

Small Group Guide THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE (PART 1)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 2, 2013

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:11

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives:* Pray we will all be open to the discipline God lovingly enacts in our lives. Ask Him for His wisdom and guidance as we seek how to institute and carry out discipline in the life of our church. Pray for the Spirit to bring conviction in each of our lives over any sin that exists. Repent of any sin the Spirit reveals. Pray for the restoration of any of our brothers and sisters who have wandered away from the faith. Ask for God to use discipline to purify our church for the sake of the gospel and His glory.
- *Pray for Our City:* This week we are praying for our middle school and high school students as they attend the Student Life Mission Camp at Shocco Springs June 5th-9th. We are also praying for North Shelby Baptist Church and Allan Murphy, Pastor.
- *Pray for Our World:* This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionary, Hannah Davis. Hannah serves as an accountant for the International Mission Board (IMB) and is based out of South Africa. There she provides support to those serving as missionaries across the world. She is also involved with local ministry doing

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outreach to the women with HIV/AIDS and orphans in the surrounding community. To learn more about Hannah and ways to pray, visit her blog at fromonesouthtoanother.blogspot.com. We are also praying for our Short-Term team serving in India.

MAIN TRUTH

Message Outline

THE CROSS AND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE (PART 1)

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:11

As members of The Church at Brook Hills, we affirm this covenant with one another by God's grace, for our good, and ultimately for God's glory....We will humbly and gently confront one another and receive correction from one another in accordance with a New Testament understanding of church discipline and restoration.

Why Not Church Discipline?

- “Church discipline is legalistic.”
 - Church discipline is loving.
- “What about Matthew 7:1?”
 - Keep going to Matthew 7:5.
- “People will leave.”
 - This is God's church to grow, not ours.
- “We don't know how to practice church discipline.”
 - Then let's learn how to practice church discipline...

What is Church Discipline?

- A Threefold Framework for Church Discipline...
 - A biblical understanding of the gospel...
 - God loves sinners enough to pursue them in their sin, call them away from sin, save them from their sin, and empower them to obey Him.
 - A biblical understanding of a Christian...
 - To be a disciple of Christ is to invite discipline from Christ.
 - A biblical understanding of the church...
 - The church is Christ's chosen instrument for declaring who belongs to Christ and overseeing those who believe in Christ.
- Two Facets of Church Discipline...
 - Formative Church Discipline:
 - Continual training believers receive from God's Word in the church as their lives are transformed into Christlikeness.
 - Restorative Church Discipline:
 - Corrective care taken by the church in matters of unrepentant sin in a brother or sister's life.
- One Foundation for Church Discipline...
 - The grace of God.

How Do We Practice Church Discipline?

- Step One: Private Correction
- Step Two: Small Group Clarification

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- Step Three: Church Admonition
- Step Four: Church Excommunication

Why Do We Practice Church Discipline?

- For the salvation of the individual.
- For the purity of the church.
 - Church members are accountable...
 - For mourning over unrepentant sin in the church.
 - For removing unrepentant sinners from the church.
 - Church members must be humble...
 - Pride: Toleration of unrepentant sinners in the church.
 - Humility: Exclusion of unrepentant sinners from the church.
 - Church membership is essential...
 - The church defines who is a member.
 - Isolation from the church reflects separation from Christ.
- For the glory of God.
 - He is the ultimate Judge of sinners.
 - He is the supreme Savior from sin.

Message Summary

In part one of “The Cross and Christian Discipline,” we study an example of church discipline that took place in the Corinthian church and what the New Testament teaches regarding church discipline and restoration. To not practice church discipline is a sin that demonstrates either an ignorance of Scripture’s teaching or a flagrant disobedience to God. While church discipline might appear legalistic, judgmental, or antithetical to church growth, it is founded upon God’s grace. God uses the church to lovingly warn sinners of their sin, to call them to repentance, and to point them toward Christ, and 1 Corinthians 5:1-6:11 teaches us to practice church discipline for the salvation of the individual, for the purity of the church, and for the glory of God.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Explain to the small group that this sermon is part one of a discussion on how the cross affects church discipline. The following sermon will include practical information regarding church admonition and excommunication as well as specific insight about the process of church discipline at The Church at Brook Hills. However, part one on church discipline provides a basic understanding of what church discipline is, why it should be practiced, and how it should be practiced.

