, and it's for anyone who is spiritual. That doesn't mean you have to be a spiritual giant or a leader in the church, it just means you have to be right with the Lord, walking in the Spirit, having your sins confessed, the beams out of your own eye. And, he says, "If you see anyone in any trespass," notice [that it is] not sins just against you, so even if you don't like the NASB reading of Matthew 18, here it is, so you still have to deal with it. He says, "You restore such a one, and do it gently, looking to yourself so that you are not tempted."

There are three goals mentioned in this verse. The first is: restoration of the unrepentant person. [The] second [is]: self-examination, and if you've ever had to confront anybody, you know [that] all you can think about when you have to do this is what? "Oh, I'm a sinner. Who am I to talk to him? I'm not any more righteous than he is." You're just wracked with doubts and fears because you know what a sinner you are. The only difference is [that while] you're a sinner and he's a sinner, you're confessing your [sin] and he isn't [confessing his]. [The third goal mentioned in this passage is:] protection for the greater Body, [the Church].

[There are five reasons behind the purpose of church discipline.] Church discipline is, first and foremost, [for] the restoration of the sinning brother or sister. What is another reason? Well, another—[second]—reason (and I'm not even going to give you any verses on this because you know this) [is that] Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" [John 14:15]. Paul says, "If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed" [1 Corinthians 16:22]. So we know [that] all Christians are to love the Lord. That's just [the] "abc's" of Christianity. The only way you can show love to the Lord is by obeying Him. You can't show love ever if you're disobeying. Rebellion doesn't show love to the Lord. So, Jesus says, "Practice church discipline." If you love Jesus, you will practice church discipline out of love for Him. That's clear. That's another reason we practice church discipline.

Third, we practice church discipline in order to maintain purity in the Church. We already looked at [how] when you have to go confront somebody, you examine your own self because as soon as you have to [approach someone else about his sin], it starts scaring you. You start thinking, "Man, do I have any things [I need to confess] in my life?" That's good. It's purifying. What you need to realize is [that] the Church gives the most glory to God when it's the most holy and free from sin. The Church is more zealous, it offers better worship, better evangelism, [and] grows faster in sanctification [when it is pure and holy]. Everything that is good always comes from holiness. Holiness is what makes the Church thrive like it's supposed to thrive.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 5. This is a scathing rebuke. Paul writes this chapter to the Corinthians because there was a man caught in immorality, in an incestuous relationship with his stepmother, and the Corinthians [were basically saying], “We’re so loving and we’re so kind that we’re actually tolerating this guy. We’re letting him come in and fellowship with us. Aren’t we cool? Isn’t this great? Isn’t our tolerance to be commended?” This is what Paul says. Look at 1 Corinthians 5:1[-13]:

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an

immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? [(The implied answer is nothing.)] Do you not judge those who are within the church? [(The implied answer is: of course.)] But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

That is a pretty clear passage, isn't it? It's begging for a whole series, here. The whole point that I want to get here is [that] it is not loving to not deal with a person who is in sin. It's not loving to the person, and it's not loving to the Body because [that person's] bad example will act like leaven that will permeate the Body and infect the whole Church.

We're all aware, here, of the big discussions about illegal immigrants and all that stuff. This is a perfect example [of the point of this passage]. We have laws that say you can't come into our country unless you do it in the proper ways. A bunch of people sneak in, and what happens? The businessmen like it because they can pay the people under the table, they don't have to pay taxes, they can rob from the government, they can pay [these people less], and that's great. So, everybody is kind of benefiting from all these illegal aliens. The problem is [that] now it's becoming a huge deal because we can't let all the [Afghans], and people from Iraq, and Iran, and any other country just sneak [across] our borders. [We can't] just say, "Well, we'll give you a bus ride to the border and you can go back home." So, now we're trying to be a little equitable, [and] as soon as the president says we need to do something, there's this huge uprising [among the illegal aliens]. Why? [It is] because for a long time people knew that these people were breaking the law and they weren't doing anything about it. Now [these illegal aliens] are actually on TV, saying, "We have our rights." You aren't even citizens. Go home! Rights to what? You have the right to prison, that's what your right is.

