

A photograph of a person wearing a blue t-shirt, sitting with their head buried in their hands in a gesture of distress or grief. Another person's hand is placed on their right shoulder, offering comfort. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting. The image has a teal and blue color palette with a textured, painterly overlay.

Church Discipline

Proverbs 3:11-12

Objections & Questions

“do not reject the discipline of the LORD”
(Proverbs 3:11).

- Motivations behind questions and statements can be the difference between rebellion and growth.
 - Questions can be good (Luke 8:8-9) and bad (Luke 10:29).
 - Objections can be good (Matthew 15:1-3) and bad (Isaiah 30:9-11)

Objections & Questions

“do not reject the discipline of the LORD”
(Proverbs 3:11).

- Our concern – *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”* (Colossians 3:17)

Objections to Church Discipline

The parable of the wheat and tares suggests we cannot separate from the unfaithful through withdrawal, but such separation is to be left to the Lord at the end of time.

(Matthew 13:24-30)

- Fundamental rules:
 - Jesus' explanation of a parable limits specifically limits our interpretation. (vv. 36-43)
 - The word of God does not contradict itself. (cf. Matthew 18:17)

Objections to Church Discipline

The parable of the wheat and tares suggests we cannot separate from the unfaithful through withdrawal, but such separation is to be left to the Lord at the end of time.

(Matthew 13:24-30)

- The objection assumes the “*kingdom of heaven*” (v. 24) and “*His kingdom*” (v. 41) refer to the church.
 - Jesus says “*the world*” – (vv. 24-25, 37-42)
 - It does not apply to, nor contradict church discipline – 1 Corinthians 5:10, 12-13

Objections to Church Discipline

It doesn't do any good

- On what basis is this conclusion reached?
 - They don't come back? – Is church protected? Was Christ obeyed?
 - It drives people away? – What people?
 - How can we reach them to get them to repent if we cut them off? – cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:15
- Saying a command of God does no good shows a lack of faith – Isaiah 55:10-11

Objections to Church Discipline

We didn't withdraw from so and so before, so how can we withdraw from others now?

- What other commands would this work with? – Singing? Lord's Supper? Contribution? Evangelism?
- **Part of growth is accepting past ignorance, negligence, or wrongdoing and putting it to an end.**
- King Josiah is a case study of what to do – 2 Kings 22:13; 23:1-3

Objections to Church Discipline

We all sin, so why are we focusing on this one member.

- But sin is never excused – 1 John 2:1-2
- But sin that is not repented of leads to death – 1 John 5:16-17
- The progression of church discipline focuses on the sinner who isn't repenting – Matthew 18:15-17

Objections to Church Discipline

Church discipline will tear the church up.

- Following God's commands does not tear the church up, but makes it what God wants it to be – **Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Thessalonians 3:6**
- We must evaluate the church by God's standard, not our own – **Revelation 3:1, 17**
- Sin is what tears the church up. Getting rid of it strengthens the church – **1 Corinthians 5:7-8**

Questions About Church Discipline

How can we know that we have been longsuffering enough to move forward in the process of church discipline?

- The answer has more to do with the circumstance than the time – cf. **Jude 22-23** (NASB); **Titus 3:9-10**
- Involves judgment, but judgment can be negligent or sinful – **1 Corinthians 5:1-3** (“*already*”)
- The whole process is an action of longsuffering – **Matthew 18:15-17**

Questions About Church Discipline

What about the Christian who has fallen away but was not withdrawn from when they should have been? Do I have an obligation toward them as an individual?

- Three important things remain certain despite the failure to discipline:
 - Their soul needs saving – 2 Timothy 2:26
 - Your soul can be corrupted – 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 John 11
 - God's boundaries of fellowship still apply – 1 John 1:3, 7; Ephesians 5:11

Questions About Church Discipline

What about the Christian who has fallen away but was not withdrawn from when they should have been? Do I have an obligation toward them as an individual?

- The scriptural method of how to treat the erring when they resist God's word and do not repent remains the same – 2
Thessalonians 3:14-15

Questions About Church Discipline

What if the erring Christian withdraws from us (or leaves) before we can withdraw from them?

- Scripturally, withdrawal is only spoken of as an action of the church (faithful).
 - What do the erring actually do? – Hebrews 2:1; 3:12; 6:6
 - Did their action fulfill our responsibility? NO! – 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Questions About Church Discipline

What if the erring Christian withdraws from us (or leaves) before we can withdraw from them?

- Is this not the scenario Jesus referred to in His shepherd illustration? – **Matthew 18:12-14**
 - The shepherds of Israel were rebuked for the mindset displayed in this question (posed to avoid acting) – **Ezekiel 34:1-6**
- Does their accountability change because they don't want it? – **Hebrews 13:17**

Questions About Church Discipline

What if the erring Christian withdraws from us (or leaves) before we can withdraw from them?

- Has their decision to “withdraw” or leave changed their spiritual state or responsibility? – In sin? Repented? Still a brother? Isn’t their decision adding sin to sin?
- Will we say the same about the sin of forsaking the assembly? (cf. **Hebrews 10:25**)
- **They must still be disciplined according to the scriptural pattern!**

Questions About Church Discipline

Does one congregation have to accept the withdrawal that another congregation has practiced?

- No. Each congregation is autonomous – 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28
- It is possible for a church to be wrong in their withdrawal – cf. 3 John 9-11
- However, each congregation MUST give diligence to determine lawfulness of fellowship – cf. Acts 9:26-28
- **Autonomy doesn't mean we can accept anyone!**

Questions About Church Discipline

What can a church do who has not practiced discipline at all in the past, or who has been inconsistent or mistaken in their practice of church discipline in the past? Are they supposed to backtrack, and withdraw from everyone they neglected in the past?

- Churches can and must repent – **Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19**
- Repentance does not require the impossible – going back in time and disciplining.
- Repentance requires fitting fruit – **cf. Luke 3:8, 10-14**

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