Be aware that the people in your small group will have different connotations and experiences with church discipline. One way to open the discussion of this passage is to ask the group, “What comes to mind when you hear the phrase ‘church discipline’?” Ask if anyone in the group came from a church or denomination that actively practiced church discipline (or practiced it in a biblical manner). Also, ask the group why so many churches do not practice church discipline and why we are unfaithful in obeying Scripture’s commands such as not associating with sexually immoral people who claim to be Christians (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

Discuss the four arguments against church discipline that are listed in the sermon outline as well as their counter-arguments. With regard to discipline being loving, highlight the example of a parent and child. A parent who does not set boundaries, teach their child right from wrong, or consistently discipline unruly behavior is not acting in the best interest of the child. One way we know that God loves us is that He cares

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enough to discipline us (see Hebrews 12:5-11), and He involves the local church body in His efforts to point wandering sinners back to Himself. Contrast a legalistic picture of church discipline with a loving demonstration of it. Discuss how it is unloving for believers to be passive regarding the sins of other Christians. Why are we often hesitant to confront each other about sin? Is there unrepentant sin in the lives of those in this small group that needs to be addressed? As the small group leader, are you being faithful in leading and serving the group with regards to church discipline?

For those who are at The Church at Brook Hills, rehearse the portion of our church covenant that references church discipline and restoration. For a copy of the church covenant, visit brookhills.org/pdfs/BH_Covenant%20update%202012-1-11.pdf.

For those who are not in a Brook Hills small group, what does your church covenant or by-laws state regarding church discipline, or what does your denomination's statement of beliefs affirm regarding church discipline?

Some of the people in your small group may not be members of a local church. As a result, they have no church body to hold them accountable in the area of church discipline. Use this opportunity to discuss the importance of church membership with your small group. If you know of specific people in the small group who are not currently members of a local church, take time outside of small group to get to know the person and to discuss church membership with them. See if they have any questions and help them connect to membership in a local body. For information about becoming a member of The Church at Brook Hills, visit brookhills.org/impact.

At Brook Hills, our church members commit to "humbly and gently confront one another and receive correction from one another in accordance with a New Testament understanding of church discipline and restoration." Explain that 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 provides insight into how church discipline played out in the Corinthian church. Discuss the sin that Paul addresses (a man having sexual relations with his father's wife).

In light of the four arguments against church discipline, why *should* the church practice church discipline? How is church discipline in the best interest of the individual? How is best for the purity of the church? How does church discipline glorify God?

With regard to the process of church discipline, read Matthew 18:15-20 and Matthew 7:1-5. What are the implications of these two passages for approaching others about their sin? If we are going to confront someone about sin, how do we avoid pride? Encourage the individuals in the group to consider how they currently respond to conflict and whether their current response is Christlike. How do you respond when a spouse, family member, or friend points out a sinful action or tendency? Is there unresolved bitterness, anger, jealousy, or insecurity at the root of the current response pattern? How can the people in this small group become more like Christ with regard to Matthew 7:1-5 and Matthew 18:15-20?

In discussing the threefold framework for church discipline, explain how the gospel should inform our understanding of church discipline. Take time to ensure that the group understands the definition of church provided in the sermon outline, particularly the church's role in declaring who belongs to Christ and what it means for the church to oversee who belongs to Christ. For the church's role in declaring, read Matthew 16:16-19, and share that the church has the authority to declare people forgiven by God or not forgiven by God based upon their confession (or lack of confession) of Christ as their Lord and Savior. When the church disciplines an individual, they are no longer able to say that the person is a Christian because, from what the church can tell, the individual does not understand the gospel and is not a disciple of Christ inviting discipline from Christ. Because church discipline involves someone who is *unrepentant* about their participation in *habitual* sin, distinguish between sin that necessitates church discipline and the sin in which we all engage because we are all imperfect sinners (see Romans 7:15-21).

