

The Discipline of God's Children, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 18:15–17

Code: 2331

INTRODUCTION

A. The Meaning of Discipline

This is a passage that deals with discipline among God's people. When I use the word discipline I want to make it clear that it is not a negative word, but ultimately a positive one. Biblical discipline involves training and is not unrelated to the word discipling. To discipline means "to conform someone to a standard." And church discipline specifically means that we bring believers into line with God's standard for His glory, the progress of His Kingdom, and the blessedness of the individual as well.

B. The Methods of Discipline

This passage helps us to understand that there are basically two ways people are trained or disciplined. This is definitely true of children, and since this entire chapter deals with the childlikeness of the believer, we should draw our analogy from childhood. The two methods of discipline can be described as positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.

1. In the Physical Realm

Now positive reinforcement simply says, "If you do this, I'll reward you." We use that all the time with our children, don't we? "Clean up your room and I'll take you to McDonalds.... You want that new bicycle you've been asking for? Well, let me see you get your grades up." On the other hand, we also use negative reinforcement with our children, because the Scriptures have told us that if we spare the rod we spoil the child (Prov. 13:24). And so there is also that kind of reinforcement that says if you don't do this, here are the consequences.

2. In the Spiritual Realm

Now, we find the same thing is true in God's family. There is positive affirmation in the Bible where God says, "If you do this, I'll bless and reward you with joy, peace, and all the things that anyone could ever wish for." And then there's that negative reinforcement that says, "If you don't do this, there will be chastening." Hebrews 12:6 says, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And so, we have both kinds of reinforcement at various points in Scripture. In this particular text, our Lord is telling us the importance of negative reinforcement when you have people who are sinning against Him. At that time, it becomes the responsibility of the assembly of God's people to bring them into line with consequences designed to draw them back to where God wants them to be. It is an essential ministry in the Lord's church for the purpose of its purity.

Children must be conformed to obedience by some kind of discipline that enforces consequences for their misbehavior. The same is true spiritually. The neglect of dealing with sin not only allows the person sinning to drift further away, but it sets a standard that allows others to walk in the same path of sin feeling no consequence will be forthcoming. But where you act against sin, you not only pull the person sinning back, but you reestablish the right model of virtue. For example, in the Old Testament when God set out to punish the people of Israel for their disobedience to His Word, He said in Deuteronomy 13:11, "And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you." In other words, when you punish a few, the others get the message. And so, there is then to be discipline--the church must be pure.

REVIEW

I. THE PLACE OF DISCIPLINE (v. 17)

II. THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE (v. 15b)

III. THE PERSON IN DISCIPLINE (v. 15)

This brings us to a fourth point that helps us to know when to approach someone in discipline:

IV. THE PROVOCATION OF DISCIPLINE (v. 15a)

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass..."

Having taught about God's people being like children who need to be protected, cared for, and sometimes sought after when they go astray, Jesus answers the question, "What do I do if my brother sins against me?"

A. The Provocation Identified

The provocation to discipline occurs "if thy brother shall trespass [Gk. hamartano = to sin]...." This is the basic New Testament word for sin, which means "to miss the mark." The mark that men miss is God's righteous standard--they violate His law. If we learn here that sin is the provocation for discipline, we need to ask, what constitutes a sin that needs discipline? What sins need to be corrected? All of them. That's why the text is general. There aren't good sins and bad sins, for any sin is the antithesis of the utter holiness of God and puts a stain on the fellowship. Therefore, any sin is a sin that ought to be corrected. If any member of a Christian fellowship sins by violating God's standard in any way, the process immediately goes into action. That's God's desire.

B. The Person Involved

Notice that in the hypothetical situation, the brother is sinning "against thee." Whereas some ancient Greek manuscripts have this phrase while others don't, the use of lower criticism, which analyzes the texts, is unable to determine whether it belongs in or doesn't belong in. However, I feel that it should be left in because of other biblical evidence.

