

D. How do I relate to someone who's been excommunicated?

- Upon excommunication, church members should not “associate” with offender. 1 Cor. 5:11.
- Treat offender as unbeliever; lovingly encourage him to repent; but avoid purely social interaction.

D. What if a church leader sins?

1 Tim. 5:19-20: “Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.”

- Requires more than one witness to formally commence discipline action.
- 1 Tim. 5:19 does not mean that a wronged member has no recourse against elder if he or she is the only witness.
- An elder's sin is particularly serious and requires public rebuke.

Conclusion

Core Seminars—Living as a Church

Class 9: Church Discipline: Preserving God-Glorifying Unity



I. Introduction

Purpose of class:

- To consider the various ways that the Bible instructs us to practice church discipline;
- To consider how a proper exercise of discipline preserves unity and protects the reputation of Christ;
- To consider how we, as church members, bear a responsibility to be involved in the discipline process.

II. Two Kinds of Discipline.

1. Formative discipline – *E.g.*, Eph. 4:11-12
2. Corrective discipline – 1 Cor. 5; Matt. 18

III. The Purpose of Corrective Discipline

1. For the good of the person being disciplined.
2. For the good of other Christians.
3. For the health of the church.
4. For the corporate witness of the church.
5. For the reputation of Christ.

IV. How do we Exercise Corrective Discipline?

A. What if someone sins against you?

Matthew 18:15-17: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

Step #1 – Go to the offender.

Preserves unity within the church and promotes reconciliation.

Five Suggestions before you go:

- Pray for the offender
- Make sure you have a biblical basis
- Examine your motives
- Be careful not to slander or gossip
- Speak with gentleness, humility and love

Two additional thoughts:

- We must follow Matthew 18 when the offense has created an unreconciled state between us and the offender and/or when the sin is endangering a brother or sister
- Matthew 5:23-24 requires an offender to go and be reconciled to his brother. This creates obligations on both parties.

Step #2 – Take one or two others.

The additional person or persons serves to facilitate reconciliation, and as a witness of the meeting.

Three Suggestions:

- Select a person of good judgment, impartial and trustworthy.
- Let the offender know about the witness in advance.
- Do not attempt to influence witness.

Step #3 – Tell the church

Church officially takes part in the discipline process.

B. What if you see a member sin against another member?

Galatians 6:1: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”

When to approach another member?

When the sin: (1) is visible to outsiders; (2) is hurting others; (3) fosters disunity; or (4) is seriously harming the offender.

C. What about heinous sin? – 1 Cor. 5:1-11

- Discipline is urgently necessary to protect Christ’s reputation and for the good of the unrepentant sinner.