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Discipline in the Church



I. What is meant by church discipline?

Discipline: from the Grk *paideia*: a term used in child rearing, meaning to instruct, train, correct.

Discipline is related to the word disciple, a learner, a follower.

Church discipline is godly instruction, training, and correction that lovingly directs believers to Christlikeness, and promotes corporate holiness and unity to the glory of God.



II. Why do we need Church Discipline?

A. To glorify God who is Holy. 1Pet.1:15,16.

B. Discipline is an evidence of God's love. Heb.12:5-11

C. To satisfy God's sense of order. 1Cor. 14:33, 40

D. To safeguard the credibility of a church's testimony. Jonathan Leeman: "Church Discipline is not driven by lists of which sins qualify for discipline. It's driven by the single question of whether a church can continue to publicly affirm a person's profession of faith as credible."



II. Why do we need Church Discipline?

E. To control the influence & spread of evil. 1Cor. 5:6.

F. To correct and restore the erring member. Gal. 6:1

This is referring to someone caught off guard by sin, overtaken by sin, an act of sin, rather than one who is habitually sinful & unrepentant. They are to be restored in a spirit of humility and gentleness by spiritual believers who realize they too could fall into sin.



III. What are the different kinds of Church Discipline?

A. Preventative discipline.

1. Personal examination 1Cor. 11:28-31

2. Teaching Matt 28:20, 2Tim. 4:2:

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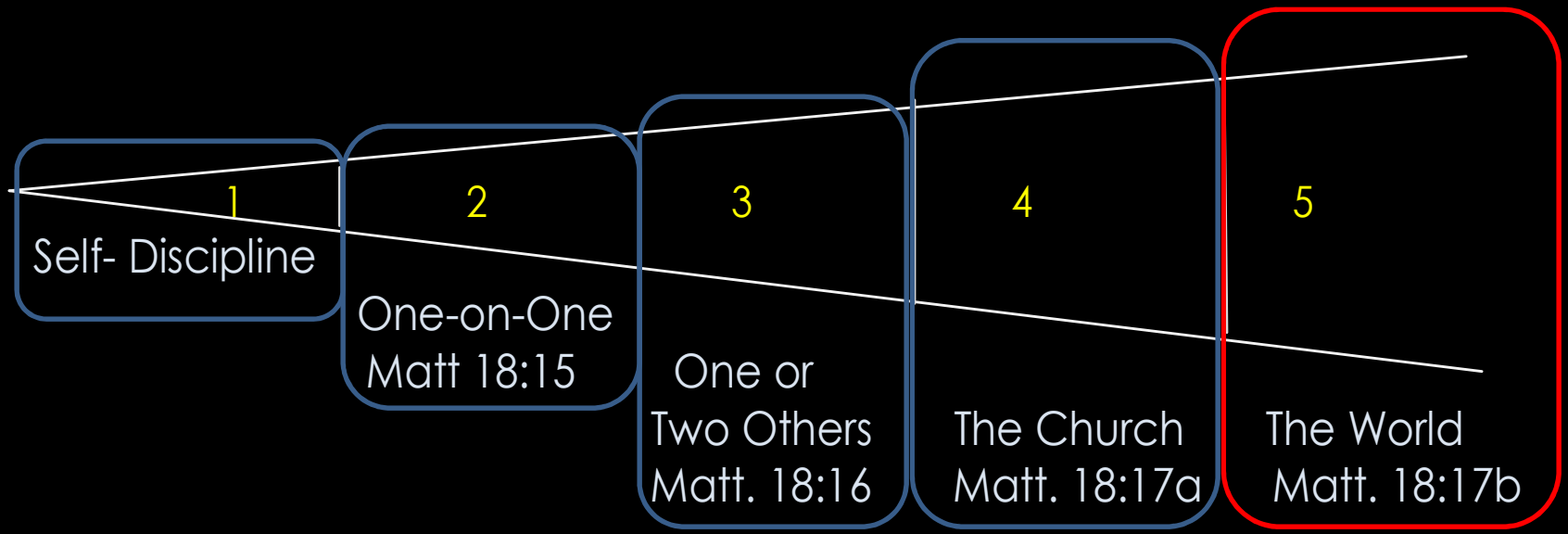
B. Personal Trespass: Matt. 18:15-17:



Jay Adams



C. Warning and Rejection of factious people.

Rom. 16:17: “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.”

Titus 3:10, 11 “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”



D. Avoidance for a Disorderly Walk - 2Thess. 3:11-15:

"For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread… vs14 "if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."



E. Public rebuke - 1Tim.5:20 “Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.”

Vs 19: “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”



F. Ex-communication or disfellowshipping

1Cor.5:1-13

vs 11 “I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be 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.”



F. Ex-communication or disfellowshipping

1Cor.5:1-13

vs12,13 “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”



V. How is discipline carried out?

A. We all have a responsibility to resolve conflicts according to the steps in Matt. 18:15-17 & 5:23-24

B. In cases of church discipline the elders are responsible to hear the facts objectively, impartially, from all sides and prayerfully bring Scriptural principles to bear on each situation.



V. How is discipline carried out?

C. The elders counsel with the person.

D. Discipline is given in a spirit of love, gentleness, humility, and watchfulness.

E. If a public announcement is called for, it should be within the church family.

F. As a body we need to be alert to the enemy's attempts to sow discord and division.



G. Some pitfalls to avoid:

- Delayed or no action because of a dislike for discipline.

- Taking sides, refusing to recognize proper discipline for personal reasons.

- Gossiping, finger pointing, instead of healthy self-examination and prayer.

- Allowing a believer under discipline to continue in a leadership role.



G. Some pitfalls to avoid:

- Receiving into fellowship believers who are under discipline from another church.

- Insufficient time for discipline work

- Not welcoming back a believer who has genuinely repented. 2Cor. 2:7,8 “…on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.”