1. Who Is the One Sinned Against?

a. Matthew 18:21 -- "Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?..." Not only are there no manuscript problems in this verse, but it is safe to assume that Peter merely repeated the "against me" from Jesus. Also in support of keeping the phrase is the comparative passage in...

b. Luke 17:3 -- "Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." So, in Luke's record of Jesus teaching on the same subject, the phrase is also in the text.

Some people conclude that if "against thee" is there, then a potential problem exists, because it means that the only person responsible to go out and seek the sinning brother is the one who was sinned against. They might say, "If your brother sins against you, that's your problem to discipline him. I'm only responsible for somebody if they've sinned against me." Do you want to know something? That is exactly right. If they don't sin against you, you are not responsible. However, let me tell you that there are two ways you can be sinned against.

2. How Is the One Sinned Against?

a. Directly

The direct way you might be sinned against is if somebody punched you in the nose because he was mad at you, or somebody stole from you, deceived you, lied to you, abused you, slandered you, or committed a crime of immorality against you, taking your purity. Those would be sins directly against you. And the obvious intent of the text is to teach that if a person directly sins against you, you should go and tell him, in order to gain him back. It isn't that you go and say in anger, "I want to tell you what you did to me. I'm going to work the rest of my life until I get revenge!" That's not it. When you are sinned against by a Christian, whether it is deception, a lie, slander, abuse, or anything else,

you are responsible to go and tell him the sin, encouraging him to confess it and repent that you may gain him back as a brother or a sister in Christ. When you do that, you are showing the most magnanimous heart attitude that forgives the sin and longs to restore the sinning believer. That kind of a gracious response would absolutely shock the person who was waiting for your retaliation, because the tendency is to hold a grudge against somebody who directly sins against us, cultivating bitterness, resentment, and anger in our hearts. But Jesus says that when you are sinned against, you are to go and gain your brother back with an attitude of forgiveness.

How many people can you think of that you've got a grudge against and with whom you refuse to speak? Every time they come up in a conversation you become angry because they've done something to you. If you can think of some, then you had better read Ephesians 4:32, which says that you should be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." In other words, "Who do you think you are to hold a grudge when God's forgiven you so much?"

A second way, though, that you can be sinned against is...

b. Indirectly

Not all sins against me are direct. They can also be indirectly against me. In fact, any sin in the assembly of God's people is against any of God's people because it stains all of us. When anyone sins, they are in danger of being lost to our fellowship...a loss which affects all of us. Furthermore, when anyone is living a disobedient life, they bring reproach on Christ. Because we are Christ's representatives, who bear His reproach, any sin is indirectly against us. If I know about it, it is against me, and I should be willing to zealously stand for the holiness of God's name and glory.

If we only react to sins directly against us, taking no responsibility when a believer lies, commits adultery, slanders or abuses an unsaved person outside the church, does that mean he is out of the jurisdiction of church discipline? Because if you restrict discipline to only direct sin against a believer, then Christians could be sinning with people in the world who aren't a part of the assembly and they would have absolutely nobody to confront them. Consequently, it must be understood that any sin is a sin that stains the fellowship, whether it's direct, or indirect, because, as the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 5:9, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6). You can't isolate the effect of sin. It influences much in the same way as leaven permeates dough. For this reason, leaven is used in the Bible as an illustration of influence. For example, the Israelites were told to take only unleavened bread out of Egypt and not to bring the soured starter to make new bread with. This symbolized that they were to leave the influence of Egypt behind. And so, the point is that a little sin will influence everybody. Therefore, if you know about it, that should provoke the process of discipline.

Now, that brings us to point five:

V. THE PROCESS OF DISCIPLINE (vv. 15-17)

What do you do if you know discipline is to happen in God's redeemed assembly, if you know you're the person to carry it out, if you know the purpose is to gain your brother back, and if you know any sin qualifies? How do you go about disciplining? There are four steps that are very clearly delineated in this passage:

A. Step One: Telling Him His Sin (v. 15b)

"...go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone..."

