

Back To Basics

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SPECIAL EXPANDED EDITION: EFFECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Johnie Edwards

If churches of Christ are lacking in doing a command of God, it is the failure to carry out the command to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...” (2 Th. 3:6). This special issue of *Back To Basics* takes a Scriptural look at *Effective Church Discipline*.

1) CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A DIVINE COMMAND. Church discipline is not optional, but is a God-given command. “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” (2 Th. 3:6). The commands of God are to be heeded (Rev. 22:14).

2) CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS AN OLD COMMAND. Discipline is almost as old as the Lord’s church. The early church saw divine discipline exercised by the Lord Himself, in the case of “Ananias with Sapphira his wife...” (Acts 5:1). This couple “sold a possession, And kept back part of the price” (Acts 5:3), pretending to have given all of it. God called this lying. The death penalty was God’s way of disciplining them.

3) CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A NEGLECTED COMMAND. Few churches seem to see the need for practicing this command. Neglect is a sin (Heb. 2:3); and, as James penned, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17).

4) CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A RESULT-PRODUCING COMMAND. Contrary to the thinking of many, proper Bible church discipline will work. It worked in New Testament times. The man in 1 Corinthians 5 was disciplined and according to 2 Corinthians 2:1-9, this withdrawn from man repented and returned to faithfulness. Read it. I am sure that many of our readers of *Back To Basics* have seen it work. It is time we get back to the basics of teaching and doing the Lord’s will and allow His word to do its work!

5) CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS A TAUGHT COMMAND. A failure to teach on this subject has caused some to be ignorant of its value and how to go about doing it. We are what we have been taught and church discipline is taught on the pages of the word of God. So, please take the time to read this special issue, as you check what the Bible has to say, on this vital theme.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

John Isaac Edwards

That we might have a clear conception of the subject before us, let us begin with a definition of terms. We approach them in the reverse as they appear in our title - *Effective Church Discipline*.

1) **DISCIPLINE.** Discipline is training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior. There are two kinds of discipline: Instructive (preventive) and corrective (punitive). *Instructive* discipline serves to inform or provide knowledge. Paul reminded the Thessalonians, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" (1 Th. 2:11). *Exhorted*, *comforted*, and *charged* are expressions of instructive discipline. Perhaps, we would not have to practice as much punitive discipline, if we would put more emphasis on preventive discipline. *Corrective* discipline punishes for the purpose of improving or reforming. As we discuss *Effective Church Discipline*, we have in mind discipline that is punitive in nature.

2) **CHURCH.** The Bible describes three divine institutions: the home (Gen. 2:18-24), civil government (Rom. 13:1-7) and the church (Mt. 16:18). All three require proper discipline to oper-

ate as God ordained. Effective *Church Discipline* limits the field of our study to discipline as it relates "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:2).

3) **EFFECTIVE.** This has to do with the aim or objective of the discipline. What is to be accomplished by administering church discipline? Paul said, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Th. 2:12). Though punitive discipline is not pleasant, it is profitable. The apostle to the Hebrews penned, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). Discipline is effective whenever it serves the purpose God intended.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 records, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Bible contains everything we need with reference to the subject before us. Any discipline according to Scripture is of God, while any discipline contrary to Scripture is not of God.

Back To Basics

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SUBJECTS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

John Isaac Edwards

We open the Scriptures and allow the Lord to identify the subjects of church discipline.

1) **THEM WHICH CAUSE DIVISIONS.** Paul besought, “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). An effect requires a cause. There is no room in the kingdom for doctrine-contrary authors of dissension.

2) **ANY IMMORAL BROTHER.** Paul wrote the Corinthians, “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” (1 Cor. 5:11). Church discipline does not pertain to “them also that are without,” but “them that are within” (1 Cor. 5:12). No brother is above discipline as Paul said, “any.”

