

# Local Church Discipline

# Fellowship In The Local Church

- It is essential that we understand what constitutes local church fellowship before we consider the matter of withdrawing fellowship.
  - "Fellowship" - a sharing or commonality; giving a share, receiving a share, sharing a common matter.
  - "Church" - a called-out group; an assembly.
    - Any assembly - Acts 19:39.
    - All of the saved - Heb. 12:22-23.
    - A local body of Christians - Rev. 2:1.
- "Local church fellowship" - the sharing or commonality of spiritual matters between members of a local group of Christians.

# Fellowship In The Local Church

- How is fellowship established in:
  - The church universal?
    - Fellowship is Divine in origin, maintenance, and severance; human cooperation is necessary.
    - 1John 1:6-7
  - The local church?
    - Fellowship is extended, maintained, and ended by man; Divine guidance is necessary.
    - Acts 9:26; 1Peter 5:1-2; 2Thes. 3:6

# Fellowship In The Local Church

- Perversions of local church fellowship:
  - Accepting those whom God has rejected -  
2John 9-11
  - Rejecting those whom God has accepted -  
3John 9-10
  - The standard that determines this is the word of God.

# What Is Local Church Discipline?

- What is discipline?
- Secular: "Training that develops; orderly conduct; submission to control; a particular system of rules; treatment that corrects."
- Biblical: "To bind, discipline, correct, chasten, restrain; to reform by words or actions; the training of a child, including instruction; hence, discipline, correction."

# What Is Local Church Discipline?

- Types of local church discipline:
  - Instructive discipline: preventative in nature (includes all teaching, edification, admonition, and instruction)
    - Christ commanded it - Matt. 28:18-20
    - Early church practiced it - Acts 2:42
    - Apostolic examples - Acts 20:20-27

# What Is Local Church Discipline?

- Types of local church discipline:
  - Punitive discipline: corrective in nature (reproving, rebuking, correcting, warning, and withdrawing fellowship).
    - Christ commanded it - Matt. 18:15-17.
    - Paul was inspired to command it - 2Thes. 3:6.
    - Holy Spirit gave an example - Acts 5:1-14.

# What Is Local Church Discipline?

- Misuses of local church discipline:
  - Should not be used for revenge or getting even
    - Rom. 12:19; 2Thes 3:15
  - Is not intended to get rid of a dislikable person
    - 2Thes. 3:14; Gal. 6:1
  - Should not be a spring cleaning process
    - 1Cor. 14:40

# Why Is Local Church Discipline Necessary?

- The effects of tolerated sin:
  - Sinner loses soul - 1Cor. 5:5.
  - Church loses influence - 1Cor. 5:6.
  - God is displeased - Rev. 2:20.

# Why Is Local Church Discipline Necessary?

- The effects of tolerated sin:
- 1Cor. 5:1 - “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”

# Why Is Local Church Discipline Necessary?

- The need to respect Divine authority.
  - Under the Old Law, those who did not respect Divine authority died.
    - Lev. 10:1-2; Heb. 10:28
  - Under the law of Christ, congregations that disregard His authority are digressive.
    - Rev. 3:1-6

# Why Is Local Church Discipline Necessary?

- The purposes of punitive discipline:
  - To maintain the authority of Christ - Luke 6:46.
  - To maintain the purity in the church - 1Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27.
  - To maintain unity in the church - Acts 20:29-31; Rom. 16:17-18.
  - To maintain the good influence of the church - Acts 5:1-14.
  - To save the erring - Matt. 18:15; 1Cor. 5:5; 2Cor. 7:10.

# How To Practice Local Church Discipline

- Five steps of local church discipline:
  - Public instruction - Acts 20:20,27,31.
  - Private instruction - Heb. 3:13.
  - Private rebuke and admonishment - Matt. 18:15-16; Luke 17:3-4.
  - Public rebuke - Gal. 2:11-14; 1Tim. 5:20.
  - Withdrawal of spiritual & social fellowship - Rom. 16:17; 1Cor. 5:9-13; 2Thes. 3:6; 2Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:10-11; 3John 10.