1. Explained

That is simple enough, isn't it? Go and tell the brother who has sinned against you his sin. In the present imperative, the first verb conveys the idea that you should continue to go and pursue him without being distracted. The second verb, in the aorist imperative, conveys the idea of being convincing in getting the point across. From the Greek verb *elengcho*, it means "to expose to the light." In other words, "Hang in there until he really sees it. Don't just go and say, 'Hey, I haven't seen

you at church and I was just wondering...are you drifting around?" No, just go and confront him, exposing the sin so that he is aware of it and understands that there is no escaping it. Take the time and the effort that is needed to delicately handle this difficult task.

Discipline is difficult with the people you know, because when you start talking about their sin, they may have something to say to you as well. It's also difficult with the people you don't know, because you're going to say, "Who am I to do that?" Consequently, we tend to be intimidated by the people we know, and indifferent over the people we don't know. But it's a responsibility that Jesus has given us. And do you know what happens when you do this? There is a marvelous union of two souls knit together if you go in the right attitude.

a. A Personal Meekness Galatians 6:1 helps us to see the attitude we should have in confronting a sinning believer: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." In other words, you should go in humility, realizing that it could have been you that was tempted. Verse 2 says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." And what is the law of Christ? It's the royal law (Jas. 2:8), the law of liberty (Jas. 1:25)...the law of love. So you go with a love that wants to help him carry the burden, and you go in meekness. You don't go in a pontificating, pious, and self-righteous manner for the purpose of your self-satisfaction or for obtaining vengeance. You go out of a loving, humble concern to restore him.

b. A Private Meeting Also notice that it says that you should go alone so that there are just the two of you. The first confrontation is to be "between thee and him alone...." Do you know what our tendency is? As soon as we hear about somebody's sin, we tell everybody: "Did you hear about so-and-so? It's so sad, but we're praying for brother so-and-so." And the word starts spreading around. But this text tells us that if we know about a sin, we are to go alone to the one who has committed it. It doesn't ever need to get beyond that. If, on the other hand, you just start talking about it, you will create a situation which may make it impossible to ever have a meaningful relationship with that person even if they do come back. I'll promise you, though, that if you confront that person in love and humility without saying anything to anybody else, and that person repents, you will have a bond of intimacy that nothing will ever be able to break. It's a marvelous thing. That's how the intimacy in the body is protected. God doesn't say, "Shout it from the housetops." He says, "Just go by yourself and let it be between the two of you." Only in this way can you establish a relationship characterized by a deep bond of commitment to one another. That's the way to go--one to one whenever possible. And it says at the end of verse 15, "...if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." That is what you are seeking to accomplish. When was the last time you went to someone you knew was sinning for a one-to-one discussion, without ever saying a word to anybody else about it when you found out? Oh, what an important thing it is to lovingly confront someone in private so that you can avoid any rumors that might distort the truth!

2. Exemplified

Is there any illustration in the New Testament of this kind of discipline? Yes there is, in Galatians 2:11. After Peter had sinned in cutting himself off from the assembly of God's people to identify with some legalizers, Paul confronted him: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Did Peter respond? Yes he did, because later on, he wrote in 2 Peter 3:15, "...even as our beloved brother, Paul..." Evidently, one reason they were able to have such a love bond between them was that Paul cared enough to be willing to confront Peter with his sin. Often, when you confront a person on a one-to-one basis, your hearts will be knit together. But what if he refuses to hear? Then you go to...

B. Step Two: Taking Some Witnesses (v. 16)

"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

1. Explained

Of course, the Jewish people knew well that God had established the law in Deuteronomy 19:15 so

that all accusations had to be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. This was for protection so that no one was passing on slanderous information about anybody that was unconfirmed. There had to be the affirmation of two or three witnesses. Therefore, in the second step of discipline, when there has been a definite refusal to repent, and when, as Lenski says, the devil has plunged the person into the pit of impenitence, then you must take one or two more believers with you.

a. The Restoration Intensified Now, this begins to put the pressure on. You take a couple people with the same objective in mind of gaining back your brother. As you pursue this individual again, the idea is to show him his sin so that he or she really understands it and that there might be genuine confession, repentance, and restoration. This is the second attack in the battle for this drifting brother or sister, and it serves to intensify the caring concern.