3) **EVERY BROTHER THAT WALKETH DISORDERLY.** The Thessalonians were commanded, “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Th. 3:6). To not follow apostolic tradition is to walk disorderly. Apostolic tradition is composed of things the apostles did by example and taught by command (2 Th. 3:7-11). To not work, for example, was to become disorderly, for the apostles “wrought with labour and travail” and commanded, “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”

4) **ANY MAN WHO TEACHES OTHERWISE.** Read 1 Timothy 6:1-5 to learn, “If any man teach otherwise...from such withdraw thyself.” Any teaching not according to the doctrine of Christ is not wholesome and causes a breach of fel-

lowship (2 Jn. 9-11). A man’s doctrine defines his character - “*If any man teach otherwise...He is...*” Some are in the reverse, trying to determine a man’s doctrine by defining his character!

5) **A MAN THAT IS AN HERETICK.** One who is contentious or factious, “after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Ti. 3:10-11).

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BEFORE DISCIPLINE

Johnie Edwards

Discipline, in the form of withdrawing fellowship from a disorderly church member, is the last resort. There are a number of things which must be done first, before withdrawing.

1) **TEACHING.** A lot of disorderly conduct could be prevented if there were more Bible teaching on preventive measures. Most places have gotten away from pointed sermons on sins which cause folks to be subjects of discipline. How long has it been since you heard a plain, simple sermon on sin? That is, where sins were named like the Bible names them. We would do well to preach on 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Here Paul noted some specific sins: “Unrighteous, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners.” The “works of the flesh” of Galatians 5:19-21 would be another good topic to preach on from time to time.

2) **CONVERT THE ERRING.** James penned, “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (Jas. 5:19-20). We too often think of outsiders of needing converting; sometimes church members do too!

3) **WARN THE UNRULY.** Quite often, we see church members being unruly and nothing is said or done about it in time to prevent a falling away. Paul told the Thessalonians, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly...” (1 Th. 5:14). Sometimes warning the unruly may be all that is needed to get them to behave themselves.

4) **SUPPORT THE WEAK.** Sometimes brethren become weak spiritually and no one comes to their rescue. Paul said, “...support the weak” (1 Th. 5:14; Acts 20:35). The Romans were told, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Rom. 15:1). Have you taken the time to help a weak Christian bear his load?

5) **PRAY FOR THEM.** Our most vital tool in restoring the lost is to pray for them and we often fail to use it. John uttered, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask...” (1 Jn. 5:14). Sometimes we don’t have because we don’t ask. Remember that Jesus said, “Ask and it shall be given you...” (Mt. 7:7). Don’t forget the Lord said, “Let your requests be made known unto God...” (Phil. 4:6).

6) **SHOW CARE.** A lot of church members get side-tracked and get to feeling that no one really cares. Too often this is the case. May it never be said of us, “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me: no man cared for my soul” (Ps. 142:4). May we take the words of Paul and as “members, have the same care one for another” (1 Cor. 12:25).

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EFFECTS OF NO CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Irvin Lee, "Dead Yet Speaketh"

Failure to carry out any command of God is a serious failure. The New Testament emphasizes the duties of the individual, but there are certain responsibilities assigned to groups of Christians (churches) because we are to work together as a family or body under the elders and under Christ, our chief Shepherd (Rom. 16:16; Ti. 1:5; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-5).

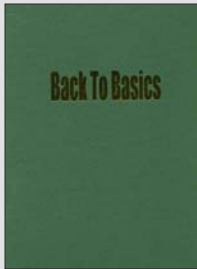
1) NO DISCIPLINE CAUSES MEN TO BE LOST. God does not want any to perish because every soul is precious (Mt. 16:26; 2 Pet. 3:9). If a brother sins, he endangers his own soul. Any Christian near him should seek to convert or restore him to God (Jas. 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1). If efforts of this type fail, the important task of rescuing this one from perishing falls upon the church (1 Cor. 5). Let every member be aware of the fact that the effort is to save the sinner as well as to protect the reputation of the church (1 Cor. 5:4-8). We may admonish the sinner as a brother because we are interested in his spiritual welfare. We want him to be ashamed of his sinful way, so we withdraw from him (2 Th. 3:6, 14-15).