[Imagine that] you see somebody in sin, [such as], “I know that guy’s shacking up with his girlfriend, but I don’t want to lose his friendship, so I’m not going to talk to him about it.” [Or] this person’s into pornography, this person’s dressed immodestly, this person’s doing this, this person’s doing that, and this person’s doing this, [but you’re] just not going to bother [confronting them about it]. Then what happens is [that] other people [think], “Well, if that person can do it, I can do it. If that person can get away with it, then I can, [too].” Then if you ever go to confront that person, [he says], “Well, hey, I may be doing it, but I know ten other people who are doing it. So you have to deal with them, too.” No, [he has] to deal with them, [you’re] dealing with [him].

What happens is [that] the Church then becomes unholy, and when the Church is unholy, I don’t care how excited and emotional people get on Sunday, it is not giving glory to God. God demands holiness. He wants a chaste and pure Bride. It is that holy and acceptable lifestyle [that] is offered up [and that] is the acceptable sacrifice. If it’s not holy, I don’t care what people feel about it, it doesn’t give honor to God. This whole text is about that very thing. Notice [that] Paul says, “I’ve judged them,” and he says, “Are we not to judge those within the church?” I mean, there are some people who go, “Judge not, lest ye be judged.” What is that text? That’s Matthew 7:1. Jesus is saying, “Don’t judge hypocritically.” He says, “Remove the beam out of your eye, then judge.” Yes, we are to judge each other in the Church. Does that scare you? You’re commanded to do it, and if you don’t you’re sinning. It’s in there. Read it.

[When] you go through the Scriptures, [you will find] a lot of other Scriptures that talk about the need to protect the Church from false doctrine. For instance, in Titus 3:10–11, it says: “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.” We had a man here [at Calvary Bible Church] one time who was teaching false doctrine. He was going around slandering people [and] giving false accusations. We talked to him; he wouldn’t stop.

We talked to him [again]; he didn't stop. We said, "Hey, you're not welcome here. Do not come back." Why? Because we're protecting you, [that's why].

There are always people in the Church who start gathering little, disgruntled people into these huddles. They're standing out to the side, going, "Look at those people."

"Yeah, they're doing this."

"Yeah, I think this."

"Oh, me, too." They feed off of each other. That is just carnality. That is rebellion. I'm telling you, when the elders see that happening, when you see that happening, it should be like, "Beep, beep, beep, beep," [an alarm going off]. Go for it, and say, "You guys need to repent. I'm confronting you. Stop." You are to reject the factious man after the first and second warning.

A fourth reason to practice church discipline is [so] that the people in the Church would fear sinning themselves. I don't know about you, but whenever church discipline is done, [particularly the final step of bringing it before the whole church], do you ever sit out there, and think, "Man, I hope they don't do that to me!" That's good! It's like, "Man, I'm getting my act together. I don't want them reading my name."

[Do] you remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5—the couple who sold that piece of property? [That property] was theirs. The church didn't say, "Thou shalt sell your property and give it to us." It was theirs. They had the choice to sell it. They could have given an eighth, a tenth, half, whatever they wanted. But, in order to get honor from men, they decided [that] they were going to give part of the price of the property to the church, but tell the church they were giving all [of the profit]. [It was] kind of like [they were saying], "We're really sacrificing," [but only so] they could get honor from men. [Do] you know what happened? They lied to the Holy Spirit and God killed them both. They dropped dead and [people from the church] carried out their bodies. [Do] you know what the text says? "And great fear came over the whole church" [Acts 5:11]. No kidding!