b. The Report Verified The explicit reason that is given in the verse is in order that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established." These are not one or two people who saw the sin or who knew about the sin. Rather, they are witnesses of the confrontation who can come back and confirm the words that were spoken there. Their presence is as much a protection for the one being approached as it is for the one approaching, so that when a report comes back, a biased person doesn't say, "Well, I tried to confront him, but he's impenitent." It would be presumptive to think that one person could make that ultimate determination, especially one who may be somewhat bitter because he has been sinned against. So, to protect against accusations of bias, favoritism, or bitterness, it is necessary that you take one or two others who can objectively witness the second confrontation and confirm that there was a heart of repentance, or one of indifference or rejection. Such a report provides the basis for further action, because the situation has been verified beyond just the report of one individual. God wants the confirmation of either the repentance, or of the impenitence by the mouth of two or three witnesses. Before discipline takes place, He wants to be sure that our analysis of a person's attitudes and actions are accurate. He doesn't want wrong reports given about His people. He doesn't want it to be said that they are not repenting when they are, or vice versa. Well, hopefully, the person confronted would respond to this second step. Hopefully, when the two or three went and again the exposed the sin and pleaded with him or her to turn from the sin and return to the fellowship, the person would respond. But if there wasn't repentance, they would report it so that it could never be argued contrary to the affirmation of the witnesses. Has this ever occurred in the New Testament? Yes, there is an instance of this second step in discipline...

2. Exemplified

Look at 2 Corinthians 13:1-2, in which Paul says, "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and tell you beforehand, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them who heretofore have sinned, and to all others, that, if I come again, I will not spare." Now what is he saying? "You, who are sinning in the Corinthian assembly, I have already confronted, and it has been confirmed by witnesses. And if I come and you still have not repented, I won't spare the discipline." Paul called the Corinthians to respond to the second approach to their sin.

After taking the witnesses to confirm the story, what happens if the one who has been confronted still refuses to repent?

C. Step Three: Telling The Church (v. 17a)

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church..."

1. Explained

We are to tell the whole assembly when a sinning believer fails to respond to the confrontation of the witnesses. Now this may mean a public proclamation to everybody. Or, it may mean that you tell enough people representative of the church so that the word gets out that this person is sinning and not coming back. Sometimes the leaders disseminate it through the fellowship or study groups in which the person is known. Other times it may be announced at a communion service.

a. The Purpose Reviewed What is always the purpose of discipline? Restoration. So what do you tell the church? "Church, go after him to win him back. An individual went--no response. Two or three went--no response. Now we'll all go and drown him in our concern." Wouldn't that be wonderful? So many times in the life of a church people just drift away. And I have asked myself, "How many people did I know who drifted away into sin and are lost to me because I didn't follow through with discipline?" At the first signs of refusal to repent I gave up on them. Sometimes you hear people say things like, "Oh well, they're gone. They were never much help anyway." But the point is that if a brother drifts away into sin, you should go to him and do everything possible to not let that happen. If you don't see them, or if you know something's wrong in their life, you go first, and then you take somebody with you, and finally you need to tell everybody to go and put pressure on, pursuing them with a meek love in order to call them back from sin into the fellowship.

b. The Pastor Rebuked By the way, there's no different standard for elders or pastors. First Timothy 5:19-20 says that elders are to be disciplined the same way: any accusation against them should be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses. And when they sin, and continue in it, they are to be rebuked before all that others may fear the public consequences and not follow their pattern. When the leaders fall into sin, the same process is set in motion: one goes, two or three go, and then the rest of the church goes. We all go pursuing them and wanting to restore them. But unfortunately, I don't believe that the church even thinks of disciplining like this. Even in my own life I have had to admit that I have failed individuals who were sinning, and ultimately the Lord, because I didn't pursue them.

c. The Procedure Redesigned Now, as I've said before, disciplining isn't the task of one person. Evidently, one church had changed the procedure and had one person in charge...and it was a disaster. John the Apostle wrote about this individual, named Diotrephes, in his third Epistle: "I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content with that, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church" (vv. 9-10). Here was a self-appointed guy throwing people out of the church. But it is not one man's task to decide this. If we ever have to put a person out of the church, it is only because he refuses to repent after one person has gone to him, followed by two or three, who are in turn, followed by other believers in the assembly going and confronting the individual. In this way, no single person is calling all the shots; rather, many people are out there trying to restore that person. And if he still does not respond, then the motion goes into effect to put him out.

