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## Lesson 19 – Church Discipline (OUTLINE)

### I. The definition of “discipline”.

- A. Discipline, in a larger sense, means training, cultivation, improvement, according to prescribed rules; subordinate to law; administration of government and submission to lawfully constituted authority.
- B. The word “discipline” and “disciple” come from the word **disco** which means: “I learn.”
- C. Discipline is the means God gave the church to assure the smooth operation of the organization and the maintenance of proper standards for membership.
- D. [discipline: the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.]

### II. The purpose of discipline

- A. The purpose of discipline is to prevent, restrain or remove the evil that may exist, to encourage and protect the right, and to cherish the good.
- B. Discipline is not to satisfy the personal prejudice of any but to reclaim the wandering, and to guide the wayward.

### III. The spirit of discipline: Read Galatians 6:1 (and more).

*<sup>1</sup>Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. <sup>4</sup>But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. <sup>5</sup>For every man shall bear his own burden.*

### IV. The authority of discipline: The authority to exercise discipline is vested in the church is clearly taught in the scriptures. Read:

- Matthew 18:17
- Titus 3:10
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

### V. The method of discipline: Disciple offenses are usually considered as of two kinds – **private and public or personal and general.**

- A. A **private offense** has reference to the personal relations of individual members. It is an injury done, or claimed to have been done, by one member to another.
- B. The method for handling private offenses is given in Matthew 18:15-17, which gives the following procedure:

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1. The one who considers himself offended must go to the offender and tell his cause of grief, and between themselves alone adjust the matter, and if possible, settle the difficulty.
  2. If the first step fails, the offended one must take one or two others with him as witnesses and try again to settle the matter.
  3. If the second step fails, the offended one is to tell the whole matter to the church and leave the matter in their hands to be settled.
  4. The church is to pass the final settlement of the difficulty.
- C. A **public offense** is one to be claimed to be a breach of Christian morals, or a violation of covenant faith or duty. A public offense is an injury to the Christian name and profession.
1. The Bible lists many “public” offenses:
    - a. False doctrine. Galatians 1:9; 2 John 10
    - b. Disregard of authority. Matthew 18:17
    - c. Contention and strife. Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 11:16
    - d. Immoral conduct. 1 Corinthians 5:11
    - e. Disorderly walk. 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 3:11
    - f. A covetous walk. Ephesian 5:5; 1 Corinthians 5:11
    - g. Arrogant deportment. 3 John 9-10
    - h. Going to law. 1 Corinthians 6:5-7
  2. If, after patient, deliberate, and prayerful labor, all efforts fail to reclaim the offender, then the church must withdraw from him their fellowship.

### Questions:

1. Give a definition of discipline.
2. What is the purpose of discipline?
3. In what kind of spirit should discipline be conducted?
4. Who has the authority to exercise discipline?
5. Describe the method that should be followed in the case of a “private” offense and a “public” offense?
6. Name some public offenses.

**Discussion:** Do you think churches practice enough discipline?

### Assignment:

- Memory work study: 1 Timothy 3:15
- Assignment: be prepared to describe what you think is **an ideal church member**.

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### I. The definition of “discipline”.

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- D. [discipline: the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.]

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- B. Discipline is not to satisfy the personal prejudice of any but to reclaim the wandering, and to guide the wayward.

### III. The spirit of discipline: Read Galatians 6:1 (and more).

***<sup>1</sup>Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. <sup>3</sup>For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. <sup>4</sup>But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. <sup>5</sup>For every man shall bear his own burden.***

IV. The authority of discipline: The authority to exercise discipline is vested in the church is clearly taught in the scriptures. Read:

- Matthew 18:17 *<sup>17</sup>And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6 *<sup>6</sup>Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*
- Titus 3:10-11 *<sup>10</sup>A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; <sup>11</sup>knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 (whole chapter) - about Moral Disorders  
*<sup>1</sup>It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. <sup>2</sup>And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. <sup>3</sup>For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, <sup>4</sup>in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>5</sup>to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? <sup>7</sup>Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: <sup>8</sup>therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. <sup>9</sup>I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: <sup>10</sup>yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? <sup>13</sup>But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

V. The method of discipline: Disciple offenses are usually considered as of two kinds – **private and public or personal and general.**

- A. A **private offense** has reference to the personal relations of individual members. It is an injury done, or claimed to have been done, by one member to another.
- B. The method for handling private offenses is given in Matthew 18:15-17

*<sup>15</sup> Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

*<sup>16</sup> But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. <sup>17</sup> And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

This scripture gives the following procedure:

1. The one who considers himself offended must go to the offender and tell his cause of grief, and between themselves alone adjust the matter, and if possible, settle the difficulty.
2. If the first step fails, the offended one must take one or two others with him as witnesses and try again to settle the matter.
3. If the second step fails, the offended one is to tell the whole matter to the church and leave the matter in their hands to be settled.
4. The church is to pass the final settlement of the difficulty.

C. A **public offense** is one to be claimed to be a breach of Christian morals, or a violation of covenant faith or duty. A public offense is an injury to the Christian name and profession.

1. The Bible lists many “public” offenses:

a. **False doctrine.**

(i) Galatians 1:9 <sup>9</sup>*As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

(ii) 2 John 10 <sup>10</sup>*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: <sup>11</sup>for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

b. **Disregard of authority.** Matthew 18:17 <sup>17</sup>*And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.*

c. **Contention and strife.**

(i) Romans 16:17-18 <sup>17</sup>*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. <sup>18</sup>For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*

(ii) 1 Corinthians 11:16 <sup>16</sup>*But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

- d. **Immoral conduct.** 1 Corinthians 5:11 *<sup>11</sup>But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*
- e. **Disorderly walk.**
- (i) 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7 *<sup>6</sup>Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. <sup>7</sup>For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;*
- (ii) 2 Thessalonians 3:11 *<sup>11</sup>For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.*
- f. **A covetous walk.**
- (i) Ephesian 5:5 *<sup>5</sup>For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*
- (ii) 1 Corinthians 5:11 *<sup>11</sup>But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

- g. **Arrogant deportment.** 3 John 9-11 <sup>9</sup>*I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. <sup>10</sup>Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*
- h. **Going to law.** 1 Corinthians 6:5-7 <sup>5</sup>*I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup>But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. <sup>7</sup>Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? <sup>8</sup>Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. <sup>9</sup>Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*
2. If, after patient, deliberate, and prayerful labor, all efforts fail to reclaim the offender, then the church must withdraw from him their fellowship.



**Questions:**

1. Give a definition of discipline.
2. What is the purpose of discipline?
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5. Describe the method that should be followed in the case of a “private” offense and a “public” offense?
6. Name some public offenses.

**Discussion:** Do you think churches practice enough discipline?

**Assignment:**

- Memory work study: 1 Timothy 3:15 *<sup>15</sup>But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.*
- Assignment: be prepared to describe what you think is **an ideal church member**.