# How To Practice Local Church Discipline

- Withdrawal procedure in a matter of private sin - Matt. 18:15-17.
  - Private meeting and instruction - Matt. 18:15.
  - Private rebuke with two or three witnesses - Matt. 18:16.
  - Private warning by the leadership in a local church (elders or duly constituted business meeting in absence of elders) - Gal. 6:1; 1Thes. 5:14.
  - Public withdrawal of fellowship by the church - Matt. 18:17.

# How To Practice Local Church Discipline

- Procedure in a matter of public sin - 1Cor. 5:11; 2Thes. 3:11,6; Heb. 10:25; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-11
  - Public instruction (for a large group) - Gal 1:6, 3:1
  - Private instruction (for a single individual) - Acts 8:20.
  - Private warning by the church - 1Thes. 5:14
  - Public warning by the church - 1Tim. 5:20
  - Public withdrawal of fellowship - 1Cor. 5; 2Thes. 3

# How To Practice Local Church Discipline

- Procedure with a heretic, false teacher, or factious brother - Titus 3:10-11.
  - Private instruction - Acts 18:24-26.
  - Public rebuke - Titus 3:10; 1:9-14.
  - Mark and avoid - Rom. 16:17-18; 2John 9-11.

# Withdrawing Fellowship

- Have the proper attitude.
  - Right action can be negated by wrong attitude - John 4:24; Matt. 18:7-9.
  - Do not lose sight of the purpose of discipline - 1Cor. 5:5-7; Matt. 18:15.
  - Discipline with love - John 13:34.
  - Discipline with firm resolve - 1Cor. 15:58.
  - Discipline in an orderly manner - 1Cor. 14:40.
  - Discipline in unity - 1Cor. 5:4, 1:10.
  - Discipline consistently - 1Tim. 5:21.

# Withdrawing Fellowship

- Maintain individual Christian duties toward the disciplined.
  - Respect the marking by the church - Rom. 16:17.
  - Avoid association that implies endorsement of their manner of life - 2John 9-11; 1Cor. 5:11; 2Thes. 3:14.
  - Consider them as erring Christians to be prayed for and admonished - 1John 5:16; 2Thes. 3:15.
  - View them as unsaved (Matt. 18:17), but not as an enemy (2Thes. 3:15).
  - Seek to restore them by means of repentance and confession - James 5:16-20.
  - Forgive completely when they repent - 2Cor. 2:5-8, 7:9-12.

# Answering Objections

- "We can't withdraw from them until every member has been to see them."
- "The parable of the tares teaches us to leave them alone and not bother them."
- "We might get sued."
- "It will just drive them away from the church."
- "It will make folks angry with us (in or out of the church)."
- "They have already withdrawn from the church."
- "Everyone sins; what sins will you start with?"

# Answering Objections

- "We have several people that need withdrawn from years ago. Are you going to go back and get them too, too?"
- "We don't have elders, so we can't withdraw from anyone."
- "You're judging people. God decides who's in the church & who goes to heaven."
- "You can't talk about others sins."
- "What if withdrawing from someone does more damage than good?"

# What Must The Disciplined One Do In Order To Be Restored To Fellowship?

- The disciplined one must make a public confession of wrong.
- He must confess the sins for which he is being disciplined.
- The repentance and confession must be genuine.
- The confession is invalid if one continues in the sin.
- The confession is invalid when it contains the word “if”.
- Denying the authority of the elders or business meeting in which one was disciplined does not constitute a confession.
- Accusing other brethren does not constitute a confession.
- One who makes an invalid confession is still under the aegis of the disciplinary action. He is still withdrawn from.
- The members of the congregation who continue to have fellowship with him commit sin and become candidates for discipline themselves.

It is never pleasant to  
discipline unrepentent,  
erring Christians...

**But it is the  
Lord's will.**