

CORE CLASS: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

21 September 2022 | *What the Church Does When Sheep Wander* | Questions: 317-798-0661

REVIEW

"The world will draw its conclusions about Jesus based on his followers. Church discipline, fundamentally, is about making sure that Jesus's representatives on earth represent Jesus and not someone else."

- Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline*

I. Case Studies

SITUATION → ASSESSING THE SIN → ASSESSING REPENTANCE → OTHER FACTORS → DECISION

Case #1: Dave

Situation: Dave the doughnut man, a local celebrity, known for his famous bacon doughnuts and memorable commercials is a member of Castleton Community Church. The police recently raided his donut shop on suspicion that Dave was using his business as a cover to traffic drugs and young girls. The police found significant evidence of his crimes and are investigating multiple other felonies. They have formally charged Dave with multiple felonies, and he is being held in the state prison without bond. Police are reporting that his crimes have occurred over a 10-year period. Dave has been an active member in the church since joining in 2019. Since Dave is a well-known local celebrity, the Indy Star has the story on the front page. At the arraignment, Dave plead guilty to his crimes and has publicly apologized and taken full responsibility for his actions. He has contacted the elders and is looking for counsel.

Assessing the Sin: *How would you assess the sin in this situation? How severe is it?*

Assessing the Repentance: *How would you assess Dave's repentance?*

Case #1 continued...

Other Factors: *Are there other questions/factors that need to be considered in this situation?*

Decision: *Weighing the gravity of his sin and the signs of repentance what should the church do with Dave? Should the church immediately excommunicate Dave or should they take time to assess his repentance? Dave's wife is also asking for permission to divorce Dave. Should the elders grant her request so soon? Explain your answers with biblical support.*

Case #2: Jason

Situation: Jason, a recent college graduate joined Castleton a year ago and initially was present most Sundays and served monthly on the Greeting Team. Recently, the elders noticed that they haven't seen Jason at church and checked their recent communications with Jason and realize that he hadn't responded to their last email asking for prayer requests.

Two elders send an email asking to meet up with Jason but do not get any response. They try calling and leave voicemails, but do not hear back from him. One of the elders talked to the Greeting Team lead and she said that Jason didn't show up one Sunday he was scheduled and hasn't accepted any serving requests the last three months.

A few more months go by and still no one has heard from or seen Jason at church. Two different elders then call and email Jason, but two more months go by with no response. The elders decide to ask the congregation at a member meeting if anyone knows Jason and if they do, could they come privately to the elders to help them get in contact with them. A former classmate of Jason's comes to the elders that week and says he also hasn't heard from Jason either and doesn't believe he's going to another church.

One more call goes out with no response. It's now been 8 months since anyone at church has heard from Jason.

Assessing the Sin: *How would you assess the sin in this situation?*

Assessing the Repentance: *How would you assess repentance in Jason's situation?*

Other Factors: *Are there other questions/factors that need to be considered in this situation?*

Decision: *Should Castleton Community Church remove Jason from church membership? Why or why not? If so, should they remove him in good standing or by way of church discipline?*

Case #3: Jill

Jill is a 21-year-old college student who grew up going to church, professed faith, and was baptized as a teenager. Jill serves faithfully each Sunday morning as a teacher in the 4th-6th grade children's ministry class. Almost everyone in the church knows Jill, and her parents both serve as Deacons. Jill is taking her college classes locally and was considering pursuing seminary after she graduated from her undergrad. One Sunday, Jill uncharacteristically didn't show up to serve, and later that week, told her Titus 2 leader that she had just found out that she was pregnant. The next day she asked to meet with some of the elders and tearfully confessed to an ungodly relationship with a non-believing classmate. She tells the elders she is still in contact with the father but is no longer in a relationship. She asks for forgiveness and for help as she prepares to parent her child alone. She says she is scared to come to church but wants to keep teaching on Sundays if the elders allow.

Assessing the Sin: *How would you assess the sin in this situation?*

Assessing the Repentance: *How would you assess Jill's repentance?*

Case #3 continued...

Other Factors: *Are there other questions/factors that need to be considered in this situation?*

Decision: *Should Jill be brought before the church for formal discipline? Should Jill be allowed to teach on Sunday morning? How should the elders shepherd the rest of the church knowing people will soon be asking questions.*

Case #4: Jack

Jack, a member of five years, decided to divorce his wife after 15 years of marriage. Jack hit it big with a recent investment and wanted to move to New York for a job opportunity, but his wife did not want to move their family of 4. When confronted about the divorce, Jack said that their marriage was never healthy, and over the last few years, they've just existed together. He claims to have tried to pursue his wife, but says she's unwilling to follow his lead, therefore, he says that it is best for both of them if they ended the marriage and went their separate ways.

Many of Jack's friends beg him not to go through with it, and eventually, set up a meeting with one of the elders to call Jack to repentance. When the elder mentions the potential for church discipline at the end of a lengthy meeting, Jack quickly ends the meeting, and that week he fills out the "Member Resignation Form" and officially files for divorce.

Assessing the Sin: *How would you assess the sin in this situation?*

Assessing the Repentance: *How would you assess Jack's repentance?*

Other Factors: *Are there other questions/factors that need to be considered in this situation?*

Decision: *Can Jack avoid church discipline if he resigns his membership? Should Jack be excommunicated?*