Imagine we were having communion Sunday here, and one of the pastors or elders gets up here, and says, “We’re having communion.” He reads that part [in Scripture] about making sure you examine your own self, and [that you are to] judge the body rightly so you don’t eat and drink judgment to yourself. [It] talks about [how] in Corinth some people were sick and God even killed some people because they were taking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy fashion [see 1 Corinthians 11:27–30]. You’re [thinking], “Yeah, yeah,” and the bread is passed out. [They say], “OK, let’s partake,” and [crash] about fifteen people [gasp and fall to the floor]. They’re all carried outside, and then the pastor says, “Now it’s time for the wine.” Would that make you think? That is a good thing. God wasn’t trying to restore Ananias and Sapphira. He was using them as an example so that we would fear. [After the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were carried out,] the whole congregation then thought, “Man, those people dropped dead! This whole church thing is serious, man.” God wants holiness in His Church. That is a good thing. “Great fear came upon all of them.” And so, one of the reasons we do church discipline is so that we’ll all fear sinning, ourselves. [It is used] as a deterrent.

Fifth, [and] finally, we are to practice church discipline to maintain a good witness for Christ in the world. In Romans 16:17–19, Paul says this:

Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.

Notice that when they were faithful to deal with people in sin and [with] false teachers, Paul says, “Everybody is hearing about it.” That’s

why church discipline is good, because then the unbelievers go, “Man, Calvary Bible Church, they’re not like most churches. If you fall into sin and you don’t want to turn from it, they tell *everybody*. Man, the whole church comes after you! I heard that there were people lined up in front of this guy’s house! He got hundreds of letters. Man!” You might think to yourself [that] that would scare people away, [that] they’d never want to come to a legalistic church like this. But that’s not what happens. As a matter of fact, if you come to the family fellowship service and hear baptismal testimonies, there are a lot of people who say, “The reason I come here is because they do church discipline.”

Or, “The reason I came here from another church is because they do church discipline here.”

John MacArthur says he thinks that one of the most significant factors in the growth of Grace Community Church is the fact that they do church discipline. Why? [It is] because Christians who love the Lord love holiness. They want to be held accountable. They want people to love them; they want people to rescue them if they’re caught in a trespass. They’re drawn to the light. They’re drawn to the truth because they’re lovers of truth and “children of Light” [Ephesians 5:8].

Our witness is always the strongest when we’re the purest and most holy. You can go to Revelation 2 [and] look at the letters to the churches there. Jesus commends the Church of Ephesus. Do you remember why? He commends the Church of Ephesus for not tolerating wickedness and false teachers. He then goes on to rebuke the Church of Pergamum and to rebuke the Church of Thyatira. Do you know why? [It is] because they were tolerating wickedness and false teaching. He says this to Pergamum in Revelation 2:16: “Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.” How would you like Jesus to say that about this church? “I am coming to make war with you!”

“Please don’t!”

“Then get [those unrepentant sinners and false teachers] out of there!”

He wants His Church to be holy, a pure [and] chaste Bride because that's what gives Him the most glory, [and] that's what causes Christians to grow the most, to have the most joy, [and] to have the greatest impact in the world.

As you leave here today, take it upon yourself to get involved in church discipline. If you see [a] brother or sister in Christ [and] you know he or she is in sin, go to him or her in private. Very gently, very kindly, say, "I'm not very good at this. I don't want to offend you, but I see this in your life, and it's not right. The Bible says this. You need to stop." You've done church discipline. If they don't [repent], get one or two and tell them again.

If we ever have to stand up here as an elder board and say, "So-and-so is sinning," you [should] think, "I have to do something now." Every one of you, individually, [should think], "I have to do something now," and then take action [to] rescue that wayward sheep. This is how the Church grows, maintains holiness, and gives glory to God. That's why we do it. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for being able to survey all of these texts. And, Father, there were so many others I wish we could have gotten to, but we couldn't. Father, I just thank you that Calvary Bible Church is seeking to be faithful in this area. Father, I pray that all of us would be rebuked for those times when we know we should have said something and we didn't. Father, help us to be more faithful. And, Father, if we do have to go to that final step and tell it to the church, I pray [that] all of us would go home that very day and just take a few moments to do our part so that collectively, as a body, we may send one gigantic message: We love you and we want you back. Father, help us to be that way for Your glory, for the love of each other, and for our testimony in the world. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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