

# **Sermon**

## **“Church Discipline”**

*Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13*

**Jeff Jackson**

**“Living For the One Who Branded Us...Jesus”**

## “The Problem of Codependency in the Church”

“Reproof is unavoidable. God’s Word demands it when a brother falls into open sin. The practice of discipline in the congregation begins in the smallest circles. Where defection from God’s Word in doctrine or life imperils the family fellowship and with it the whole congregation, the word of admonition and rebuke must be ventured. Nothing can be more cruel than the tenderness that consigns another to his sin. Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe rebuke that calls a brother back from the path of sin. It is a ministry of mercy, an ultimate offer of genuine fellowship, when we allow nothing but God’s Word to stand between us, judging and succoring. Then it is not we who are judging; God alone judges, and God’s judgment is helpful and healing. Ultimately, we have no charge but to serve our brother, never to set ourselves above him, and we serve him even when we must speak the judging and dividing Word of God to him, even when, in obedience to God, we must break off fellowship with him. We must know that it is not our human love which makes us loyal to the other person, but God’s love which breaks its way through to him only through judgment. Just because God’s Word judges, it serves the person. He who accepts the ministry of God’s judgment is helped.”

— **Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community**

### **Matthew 18:15-20**

“If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he won’t listen, take one or two more with you, so that **by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established**. If he pays no attention to them, tell the church. But if he doesn’t pay attention even to the church, let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you. I assure you: Whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven. Again, I assure you: If two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there among them.”

### **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

It is widely reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and the kind of sexual immorality that is not even tolerated among the Gentiles —a man is living with his father’s wife. And you are inflated with pride, instead of filled with grief so that he who has committed this act might be removed from your congregation. For though I am absent in body but present in spirit, I have already decided about the one who has done this thing as though I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus with my spirit and with the power of our Lord Jesus, turn that one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast permeates the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch. You are indeed unleavened, for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us observe the feast, not with old yeast or with the yeast of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. I did not mean the immoral people of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer who is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or verbally abusive, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders? Don't you judge those who are inside? But God judges outsiders. **Put away the evil person from among yourselves.**

**Alexander Strauch**

Love is not just happy smiles or pleasant words. A critical test of genuine love is whether we are willing to confront and discipline those we care for. Nothing is more difficult than disciplining a brother or sister in Christ who is trapped in sin. It is always agonizing work – messy, complicated, often unsuccessful, emotionally exhausting, and potentially divisive. This is why most church leaders avoid discipline at all costs. But that is not love. It is lack of courage and disobedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself laid down instructions for the discipline of an unrepentant believer (*Matt. 18:17-18*).<sup>1</sup>

## I. The Spirit of Discipline

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**Carl Laney**

Many people fail to make a clear distinction between punishment and discipline, and there is a very significant difference between these two concepts. Punishment is designed to execute retribution for a wrong done. Discipline, on the other hand, is to encourage the restoration of the one involved in the wrongdoing. Punishment is designed primarily to avenge a wrong and assert justice. Discipline is designed primarily as a corrective for the one who has failed to live according to the standards of the church and/or society.<sup>2</sup>

## II. The Steps of Discipline

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<sup>1</sup> *Leading With Love*, Lewis and Roth, 2006, p. 152  
<sup>2</sup> *A Guide to Church Discipline*, Bethany, 1985, p. 79

### III. The Severity of Discipline

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### IV. The Service of Discipline

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### Conclusion:

Discipline should never be taken lightly or flippantly nor can the body of Christ be avoidant about discipline because it is a service to Christ and to His body, the Church. This task falls into the hands of the Elder body in the administration of Church discipline. Much prayer, communication, and love should be the foundation of any Church discipline. It is not the desire to discipline, but it should be the will of the Elders and the body of Christ to discipline rather than allowing sin to continue to hurt the individual even if they do not see the dangerous outcome.

#### **Curtis Thomas**

Church discipline has as its objective to recover the brother to a position of obedience, to protect the integrity of the name of Christ, to purify the church, to deter sin in the congregation and to reconcile the brother to the body.