2) NO DISCIPLINE ALLOWS LEAVEN'S WICKEDNESS TO ENTER THE LUMP. The church at Corinth was "puffed up" with its own wisdom

rather than depending on the counsel of God concerning the member who was a fornicator. Allowing one couple to live in violation of the law was a way of letting the leaven of wickedness enter the "lump." It was true then as it is now that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6-8). If the church closes its eyes to one case, there will likely soon be another and then others.

3) NO DISCIPLINE WILL KEEP MEN FROM ENDURING SOUND DOCTRINE. Timothy was charged to "preach, reprove, rebuke and exhort" in an urgent way, if he would push off the day when they would not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-5). The mouths of those who speak unsound doctrine, should be stopped, but who will do this if the people like the perverted pattern? (Ti. 1:10-14; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Timothy was urged to be forceful and faithful in his preaching, and the churches were taught to mark, avoid and reject false teachers. They were to purge out the leaven of wickedness and disorder to avoid the evil day when they would not endure sound doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18; Acts 20:29-31; Gal. 1:6-10).

4) NO DISCIPLINE ENCOURAGES THE WORLDLY. If a church looks the other way and refuses to notice when more and more members become ungodly, that church will become a gathering place for the worldly. It will also lose the respect of the community. Its zeal for Christ will vanish, so it will fall into the same condition that had come to Israel when Isaiah and Jeremiah lived. God was displeased with a church that tolerated doctrine and practices that were contrary to His will (Rev. 1:14-15).

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OBJECTIONS TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE

David McPherson

In the pages of God's Holy Writ, the need for church discipline is clearly taught. Nonetheless, there are those claiming to be Christians who oppose Christ's authority on the matter. Consider just a few of their objections.

1) "TO WITHDRAW WILL RUN THEM OFF."

Folks should not be opposed to teaching or action on the basis that some might run off. When Jesus explained the sacrifice involved in following Him, many "*went back and walked with Him no more*" (Jn. 6:66). These "ran off" from Jesus' teaching. Did that mean His teaching was the problem? Certainly not!

The brother who has so acted as for the church to discipline him is already away from God. The withdrawal simply acknowledges that fact. The church is to "purge out the old leaven" (1 Cor. 5:7). In this sense, the sinful, wicked one unwilling to repent needs "run off" that the sorrowful, penitent brother in Christ might return.

By the way, to where are we going to "run them off"? In sin, they are separated from God (Is. 59:1-2). Is the action of church discipline going to somehow make them REALLY separated from God? A brother in sin who refuses to repent needs to be delivered to Satan that his spirit may be saved (1 Cor. 5:5).

2) "TO WITHDRAW VIOLATES THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES." The parable is found in Matthew 13:24-30. Those who use this argument assume that when churches root up the tares (unfaithful members), they may also uproot some of the faithful at the same time. Such reasoning is based on an erroneous view of the

parable. These believe that the "field" is the church, the "wheat" is faithful members, and the "tares" are unfaithful ones. But Jesus explained that "the field is the world" (Mt. 13:38), not the church. The wheat represents those of the kingdom; the tares are those outside the kingdom.

What Jesus is teaching is that it is not the work of Christians to execute vengeance or destroy those of the world. God will make the final separation of sinner and saint, goat and sheep at the judgment (Mt. 13:30; Rom. 12:19). The parable of the wheat and tares has nothing to do with corrective discipline in the church.

3) "WE DON'T HAVE TO WITHDRAW, WE'RE FAMILY." Such a statement is selfish, not to mention wrong. Withdrawing should not be a matter of "have to" or "don't have to;" it should be done willingly by those who love the unfaithful. This is God's way of making the one in sin ashamed (2 Th. 3:14). Too many brethren are missing it badly in this regard. I know of one family where the mother said of her unfaithful daughter, "Well she's going to hell anyway, we might as well make life on earth as pleasant as possible." Who told you that? That kind of "foolosophy" will not only take her to hell, it will grab her relatives too!

The Bible teaches that our responsibility in church discipline is to "*anyone* named a brother" (1 Cor. 5:11), "*every* brother who walks disorderly" (2 Thes. 3:6), and "*anyone*" who "does not obey our word in this epistle" (2 Th. 3:14). The "family don't apply" doctrine is of man, not of God.