2. Exemplified

Now, is there a case in the New Testament of any third-stage discipline? I think there is in 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, which says, "But if any has caused sorrow [to the assembly because of sin], he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree--in order not to say too much--to all of you" (v. 5; NASB). "Sin," he's saying, "doesn't just affect me, it affects everybody." In an indirect way, any sin touches the whole body.

Then, assuming that all of the church is aware of the situation and concerned about it, Paul says, "Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him" (vv. 6-8; NASB).

Now, here's a case where the whole church knew of the sinning person, who had apparently responded in repentance. And Paul says to them, "Now that he has responded, don't let him stay out there, holding him at arm's length and browbeating him because of what he did. Rather, embrace him again, forgiving him in love." That's the way the church is supposed to do it.

3. Ended

How long should the church keep on encouraging someone to repent? I guess until you feel he's getting harder and harder, and absolutely refuses to stop sinning. The Spirit of God has to give you that sort of subjective wisdom as to when it's time to say, "That's it, they're not responding." And I

think it's usually a shorter time than we think, because God wants a response.

So, this stage needs to end if the person doesn't respond, as verse 17 makes clear: "...but if he neglect to hear the church...." Similar phrases appear after step one, step two, and step three, and each time introduces the next action that needs to be taken for the one who has refused to repent. If he fails to respond for the third time, then comes...

D. Step Four: Treating Him As An Outsider (v. 17b)

"...but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a tax collector."

1. Explained

From the Jews' perspective, there were only two types of people: Jews, who were the covenant people of God; and heathens, or Gentiles, who were those outside the covenant. Ideally, the Jews wouldn't associate with the Gentiles, considering them outcasts. Another kind of outcast (in many ways even considered to be a worse one) was the Jewish person who had sold himself to the Roman government to exact taxes from his own people, because he was not an outcast by birth, but one by choice...he had defected to the enemy. Therefore, in the parlance of the time of Christ, "heathen" and "tax collector" referred to those outside the covenant, and hence those outside the fellowship of the Jews.

a. Putting Him Out The idea is not, however, that you don't care about those on the outside. Certainly Jesus did care, who called Matthew the tax collector to be His disciple, and who was even in the business of saving tax collectors and sinners. Think of the wonderful story of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-10). Therefore, Jesus' use of those terms doesn't mean that we cast disparaging remarks on those people. It simply means that when they sin and refuse to repent, we are to treat them as if they were outside our fellowship. In other words, when the whole process of discipline has been unproductive, Jesus instructs us to put the unrepentant out of the fellowship. Don't let them associate and participate in the blessings and the benefits of the Christian assembly. We find some examples of this in...1) 1 Corinthians 5 - In the Corinthian church there was a man who was having an incestuous relationship with his father's wife. Instead of being brokenhearted over the incest, which was an abomination to God, the people were proud about it: "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.... [I have decided] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (vv. 2, 4-5). In other words, though their spirit will be redeemed in the end, believers who refuse to repent need to be put out of the church and turned over to the Satan-controlled worldly system so that their fleshly desire to sin may be destroyed. They may have to go down to the very depths of sin before they repent. But it is something that must be done, because, as verses 6 and 7 say, "...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump...." The unrepentant believer must be put out of the assembly.2) 1 Timothy 1 - "...Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (v. 20). That's remedial training. They needed to learn they couldn't do that by experiencing more fully the consequence of their sin. When you put someone out, the sanctifying graces of God's assembly are no longer there. Then, they may begin to think about how much the fellowship of believers really meant to them. But if a person is accepted by the people of God along with his sin, he can unintentionally be encouraged to continue longer in his sin. Such people must be told that they have a choice: it's either the devil and the world, or God and His people, but not both.3) 2 Thessalonians 3 - "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" (v. 6). The word "withdraw" means "to flinch, or avoid." You avoid them, not letting them in your fellowship where they can share in the sanctifying grace that comes from Christ. Now, we're not talking about people who don't know the Lord. We want them to be exposed to the church. We're talking about sinning members of the church family. Verse 14

