



one exception

Small Group Notes - 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 & Matthew 18:15-17

Some groups may find the following suggested questions a helpful starting point. Don't feel bound by them, rather work at understanding God's word for yourselves, praying that God will help you live in the light of it.

Introduction

Last week we saw God is at work transforming us and our church into the likeness of Jesus. This week we consider the place of church discipline in the life of the church.

Pastor Mark Dever, an advocate of church discipline, cautions the local church...

"Into the peaceful, well-meaning life of an innocent, Bible-believing congregation, the lightning bolt of church discipline strikes! It may be in a sermon. It may be in a conversation between the pastor and a deacon. But somewhere it hits, usually accompanied by great earnestness and a torrent of Scriptural citations. Then, the sincere action is taken.

Then, the response comes: misunderstanding and hurt feelings result. Counter charges are made. Sin is attacked and defended. Names are called. Acrimony abounds! The symphony of the local congregation transposes into a cacophony of arguments and accusations. People cry out, "Where will this stop?!" and "So do you think you're perfect?" (Mark Dever)

Question 1 - Have you experienced the negative effects of badly handled church discipline?

Question 2 - What objections are raised against exercising discipline in the church?

Now Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Question 3 - What different reasons does Paul give the Corinthians for exercising church discipline in this situation?

Question 4 - What does this passage suggest about different attitudes the church should have towards persistent unrepentant sin by a member of the church?

Now Read Matthew 18:15-17

Jesus suggests we are to take sin seriously and seek to address the issues in a number of steps.

Step #1: Have a private conversation.

"Church discipline largely takes place informally, as Christians speak the truth in love to one another and point each other to the grace of the gospel." (Geoff Chang)

Question 5 - In practice, what would this first step of informal discipline look like?

Question 6 - *What are the dangers that need to be avoided and what would the benefits be?*

Step #2: Take one or two others along

"The next step widens the circle of involvement, while not yet involving the church as a whole. Jesus instructs the members to take one or two others along to confront the one caught in sin." (Geoff Chang)

Question 7 - *In practice, what would this next step look like?*

Question 8 - *What are the dangers that need to be avoided and what would the benefits be?*

Step #3: Involve leaders or elders by informing them of the situation.

"Here, the leadership has the responsibility to consider the nature of the charges. Is the sin concrete and serious enough to warrant taking the next steps of church discipline? Are there extenuating circumstances that the member might not know?" (Geoff Chang)

Question 9 - *In what different ways would you like the church leadership to respond when they are made aware of the situation? What should they **not** do?*

Conclusion

"The goal of discipline is always repentance, restoration, and reconciliation, if necessary. Like Jesus, who laid down his life so you could be reconciled to the Father, you're seeking the welfare of another, even if it comes at your own expense. Always ask, "Why am I doing this?" If it's about anything other than repentance and restoration, wait and pray until your goals are in check." (Whitney Woollard)

Question 9 - *What motivations, other than the restoration of the person, might cloud our judgment or cause us to act inappropriately?*

Question 10 - *What one or two things has God has challenged you to do/think/pray differently (individually or as a group) as a result of your reflections this week?*

Spend time praying for each other in response to God's word this week.