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# What Every Pastor Should Know About Church Discipline

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Church discipline is plainly taught in the Scriptures. Jesus ordained church discipline for bringing about repentance and restoration in the lives of his erring children.

## *Seven things every pastor should know about Biblical church discipline*

1. When practiced according to the **Scripture**, Biblical church discipline is an act of obedience that demonstrates our love for the Lord and our desire to have fellowship with him by walking in the light of his truth. (John 14: 2,23)
2. Biblical church discipline serves as a **deterrent** to sin. (I Timothy 5:20)
3. Biblical Church discipline preserves the **unity** (Titus 3:10), **purity** (I Corinthians 5:6-7) and **reputation** (I Corinthians 6:5-6) of Christ's church.
4. Biblical Church discipline helps to clear the **conscience** (I John 1:7-10) and the **reputation** (II Corinthians 2:6-7) of their repenting member.
5. Practicing Biblical church discipline, each member of the church assumes the **responsibility** of lovingly watching over (Hebrews 12:14-16) the other members of the church for the purpose of **encouraging** holiness (Hebrews 10:24-25) and **discouraging** disorderly behavior in each member (Galatians 6:1, 2) and in the church as a whole (Acts 20:28-31) and each member consents to being so watched over. (Ephesians 5:21, Philippians 2:3,4)
6. When other biblical measures prove **ineffective**\*, those members of the church (Hebrews 13:7,17) who refuse to repent of sin and submit to the church (I Corinthians 5: 12,13, II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15, Matthew 18:17) will be **expelled** from the church and turned over to **Satan**. (I Corinthians 5:5)  
\*Corrective measures that are less drastic than removing persons being disciplined include those outlined in (Matthew 18:15-17).
  - A. Provide attempts to restore the erring brother privately (v.15).
  - B. Restoration attempts made in the presence of one or more witnesses (v.16).
  - C. Public rebuke from the church (v.17). The usefulness of public rebuke from the church is also addressed in (I Timothy 5:20) and (Titus 1:13).
7. When the disciplined member gives sufficient evidence of genuine **repentance**, the church is to heartily express **forgiveness** and receive the offender into **Fellowship** again.(II Corinthians 2:6-7)

*It is important that Pastors not use Biblical church discipline in an unbiblical way such as just because a person is difficult to deal with or because they do not agree with you .Biblical church discipline is to be used for sin in the life of a believer.*

**Un repented Sin- I Corinthians 5:11-13**

**Divisive Behavior –Titus 3:10**

**Heresy/ False Teachers- I Timothy 1:3-4**

Many Pastors and churches are afraid to use Biblical church discipline in the church because of the possibilities of **lawsuits**. ***The Institute for Christian Conciliation*** gives some excellent guidelines that should be heeded:

### **Risk Management Recommendations for Church Discipline**

The following recommendations may reduce the likelihood of a civil court intervening in the affairs of your church:

- Amend **bylaws and/or disciplinary guidelines** to limit their application, as well as divulging as little private personal information as possible during discipline proceedings. These documents should clearly explain to whom the church's discipline authority applies. Church discipline should never apply to anyone who is not clearly and voluntarily affiliated with the church.
- Obtain informed **consent** to disciplinary policies from all members and regular attendees. Ideally, there would be a written statement signed by all persons subject to church discipline affirming that he or she understands and agrees with the policies.
- Teach regularly on **church discipline** so members and regular attendees remain aware of the biblical basis, purpose, and steps of discipline.

### **Steps to Follow When Applying Discipline**

- Be **consistent**.
- Carefully follow your **bylaws** and/or disciplinary guidelines.
- Avoid taking **disciplinary** action against anyone who is not clearly and voluntarily affiliated with the church.
- Always speak the **truth** in love.
- Communicate private information only to those who have a **right** and **need** to know. Public statements to the congregation should include only the biblical principle that has been violated,

the identity of the violator, and the instructions from church leaders as to what sanction is being imposed.

- In discussing unproven allegations with leaders, be careful to distinguish between what is fact and what is merely allegation.
- Base all decisions on clearly explained biblical grounds. Ideally, all final church discipline decisions should be reduced to writing and retained in church records available only to authorized persons.
- Check with your legal counsel while developing your church discipline policy and before providing documentation of your disciplinary policies to an inquiring attorney.

***Important: As Pastors we must remember to couple prayer and fasting together with wise council before proceeding with Biblical church discipline. It would be wise to form a team of Godly persons in the church to address Biblical church discipline matters.***

***Important: Every Pastor should take notice to what the scripture says in II Timothy 2:24-26 and read and follow it when dealing with people he deals with in the church. These verses would be good to memorize.***

***II Timothy 2:24-26***

*"The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."*

***Motto of Welch Revival, "Mend a Church and Win the World"***