reinforces this principle: "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Leave him to his shame and sin, because if he belongs to God, He won't let him go, though He may have to drag him very low.⁴) 1 Corinthians 5 - "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters, for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you 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" (vv. 9-11). Because sharing a meal with a person is symbolic of a hospitable and cordial fellowship, it is not to be allowed under the circumstances. When you put a person out of the church, you don't have him over for a meal. You don't treat him like a brother. You treat him like an outcast. There is a second thing that you are to be doing during this step, and that is...b. Calling Him Back. Second Thessalonians 3:15 says, "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." There is a sense in which you never really let him go: Though you are to put him outside of the sphere of associating with him, you keep calling him back. People say to me, "I'm going to meet with my brother who divorced his wife and has been living in adultery. Is it okay if I see him?" And I always say, "It's fine for you to see him as long as you make sure you admonish him, encouraging him to get his life right by confessing and repenting of his sin. Those are the only terms you can be with him." This fourth step of discipline in the New Testament is also...

2. Exemplified

a. 1 Timothy 1:20 - "Of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan...." b. Romans 16:17-18 - "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own body, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the innocent." Remember, though, there is a balance. You put them out for the purity of the church, but you call them back as well.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What does the word discipline mean? What is the standard that the church is to bring believers into line with? Why?
2. What two ways can people be disciplined? Are both found in the Bible? Which one is in view in Matthew 18?
3. What are two consequences of neglecting to deal with sin?
4. What mark do men miss when they sin?
5. Who is the one responsible to go out and seek the sinning brother?
6. What two ways can a Christian be sinned against?
7. Describe how we can be indirectly sinned against.
8. What is the spiritual significance of leaven with regard to sin?
9. What is the first step in the process of discipline? Why is it difficult to carry out whether you know the person well or not?
10. If discipline is done in the right attitude, what can be the marvelous result?
11. What attitude should a person be confronted in, according to Galatians 6:1-2?
12. Who are the only people involved in the first stage? Unfortunately, what is the general tendency when we become aware of someone's sin?
13. Why did God command that all accusations had to be confirmed in the mouth of two or three witnesses?
14. When you take witnesses with you in the second step of discipline, what are your two objectives?
15. Before discipline takes place, what does God want us to be sure of?
16. After taking the witnesses to confirm the story, what happens if the one who has been confronted still refuses to repent?

17. What is the purpose of telling the person's sin to the church?
18. What standard of discipline do pastors and other church leaders have applied to them?
19. What is the only reason that someone is ever put out of the church?
20. How long should the church keep on encouraging someone to repent?
21. Why weren't the Jews eager to associate with Gentiles? Who did they consider to be the worst kind of outcast? Why? How does Jesus' mention of these two types of people instruct us to treat those who have refused to repent?
22. If a person is accepted by the people of God along with his sin, what is he unintentionally encouraged to do?
23. In spite of the seemingly harsh response of treating a sinning believer as an outsider, what gracious request do you continue to make to him or her?

Pondering the Principles

1. Have you been guilty of spreading "the truth" about someones's sin rather than privately admonishing him? What problems can arise from such action? How can you most constructively deal with a Christian's disobedience? Does talk really solve anything, or might it just cause a deeper rift between the sinner and those who merely discuss the situation without taking action? Confess any failure to confront a sinning brother and any gossiping you might have done in that situation. Ask God to help you approach any possible discipline situation with such integrity and confidentiality, that the one being confronted can clearly see your desire to help is in his best interests.
2. What has been your response when you have heard that a Christian you know is involved in a sinful situation? Have you rationalized away your responsibility to lovingly confront that person? Make a commitment today to go to a believer in person when you find that he or she is struggling with sin. Pray that God would give you a heart of compassion and wisdom in leading that individual back into the fold for the blessing of the church and the glory of God.

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