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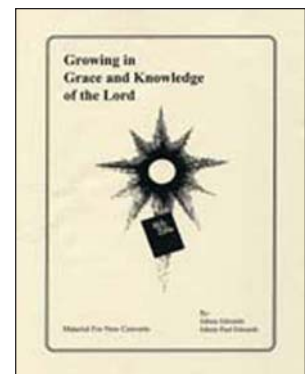
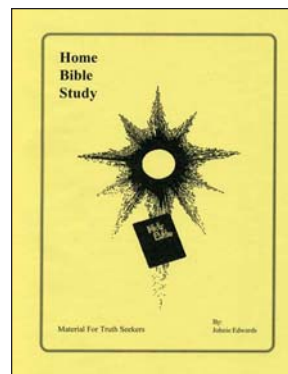
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PATTERN OF ADMINISTERING CHURCH DISCIPLINE

John Isaac Edwards

All that can be known about administering church discipline is revealed within the pages of God's inspired revelation. It is simply a matter of reading and properly applying the passages that bear on the subject.

1) CULTIVATE A FEELING OF SORROW THAT LEADS TO DISCIPLINE. With reference to the immoral brother in their midst, Paul told the Corinthians, "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (1 Cor. 5:2). Brethren who neglect practicing discipline as the Bible teaches must do some mourning!

2) COMMAND AND EXHORT. 2 Thessalonians 3:12 directs, "Now them that are such (disorderly, working not at all, v. 11) we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." Here is a brother who is insubordinate, out of rank, not following apostolic tradition. What are we to do? Admonish him to do as the Bible teaches.

3) AFTER THE FIRST AND SECOND ADMONITION REJECT. As Paul spoke of "an heretick" (who does not avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, v. 9), he instructed, "...after the first and second admonition reject" (Ti. 3:10). Suppose you command and exhort the erring brother and he does not straighten up? "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him..." (2 Th. 3:14).

4) WHEN GATHERED TOGETHER, DELIVER UNTO SATAN. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...when ye are gathered together...deliver

such an one unto Satan..." (1 Cor. 5:4-5). Church discipline is both congregational and individual. Congregational, in that it involves the church "gathered together." Individual, as Paul said, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many" (2 Cor. 2:6). Paul spoke of "Hymenaeus and Alexander (who put away concerning faith have made shipwreck, v. 19); whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20).

5) MARK THE SUBJECT AND HAVE NO COMPANY WITH HIM. Romans 16:17, "...mark...and avoid" and 2 Thessalonians 3:14, "note...and have no company" explain each other. To mark is to note and to have no company is to avoid. Peter said it was unlawful for a Jew "to keep company, or come unto one of another nation" (Acts 10:28). In this sense, he becomes "unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Mt. 18:17).

6) WITH SUCH AN ONE NO NOT TO EAT. This becomes the extent to which we have no company with the erring. "No not to eat" means just what it says. If you do not think so, have a little talk with Adam and Eve! (Gen. 2:16-17; 3).

7) COUNT HIM NOT AS AN ENEMY, BUT ADMONISH HIM AS A BROTHER. Withdrawing from the disorderly does not conclude our responsibilities. We must continue to admonish him (2 Th. 3:15). He is still our brother.

The New Testament pattern becomes the manner and method of administering church discipline. This may seem "cruel and unusual" to some, but the Lord says, "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment..." (2 Cor. 2:6).

SANCTION THE SINNER

Steven F. Deaton

Paul gave Corinth the command to withdraw from the wayward brother. He said, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:4-5). This command applies to churches today as well.

1) CHURCH DISCIPLINE MUST BE PRACTICED FOR THE SAKE OF THE SINNER (1 COR. 5:4-5). He is to be pushed out of the fellowship of the kingdom of God into the kingdom of Satan. There, it is hoped, the consequences of his sin will do what association with Christians could not do — cause him to quit his sin (Lk. 15:11-19).

2) CHURCH DISCIPLINE MUST BE PRACTICED FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH (1 COR. 5:6-7). If one man’s sexual immorality is tolerated, why not allow it for two men, or three? Likewise, if the church accepts the sexually immoral, then it won’t be long until it tolerates drunkards, liars, thieves, and false teachers. The leavening influence of sin must be removed.

