

What the Bible Says About... CHURCH DISCIPLINE

INTRO.

A. I'm sure you've heard the phrase "Blood is thicker than water."

- [Said to be] a German proverb which generally means that the bonds of family and common ancestry are stronger than those bonds between unrelated people.
- Families have certain responsibilities to each other- loving, nurturing, protecting, teaching, encouraging, etc.
- Many of these responsibilities are pleasant... and natural, while others are... [shall we say]... less natural.

B. One of the areas of greatest discord within many families is the area of **discipline**.

- **OBSERVATION:** It is not difficult to distinguish between families which consistently practice discipline and families which do not.
- If discipline is ignored/neglected in a family, the entire family suffers.
- Proverbs 13:24- *"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."*

C. The New Testament regularly refers to the Lord's church as a **family**

- We are to treat each other as "fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters."
- The church will make a giant step toward fulfilling our Lord's vision for it when we realize that "Christ's blood is thicker than human family blood."
- *"Anyone who loves his father or mother... son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."* - Matthew 10:37

I- TO KEEP GOD'S FAMILY HEALTHY, WE MUST ADOPT THE LORD'S ATTITUDE ABOUT DISCIPLINE

- He provides us an insight into 1) his **attitude about** and 2) the **value of** family discipline - Hebrews 12:5-13

CONSIDER: If you knew that the only way you could "share in God's holiness" [be saved] was to be disciplined, would you have a positive attitude about discipline?

II- WHAT IS "CHURCH DISCIPLINE?"

A. Word is used in an intensive form - Luke 23:16,22 - At Jesus' trial, Pilate said, *"I have found no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I will have him punished and then release him."*

B. Three types- each designed to prevent the next:

1- PREVENTIVE discipline

- Teaching God's word clearly and accurately- II Timothy 3:15-17
- Word "**training** [NIV]" is a translation of the word for discipline.
- See also II Timothy 2:24-25- word "**instruct**" is a translation of the same word
- Thus, "instruction and training" are the most productive and vital aspect of church discipline.
- (... When we will diligently practice PREVENTIVE discipline, there will much less need for...)

2. CORRECTIVE discipline

- A charge from the Lord- Matthew 18:15-17
- See also II Thessalonians 3:6,14-15- *"...keep away from...in order that he may feel ashamed."*
- I Corinthians 5 (entire chapter)- [regarding a sexually immoral man in the church] -*"put out of your fellowship... hand this man over to Satan... Get rid of the old yeast... do not even eat... Expel the wicked man from your number."*
- I Timothy 1:19-20 - *"... handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme."*

NOTE: The "abuse" of a principle/truth is not adequate reason to discard it. Because children are abused in some families does not lead to a reasonable conclusion that all discipline is wrong. Neither does the abuse of discipline in some church(es) relieve us of the responsibility of spiritual discipline.

(When we lovingly, gently practice CORRECTIVE church discipline, there will be much less need for...)

3. PUNITIVE discipline

- Let it be clearly understood that THIS IS GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY ALONE!
- We have no right, nor desire, to administer wrathful punishment.
- Hebrews 10:26-31- [regarding one who "...deliberately keep[s] on sinning after [he has] received the knowledge of the truth]- *"...only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.... 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people;'. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (see also- Romans 12:19)

CONCLUSION- God has given his church the responsibility for PREVENTIVE and CORRECTIVE discipline.
If we do not lovingly and consistently practice both of these disciplines, souls will be lost!

III- WHAT IS THE PURPOSE/GOAL OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

A. The goal is holiness/purity.

- Hebrews 12:14-15- *"...without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."*

B. You see, EVERYONE'S soul is involved:

1. The **person being disciplined**

- I Corinthians 5:4-5- *"When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus... hand this man over to Satan, so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."*

2. The **entire church** is directly affected by tolerance of rebellious sin

- I Corinthians 5:6-7 - *"... Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast [in this context: man involved in sexual sin] that you may be a new batch without yeast- as you really are."*

3. Purity of the church is vital for **those who are not Christians**

- Matthew 5:16- *"...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*
- II Corinthians 3:2- *"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody."*

IV- WHO IS TO RECEIVE CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE?

- Answer: Anyone involved in the practice of sin- jeopardizes their soul.

A. Some sins specifically listed (not intended to be comprehensive list):

- I Corinthians 5:6-12- sexually immoral, greedy, swindlers, idolaters, slanderer, drunkard
- Titus 3:9-10- someone who is quarrelsome and divisive
- II Thessalonians 3:6-15- Those who are idle and will not work (... this leads to sinful behavior)

B. Broadly speaking:

- II John 9-11- those who *"...does not continue in the teaching of Christ."*
- II Thessalonians 3:6- *"... every brother who ...does not live according to the teaching you received from us."*

CONCL.

A. The goal of church discipline is "self-discipline."

- We practice various forms of discipline with our children so that they will learn to discipline themselves.
- The Lord intends for church discipline to accomplish that same thing.

B. Failure to "purge out sinful behavior" leads to a toleration of sin; Toleration of sin leads to a love of sin; love of sin leads to the practice of sin.

THEREFORE, The Lord's instructions regarding church discipline is beneficial for the saving of all souls; and detrimental to none! - May God give us a heart to "do the hard things."