

BAHRAIN REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

Biblical Church Discipline

June 11, 2024

Preliminary

Note: Biblical/Church discipline is the process of correcting sinful behavior among members of a local church body or applied in *professing Christian* family

Point: Discipline is not punishment, it is design to train and restore... cf. *Discipleship* [John Owen, *A Puritan Golden Treasury*, 79] – “The nature and end of judgment or sentence must be corrective, not vindictive; for healing, not destruction.”

Challenge: Professing Christians are willing and always ready to be corrected.

1. The Importance and Purpose of Practical Discipline

[Jonathan Leenan, *What Happens When Member Don't Represent Jesus*, 110ff]

Note: The Lord Jesus, commands it... Mt 18:15-18

- Those faithful to the Lord follows the practice of biblical discipline... James 1:22
- To refuse to do it would be rebellion against Christ.

(a) Discipline aims to expose.

Note: Sin, like cancer, loves to hide.

Point: Discipline exposes the sin so that it can no longer infect other parts of the body... 1 Cor 5:2; Col 3:5

(b) Discipline aims to warn sinners to avoid the upcoming judgment of God's wrath – it aims to save and protect... 1 Cor 5:5

(c) It aims to present a good witness for Jesus.

Point: It helps to preserve the attractive distinctiveness of God's people
1 Cor. 5:1 = ... *and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans*

(d) When practiced biblically, is an act of love, not hate... Pro 23:13-14

Pro 13:24 = “*Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him*”

Heb 12:6 = *For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives...* cf. Rev 3:19

Point: To withhold the implementation of biblical discipline is to be unloving and ungodlike... James 5:20

Beware: Failure to exercise biblical discipline will destroy any relationships identity and usefulness... 1 Cor 1:10; 11:18

2. Corrective Discipline... Mt 18:15-18

Note 1: You are obligated to take the initiative to approach first your guilty brother

Mt 18:15 = “*If your brother sins... go!*”

Pro 27:5; 2 Tim 4:2 = “*Better is open rebuke than hidden love*”...

[MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, 132] – “Our love to the offenders is not to be sentimental tolerance but correcting love (Pro. 27:6).”

- If the sinning brother responds positively - you have won your brother... Lk 17:3

Note 2: If the alleged offended is no longer willing to listen, then that's the time to move the discipline to the following steps.

- Involves bringing with you one or two witnesses... Mt 18:16
- Report to the Church the alleged guilty brother who has not shown any repentance... Mt 18:17a
- If the 1-3 steps failed. The discipline moves to the final step (excommunication)... Mt 18:17b

Context: A Gentile is one who is not part of the covenant community...

- A tax collector was a Jew who had been put out of the covenant community because of his collaboration with the enemy and because of his dishonesty and thievery... cf 1 Tim 1:20; 1 Cor 5:11-13; Titus 3:9-11; Rm 16:17

[J.F. Martinez, *Church Discipline*] – “A person who refuses to listen even to the church. He is no longer to be regarded as part of the covenant community and he is regarded as a collaborator of the enemy. And why? Because his actions are no longer consistent with his profession of faith. Therefore, if and when you have to talk to him, you have to talk to him as an unbeliever and as a collaborator of the enemy. You are not to talk to him anymore as if he is still a Christian and still a friend of God's people.

[MacArthur, *ibid*, 127] – “Discipline sometimes must be severe because the consequences of not disciplining are much worse. Sin is a spiritual malignancy and it will not long stay isolated. Unless removed, it will spread its infection until the whole fellowship of believers is diseased.

3. Reasons Why Biblical Discipline is Ignored or Neglected

Note: There is ignorance of biblical teaching on the subject

- There is insensitivity toward sin – “that's fine, no one is perfect”
- There is spirit of individualism – “It's his life, he chose it”
- Misunderstanding and misapplication of Mt 7:1 – Judge not, that ye be not judged
- Fear of rejection – “Mind your own business”
- Dislike of confrontation – “why rock the boat?”
- Fear of driving the person away/fear of division – especially if the offending person is a major financial contributor... Tit 2:15
- Preference for avoiding problems – “Time heals all wounds”
- Belief that preaching alone will be a sufficient remedy.

[Alexander Strauch, *Leading With Love*, 152] – “Love is not just happy smiles or pleasant words. A critical test of genuine love is whether we are willing to confront and discipline those we care for. Nothing is more difficult than disciplining a brother or sister in Christ who is trapped in sin. It is always agonizing work – messy, complicated, often unsuccessful, emotionally exhausting, and potentially divisive. This is why most church leaders avoid discipline at all costs. But that is not love. It is lack of courage and disobedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself laid down instructions for the discipline of an unrepentant believer (Matt. 18:17-18).”

Conclusion: Conflict is best handled when individuals prayerfully and humbly focus on loving others, with the intent of restoring relationships... Gal 6:1, 2