3) CHURCH DISCIPLINE MUST BE PRACTICED FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD (1 COR. 5:9-13). Paul is explicit in saying that the church has no business withdrawing from or disciplining sinners in the world. Its disciplinary actions are directed toward erring saints. However, when the command to abstain from social intercourse with a wayward brother is practiced, it not only sends a message to him, but also to the world. Association with a sinful saint also sends the world a message — iniquity

is acceptable. Why would the worldly man become part of a church that is essentially no different than any other worldly organization?

4) CHURCH DISCIPLINE MUST BE PRACTICED BECAUSE IT IS COMMANDED (1 COR. 5:4). Paul said to do it “with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 5:4). Some weak Christians complain about disfellowship. They say it is cruel, mean, hateful, and claim it drives the erring brother away — “He will never come back now.” This reveals their sinful attitude that they know better than God. Too, their dead faith is dead wrong. The incestuous man at Corinth repented of his sin and was received back into fellowship (2 Cor. 2:3-11).

5) CHURCH DISCIPLINE SHOWS GRIEF OVER SIN (1 COR. 5:2). Sin ought to bring sorrow to the saints. Perhaps the reason more churches are not disciplining their erring members is because they do not mourn over sin or the soul caught in its grip. The more sin troubles our souls, the more motivated we will be to rid it from among us.

Elders, deacons, preachers, and every member ought to heed the Spirit’s command given through Paul — *sanction the sinner*. When this is done, churches will be healthy, vibrant, and growing.

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RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!

PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Johnie Paul Edwards

God has always had purpose for what He does and this is true of discipline as taught on the pages of inspiration. We take a look at some divine purposes of discipline.

1) TO PROVE OUR OBEDIENCE. It must be impressed upon our minds that discipline is a command of God just as Paul wrote the Thessalonians, “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” (2 Th. 3:6). Paul wrote the Corinthians to “purge out therefore the old leaven,” which was but to say withdraw from the fornicator (1 Cor. 5:1-7). Then, Paul writes the Corinthians, in 2 Corinthians 2, and commends them for their “obedience in all things” (2 Cor. 2:9). A church that does not practice discipline is not an obedient church!

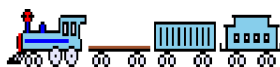
2) TO KEEP THE CHURCH PURE. A failure for a church to discipline the disorderly will make the church impure. This is the reason Paul said, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7-8). One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch!

3) TO SAVE ONE’S SPIRIT. The reason Paul gave for withdrawing from the fornicator was, “that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). You see, discipline is not to hurt a person, but to save them.

4) TO MAKE ONE ASHAMED. Paul instructed the Thessalonians to “withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...note that man, and have no company with him, that he might be ashamed” (1 Th. 3:6, 14). It is hoped that, in disfellowshipping a member, he will be so ashamed of himself that he will repent and return.

5) TO CAUSE OTHERS TO FEAR. When God disciplined Ananias and Sapphira with the death penalty, “great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things” (Acts 5:1-11). When a church practices Bible discipline when needed, and members know that if they walk disorderly and fail to correct such, they will be dealt with, you will begin to see a decrease in disorderly conduct among church members.

6) TO BRING ABOUT REPENTANCE. Just as the fornicator in 1 Corinthians 5 repented of his sin and the Corinthian Christians were told “to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” (2 Cor. 2:7). Discipline does work!



Stay On Track. Get Back To Basics.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE WITHDRAWN

Johnie Edwards

It is often thought that if one withdraws from a local church, he cannot be withdrawn from. I don't remember reading anything in the Bible about one "withdrawing from the church." Do you?

1) **FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING.** The question often comes up, "Can those who just quit attending be withdrawn from?" When effort is made to discipline such, they often say, "Well, I have already withdrawn myself from the church!" It is quite clear that we are commanded, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is..." (Heb. 10:25). If "forsaking the assembling" is a sin, then such is a subject of discipline. If not, why not? Is a person who abandons attending church services, if he is well enough, "walking disorderly?" If he is, he is a subject of discipline (2 Th. 3:6).

