

# Practicing Church Discipline

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: 1 Corinthians 5

Church discipline is often not a pleasant topic, and is even more difficult to practice. However, while this is often difficult and painful to practice, there are times when it is absolutely necessary. Also, when it is done for the right reason and in the right way, it is actually for good – benefitting the congregation AND the one from whom the church withdrew fellowship. We’re going to consider several NT passages on this topic, but will use 1 Corinthians 5 as our outline.

## Why This Is Necessary (v. 1-2)

- There was one in Corinth who was living in sin (v. 1) – publicly known; this is more than one who stumbled in sin, it was firmly entrenched in his life and he refused to repent
- They tolerated this and continued to accept him into fellowship (v. 2) – not an act of love, but arrogance
- Other reasons why this can be necessary – one is causing division (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10); one sinned against another and refused to repent (Matthew 18:15-17); one refuses to follow apostolic instruction (2 Thessalonians 3:6); one is a false teacher (2 John 9-11)

## The Benefit for the One Being Disciplined (v. 3-5)

- First of all, this was an act by the whole congregation – “when you are assembled” (v. 4); unified action
- This is done to “deliver such a one to Satan...” (v. 5) – he chose sin; the church acknowledges his choice; Lenski: “By his crime and impenitence the man placed himself into Satan’s power. [...] After this verdict has been rendered, he and all the Corinthians know the fact that the man is under Satan and not under Christ.”
- However, this is not just about “kicking someone out of the church” – the hope is to save him (v. 5); this is done to produce “shame” (2 Thessalonians 3:14) which can help produce repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8); it also includes admonishment (2 Thessalonians 3:15) which can help turn one back from sin (James 5:19-20)

## The Benefit for the Church Practicing Discipline (v. 6-8)

- It is not commendable to refuse to practice discipline when necessary – no reason to boast (v. 6); refusing to practice church discipline will be harmful to the congregation
- The influence of sin that is not dealt with will work like leaven (v. 6) – if one sin is tolerated, others will be as well; sin is progressive (2 Timothy 3:13); by dealing with sin appropriately, we can help deter others from sinning (1 Timothy 5:20)

- We are to commune together (“celebrate the feast”) in “sincerity and truth” (v. 8) – in other words, we are sincerely trying to do what is right, following the standard of God’s word

### **How This Is Practiced (v. 9-13)**

- We already saw that this was a unified action by the congregation (v. 4) – requires some type of announcement
- Church discipline is sometimes called “withdrawing fellowship” because that is what we do – no longer engage in regular social activities (v. 9-11; cf. Acts 2:46); no longer utilize them in the work of the church (v. 13; Ephesians 4:16); no longer support them in their teaching efforts (2 John 9-11)
- How this is NOT to be practiced – not to cut off all contact (2 Thessalonians 3:15) because we are hoping for repentance; not to refuse to welcome them into the assembly because this can help produce repentance (1 Corinthians 14:24-25)

### **Conclusion**

- Church discipline is not pleasant; no discipline is (Hebrews 12:11) – however, when it is necessary, it is important that we practice it and do it in the right way
- This is to keep the church pure and to help save the one in sin – ultimately, that is our goal in all that we do