

## DISCIPLINE

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**Purpose of this outline:** To examine a framework, processes and practical examples in using formative and corrective discipline to enhance the spiritual growth and education of church members.

Noah Webster's definition of DISCIPLINE in his 1828 version of the American Dictionary of the English Language:

1. Education, Instruction, Cultivation and Improvement.
2. Subjection to laws, rules, order, precepts or regulations
3. Correction, Chastisement, Punishment –intended to correct crimes or errors.

I. **FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE:** to mold or shape into a particular state.

**A. Authority to teach** given to the church and emphasized as 2 of the 3 main objectives mentioned in the Great Commission. "...TEACH all Nations...TEACHING them to observe all things..." Matt 28:19-20.

**B. The Spiritual Growth process** seen in the Scriptures.

1. Babies in Christ (Heb 5: 12-14, I Cor 3: 1-3)
2. Young Men (Titus 2:6, I John 2: 13-14)
3. Aged Men/Fathers (Titus 2:2, I John 2:13-14)

**C. The Goals or Desired End Result** (Prov 29:18)

1. To Possess the CONSISTENT DESIRE and ABILITY to:
  1. Recognize, Rejoice in and teach the truth
  2. Demonstrate Charity
  3. Live Harmoniously and Unified with fellow church members
  4. Spiritually Pray
  5. Worship and Praise publicly AND privately
  6. Actively Evangelize
  7. Endure Spiritual Hardship and/or Persecution

**D. The Stages of Learning:** Passive Learning and Active Learning

1. **Passive Learning:** Receiving or capable of receiving impressions from external agents.

- a. Revelation of the Holy Ghost (John 14:26) both directly and via the Inspired Word of God (II Peter 1:20-21).
- b. Receiving verbal input.
  1. Hearing Preaching and Teaching . Instruction by more experienced people directly.
  2. Reading. Instruction by more experienced people indirectly.
- c. This is how we learn doctrine.

2. **Active Learning:** The exertion of power. An act, deed or achievement. A state of Reality or Real Existence as opposed to a possibility.

- a. Personal Experience, both previous and new.
- b. This is how we learn to trust God. Most Goals of formative discipline are found in this stage. (James 2:18)

**E. A Look At Stages of Learning** in the Church Membership

1. A situation where No Learning is taking place.
  - a. Example: No bible reading, little to no prayer, little to no church attendance.
2. Passive Learning – stage 1
  - a. Example: Some Bible READING, formal prayer, regular church attendance
3. Passive Learning – stage 2
  - a. Example: Bible STUDYING



4. Active Learning – stage 1

a. Example: Spiritual Prayer, Worship and Praise

5. Active Learning - stage 2

a. Example: Evangelism, Endurance of hardship and Persecution

**F. Targeted Groups and Practical Suggestions for Progressive Improvement**

1. Practical Model for training given by the Apostle Paul (I Thess 2: 10-12) includes an Example, Exhortation, Comfort and Charging.

1. Minister's Life

a. Example: His life must be an example of active learning

b. Exhortation: to advise, warn or caution.

Must be able to provide passive learning opportunities to those he encounters.

c. Comfort: to strengthen, invigorate, cheer or enliven. Needs to provide encouragement to the membership both verbally and by supporting efforts at improvement.

d. Charge: That which is enjoined, committed, entrusted or delivered to another, implying care, custody, oversight or duty to be performed by the person entrusted. Empowering the membership with the responsibility to teach, evangelize, care for the church

e. Finding Balance: Ministerial Responsibility, Secular job, Husband, Father, Domestic Responsibility, Rest, etc.

1. A Great Difficulty in the Ministry

2. Time Management ("Making Time") Col 4:5, Eph 5: 16

3. Planning and Organizing your week/month is the key.

4. The self discipline/Temperance (Moderation, self-control) to follow the plan. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23).

5. The flexibility to reorganize the plan if spontaneous situations challenge it.

6. Spend time fostering your family relationships and educating your children.

7. Don't neglect your own rest (Everyone else has a day of rest on the Sabbath).

8. Too much Participation in Recreation and Entertainment will be to the neglect of someone's formative discipline.

2. Attending Church Members

a. Goal is to progress from passive learning to active learning.

b. Examples: Encourage private bible reading, bible study attendance, community activity/involvement.

3. Non-Attending Church Members

a. Goal is to progress from a state of no learning to a state of passive learning initially.

b. Examples: Attempt to establish communication and a relationship by phone calls and visitation. Encourage other members of the church to also follow up with those who are non-attending.

4. Youth

a. Goal is not only to progress them as an "attending church member", but also to provide opportunities for them to build relationships with their peers in the church with a focus on the future.

b. Examples: Encourage Sunday School participation, Vacation Bible School, Youth Group Activities. Encourage Parents to perform family devotions and Biblical education in the home with their children.

**Note: Just a reminder that the desire/will to learn and the participation required for learning to occur is solely the responsibility of the individual.**



## **II. CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

\* Chastening (correction, punishment for the purpose of reclaiming) is often a NECESSARY element in the education process. (Heb 12: 5-11)

1. Proverbs 22:15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

2. I Timothy 1: 20: "Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan (reference to church discipline see I Cor 5: 5), that they MAY LEARN not to blaspheme."

\* Lack of instruction in formative discipline many times leads to RE-formative (corrective) discipline later.

### **A. Some Objectives of Corrective Discipline**

1. To assist the one that is loved (being disciplined) with Behavioral, Doctrinal or Attitudinal Correction with an ultimate goal of restoration.

2. Maintenance of church's public reputation.

3. Maintenance of the church's purity, unity and harmony before God. This assists the church in keeping an environment where worship, praise and learning can continue to take place.

4. To provide a means for dealing with any that may be unregenerated in the membership.

### **B. Obstacles to the Church Unity needed to carry out Corrective Discipline.**

#### **1. Not following the Biblical laws of Communication.**

A. Definition: Following the rules that Jesus gave in regards to handling personal offences. Matthew 18: 15-17. Matthew 5:23-24. James 4:11-12

B. The key to maintaining any interpersonal relationship is clear, DIRECT COMMUNICATION.

C. The need for carrying this out correctly and Biblically is CRITICAL to the spiritual growth of individuals and the peace, harmony, unity and influence of churches.

#### **2. Not following the Biblical law of Impartiality**

A. Definition: Treating all people the same way in regards to the application of Biblical instruction for our personal and collective conduct.

B. The following is a LIMITED list of factors that should NEVER dictate our conduct toward another person: socioeconomic status, skin color, nationality, family ties/kinship, longevity of church membership, etc.

C. God is no respecter of persons and instructs us to be the same way. Romans 2:11, Eph 6:9, Col 3:25. James stated that partiality is sin! James 2:1-13.

D. Impartiality means I love everyone enough to: share the Gospel with them, communicate with them privately if an offense occurs and initiate church discipline if the situation calls for it.

#### **3. Not understanding the discipline process, or being slack concerning the gravity of it.**

A. I Timothy 5:20: "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

B. II Thess 3:6: "Now we command you...that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,..."

C. Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

For further examination of the elements of general offenses, private offenses and other elements of corrective discipline, please see J. M. Pendleton's "Church Manual: Designed for the use of Baptist Churches," chapter 6: "The Discipline of a Church", pages 117-146, which was used as a reference for this outline.