2) **AWOL SOLDIER.** A soldier in the United States Army has duties and responsibilities from which he cannot just walk away! Suppose a soldier just quits being a soldier and argues, "I have withdrawn from the army?" Will they say, "That's okay; we can't do anything about it, because you have withdrawn yourself from the army?" Want to try such? Why such a person would face court martial! The Lord's people are taught, "...endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

3) **SHEPHERDS GO AFTER THE LOST.** The story of the lost sheep in Luke 15 tells us, "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose

one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and *go after that which is lost*, until he find it" (Lk. 15:4). Some might say, "There is nothing we can do, the sheep has gone astray; he has withdrawn from the flock." Nonsense! The shepherd in this story "went after" the lost sheep, and so must we.

4) **GOD DISCIPLINED HIS PEOPLE.** God's chosen people, Israel, "have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Is. 1:4). Jeremiah said, "...my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer. 2:32), and were guilty of "backsliding" (Jer. 3:6-14). God, through His prophets, plead for them to return and "...stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). So God said, "That's okay, nothing I can or will do about it, for you have withdrawn from me." You know better than that! God eventually, after trying to get them to return and serve Him, through the Babylonians and Assyrians, sent them away into captivity, as punishment or discipline for their sins.

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WHEN CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS INEFFECTIVE

Johnie Edwards

Ever wonder why some church discipline is not effective? Let's take a look. Church discipline is ineffective...

1) **WHEN THERE IS NO TEACHING.** A lot of churches never hear any teaching or preaching on the subject of church discipline. Such is about a thing of the past. Yet, the Bible still has some things to say about it. We need to be as Paul, when he said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Let's get to teaching on it.

2) **WHEN BRETHREN ARE NOT KNIT TOGETHER.** There are too many churches where brethren are not close to each other. We need to be as Paul wrote the Colossians, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love..." (Col. 2:2). One of the reasons for church discipline is to cause one the pain of not being together, socially, with other members of the church. But, since a lot of church members are not "knit together," nothing has been lost in the withdrawing process! When we find ourselves being of "one heart and soul..." (Acts 4:32), discipline will become more effective!

3) **WHEN DISCIPLINE IS TOO SLOW.** It's kind of like those on prison's "death row." Capital punishment is not as effective as it could be, to deter crime, if the average "death-row-person" didn't sit there for an average of seventeen years! Didn't the wise man say, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11). Ezra the scribe wrote, "And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judg-

ment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of good or to imprisonment" (Ezra 7:26).

4) **WHEN BRETHREN DISAGREE.** For church discipline to be effective, the whole church must stand behind the decision. No doubt, this is one reason discipline is to be done "when ye are come together" (1 Cor. 5:4). This means the church is to do this work together. If friends of a withdrawn person "side-in" with the withdrawn, the discipline loses its "punch."

5) **WHEN THE WITHDRAWN ARE MISTREATED.** Just because a church member has been withdrawn from does not mean that he is to be abused. When church members let such a person know where they stand, in regards to his sin, they must "not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Th. 3:15). How can we have any influence on the withdrawn to return, if we never speak to or encourage them?

6) **WHEN THERE'S A LACK OF CONSISTENCY.** We must learn not to pick and choose those to be disciplined. Discipline must be practiced constantly as needed, to all to whom it is needed! Didn't Paul pen, "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly..." (2 Th. 3:6)? Let's see to it that discipline is effective.

MOVING?

Be sure to send your change of address.



THE JOY OF RESTORATION

Aude McKee

The *Joy of Restoration* has been neglected more by those of us who preach than any other. We often quote passages on: “Put away the wicked man from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13); “Mark them that are causing division” (Rom. 16:17); “Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Th. 3:6). But we seldom hear 2 Corinthians 2 applied to the same subject.

1) **THOSE WHO TAKE THE ACTION.** 2 Corinthians 2 has to do with the attitude of those who have withdrawn their fellowship from an erring brother. Unless the action has been undertaken with the proper motive and in the right spirit, fervent, sincere joy cannot follow when the sinner repents (2 Cor. 2:6-16).

2) **FIVE WORDS NEEDED.** Five words in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8 need emphasis.