Also, talk about the different avenues God uses to correct His people (e.g., Scripture, the Holy Spirit, the people of God, etc.), and use this as a segue to discuss formative church discipline with the small group. 2

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Timothy 3:16-17 and Hebrews 4:12-13 reference Scripture's role in changing us, but if we are not consistently studying God's Word for ourselves, we are not putting ourselves in a position to be taught and convicted by God's truth. Either during or outside of the small group meeting, take time to ensure that each person in the group knows how to study the Word, and encourage them to make this a consistent spiritual discipline that they practice. Studying Scripture is not just something to add to our Christian to-do list. God uses His Word to teach us about Himself and how He wants us to live. In our relationships with people, we are not truly friends with someone if we do not spend time with them or invest time in getting to know them. The same is true in our relationship with God.

Conclude the time together with a time of confession for public and corporate sin. Include a reminder of God's forgiveness of sin (such as 1 John 1:9). Pray for the small group leaders and for the Elders at Brook Hills to have wisdom, discernment, and humility as they provide leadership in church discipline situations. Encourage those in the group to take time this next week to examine their hearts for unconfessed sin and to repent, and challenge each person to consider how they should live this week in light of this text of Scripture.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Why is church discipline important? How does it glorify God? How is it in the best interest of the individual and of the church?
- Discuss the four arguments against church discipline as well as the counter-arguments. How is it loving to exercise church discipline?
- Read Matthew 7:1-5. What are the implications of this passage with regard to church discipline?
- Read Matthew 18:15-20, which presents the process for corrective church discipline. Discuss the four-step process for addressing sin in a fellow believer.
- How do you respond to conflict (e.g., do you live in denial of the fact there is conflict, take charge and fight for your side, avoid conflict, strike back in revenge, try to mediate and please everyone involved, etc.)? How do you respond when another person approaches you about sin in your life? In what ways do you need to grow with regard to conflict resolution?
- What should be the attitude of the individual who initiates the confrontation?
- How should the gospel affect our understanding of church discipline? How should a biblical understanding of the church and what it means to be a Christian inform our understanding of church discipline?
- Read Matthew 16:13-19. Christ builds His church on the confession that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and the church has the authority to declare people forgiven or not forgiven by God depending on whether or not they have confessed faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior (see Matt. 16:18-19). Discuss the authority and the weight of responsibility placed on the church to remove a person from the church and to say "This person is not a Christian" because, from what the church can tell, the person does not understand the gospel and is not inviting discipline from Christ. What does it mean for the church to oversee those who belong to Christ?
- Discuss the differences between formative and restorative church discipline. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Is formative discipline taking place in each person's life as they individually study Scripture, pray, and reflect on the Word? How can group members grow in applying what they read in Scripture to their daily lives?
- Define restorative discipline. Distinguish between unrepentant sin and the sin struggle faced by every Christ-follower, which Paul discusses in Romans 7:15-21.
- What does excommunication from the church include? According to Scripture, how should the church's fundamental relationship with the unrepentant sinner change? How should Christ-followers

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interact with individuals who claim to be Christians yet who are unrepentant over their habitual sin (see 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 13-14; 2 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 3:10)?

- How does God use church discipline in the salvation of the individual? How can it be a good thing to cast the person into the world where Satan is the “ruler of the world” (see 1 Cor. 5:5)? Discuss how God sovereignly uses Satan to turn mankind back to Himself (see 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 1 Tim. 1:20).
- Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-9. Church members are accountable to God for unrepentant sin in their midst. In this passage, Paul addresses the church’s tolerance of the sin, not the man’s sin itself. What sins do we tolerate as a church instead of address in a Christlike manner? Why do we tolerate them? How can we fight against passivity and tolerance of sin in our own life?
- 1 Corinthians 5:2 says the church should mourn over unrepentant sin. Are you sorrowful over sin or casual about it? What sins do you need to confess and repent of in your own life? If you are not bothered by the presence of sin in your own life or in the church, what does this indicate about your relationship with God and how can you change? Take time as a small group to confess together the sins of those in the small group as well as various sins of the church.
- How does this passage of Scripture personally apply to your life?