

TREASURING CHRIST IN THE CHURCH: Discipline

INTRODUCTION

- John L. Dagg, "When discipline leaves a church, Christ leaves with it."

What is Church Discipline?

1. Definition
 - i. Jonathan Leaman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, states, "*Church discipline is the process of correcting sin in the life of the congregation and its members. This can mean correcting sin through a private word of admonition. And it can mean correcting sin by formally removing an individual from membership. Church discipline can be done in any number of ways, but the goal is always to correct transgressions of God's law among God's people.*"
 - ii. What it is not...
 - a. A witch hunt
 - b. A violation of privacy
2. Types (formative, corrective)
 - i. Formative church discipline is the process of training Christ followers to live life apart from sin, for joy in Christ, in the local church.
 - ii. Corrective church discipline is the process of correcting the sin of Christ followers in the local church.

Biblical Foundations for Church Discipline

1. **Hebrews 12:7-17** (showing God)
2. **Matthew 18:15-20** (listening to Christ)
3. **1 Corinthians 5** (imitating Paul)
4. **Galatians 6:1**

Purposes for Church Discipline

1. Guard the reputation of Christ (**Revelation 2:19-22**)
2. Guard the witness of the church
 - i. Salt and light (**Matthew 5:13-16**)
 - ii. Distinct from the world
3. Guard the soul of the offender (**1 Corinthians 5:5**)
4. Guard those in secret sin (**1 Timothy 5:20**)

Process of Church Discipline (Matthew 18:15-20)

1. One on one (truth in love...always)
2. With a brother or sister in Christ
3. Tell it to the church (this is where elders would come in)
4. Exclude from fellowship of membership
 - i. The keys - Matthew 18:18
 - ii. John Calvin, the great Genevan Reformer, believed that the power of binding should be understood as excommunication, and loosing as reception into membership: "*But the church binds him whom it excommunicates—not that it casts him into everlasting ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and morals, and already warns him of his condemnation unless he should repent. It looses him when it receives into communion, for it makes him a sharer of the unity which is in Christ Jesus.*" (The Institutes)
 - iii. Martin Luther, "*For the dear Man, the faithful Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ, is well aware that His beloved Christians are frail, that the devil, the flesh, and the world would tempt them unceasingly and in many ways, and that at times they would fall into sin. Therefore, He has given us this remedy, the key which binds, so that we might not remain too confident in our sins, arrogant, barbarous, and without God, and the key which looses, that we should not despair in our sins.*" ("The Keys" in *Luther's Works*) - both quotes from Al Mohler's, *The Compromised Church*)

(Sinful) Occasions for Church Discipline

1. Known
2. Serious
3. Unrepentant

Prerequisites to Practice Church Discipline

1. Right understanding of the gospel
2. Right understanding of church membership
3. Right understanding of evangelism