First, the action taken was *sufficient*. It was enough punishment.

The second word of special consideration is *contrariwise*. This word indicates a 180 degree turn from the idea of inflicting more punishment on the sinner who had repented.

Forgive is the third word. When one repents, God forgives, and so must we.

Then there is the word *comfort*, which means to soothe in time of grief or fear; to console, to help and assist. The sinner who has repented needs help, assistance and consolation. If he does not receive it, it may be the last push into the arms of Satan.

Then the word *confirm* or *reaffirm* is important. May our actions toward the sinner who has repented be such that our love for him is proven. Let there be no doubt in his mind that we are deeply concerned for him, and certainly the joy we manifest at his restoration will be one of the confirming signs of our love.

3) **THE JOY OF BEING RESTORED.** There is not a Christian reading these lines but what knows personally the joy of restoration. All have sinned (Rom. 3:23). And what greater joy can one have in this life than to feel the load of guilt lifted and replaced with a close communion with God? What child of God has not at one time or another, gone to bed at night sick at heart over some thing said or done unbecoming of a Christian? And then comes the decision to make it right with the person involved and with God. Following this, a prayer reminiscent of David’s plea in Psalm 51, and the result is joy unspeakable and a peace that passes understanding. The story of the wayward son in Luke 15 does not mention the joy of this boy when his father took him back, but it was unnecessary. It will come as surely as the day follows night. God is there to welcome us, and every saint with a pure heart will rejoice in our return. Luke does record, “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Lk. 15:7).

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Kid's Activity Page

Paul Adams

Memory Verse: *"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"* (Gal. 6:1).

Restoring The Erring

Unscramble the words below, using the clues provided.

This action is to be taken toward those who walk disorderly (2 Th. 3:6).

H T I W D A R W

This action is to be taken toward those who cause divisions (Rom. 16:17).

K A R M

We must not keep this with a brother who is a fornicator (1 Cor. 5:9).

P O Y M A N C

We must not even do this with one who is the subject of discipline (1 Cor. 5:11).

T E A

To save the spirit it may be necessary to deliver one to this person (1 Cor. 5:5).

A S T N A

***"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"* (Mark 10:14).**

Question: “How could the eunuch of Acts 8 be immersed, since they were in a desert? And how much water is in the word baptism?”

Answer:

IMMERSION OF THE EUNUCH

To understand the conversion of the eunuch of Ethiopia, please take the time to read the account in Acts 8:26-39. It is stated in Acts 8:26, “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” The word “desert” does not mean without water. We know that is true for the eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized” (Acts 8:36); even in this “desert!” To help you appreciate this, please notice that Jesus “departed by ship into a desert...” (Mt. 14:13). What in the world is a ship doing in a desert if there is no water there? The word “desert” often means not populated; that is no one lives around the place. You can rest assured that the eunuch was baptized by immersion because the Bible says, “...they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized” (Acts 8:36). After he confessed his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), the Bible records, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39). How readeest thou on how he was baptized? Furthermore, the Bible says that Bible baptism is a “burial,” and a “planting” (Rom. 6:4-5). When you bury something, it is buried. Right?

WATER IN BAPTISM

As to “how much water is in the word baptism?” There is absolutely none! The word “baptism” does not mean water, but it means an immersion. In 1864, the first edition of the *Bible Union New Testament* was published by Baptist scholars, H. B. Hackett, A.C. Kendrick and J.C. Conant. Every time the word “baptism” occurred, they translated it “immersion,” which is exactly correct. For an example, Mark 16:16 is translated, “...He that believes and is immersed shall be saved...!” The Baptist Church was arguing with the Methodist Church over whether baptism is immersion or sprinkling/pouring. The translation proved too much for the Baptist Church; for when they got to John the Baptist, they translated it, “John, the Immerser...” (Mt. 3:1). The Baptist Church thought the words: “John, the Baptist,” gave them the name they wear. So, upon seeing that it translated the name “Baptist” right out of the Bible, it was taken off the market! You can see why, right.

Have A Bible Question? Send To: Back To Basics, P.O. Box 462, Salem, IN 47167

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