

What Happens in a Church Which Does Not Practice Church Discipline?

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Church discipline is divine authority delegated to the church by Jesus Christ to maintain order through the correction of persistently sinning church members for the good of those caught in sin, for the purity of the church, and for the glory of God.¹ Church discipline typically starts privately and informally, growing to include the whole church only when necessary.



In its final, formal, and public stage, church discipline involves removing someone from membership in the church and participation in the Lord's Table. The goal of discipline is always redemption (1 Corinthians 5:4), protecting other sheep (v. 6), and honoring the name of Christ (v. 1).

A GOAL IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE IS TO BE MOTIVATED BY LOVE

Whenever a church must discipline someone, they must ensure that love is their motivation. Love is the only proper motivation, as the Lord himself illustrates: "The Lord disciplines the one he loves" (Hebrews 12:6). We likewise are called to restore our brothers with a spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1), that they might come to repentance (1 Corinthians 5:5). The goal of church discipline is to guard the church's purity.²

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "But let it never be forgotten that in pursuance of his gracious plan, God, who has blotted out our offences as rebellious subjects, has now placed us in a new relationship, for, by adoption and the new birth, we have become his children and he is our father; and though he neither can nor will ever summon us before the bar of his jurisdiction, either to charge us with sin or condemn us for it, inasmuch as Jesus Christ has put that sin away, yet, as our Father, he exercises discipline amongst his family, and we, as his children, are both chidden and chastened for our faults. The sword

¹ Kimble, J. (2018). "Church Discipline." In M. Ward, J. Parks, B. Ellis, & T. Hains (Eds.), *Lexham Survey of Theology*. Lexham Press.

² English, J.D. "Why doesn't Church Discipline Ever Seem to Work?" © Founders Ministries, <https://founders.org/articles/why-doesnt-church-discipline-ever-seem-to-work/>. Retrieved December 23, 2025.

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of justice no longer threatens us, but the rod of parental correction is still in use. The judge no longer condemns, but the Father chides; 'For what son is he whom his father chasteneth not.' Remember, then, that we are not about to speak of believers under the law, or the anger arising out of the breach thereof: from all the mire of that slough of legality we are quite clean, but we are about to treat of believers as the adopted, twice-born children of God, and of the rule of the Lord's household, and the chiding and chastisement which are necessary to it."³

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Alex Zenk says, "In today's culture (and church), the word *discipline* carries a negative connotation. Our culture at large has lost the meaning and process of healthy corrective action and instead has chosen to adopt more therapeutic practices that highlight emotions, personal beliefs, and secular psychology. As a result, both children and adults carry on in their behaviors how they "feel" fit. From acting out in the home, playground, school, or office the art of loving discipline has been widely abandoned.

"However, this moral incapacity is not limited to toddlers on the playground or immature adults at the office—it is far more integrated than we might imagine. In fact, this soft-sided, egg-shell-walking, therapy-driven approach to addressing defiant behavior has deeply incorporated itself into the church.

"Pastors have allowed this practice to influence their church's culture and, in turn, have produced a flock of uncorrected, emotionally-validating sheep. Is this the goal? Does God want our behavior to find its approval in our emotions and personal perspectives?

"In Scripture, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for *correction*, and for *training in righteousness*...". That is to say, Scripture is God's gift to His church—a tool to discipline His children who are walking in unrepentant, habitual, and repetitive sin. So, the answer to my previous question is no!"

No, we are not to find our validation in our emotions. We are to find our validation in our Bibles. We do not follow our hearts. We follow the Scriptures.⁴

A church that neglects or refuses to practice biblical church discipline risks compromising its holiness, fostering moral laxity, and blurring the line between the congregation and the world. Without this form of accountability, unrepentant sin spreads like "leaven,"

³ Spurgeon, C. H. (1874). "The Lord Chiding His People." In *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*. London: Passmore & Alabaster. 20:253. Public domain.

⁴ Zenk, A. (2020). "The High Cost of Neglecting Church Discipline." <https://relearn.org/the-high-cost-of-neglecting-church-discipline/>. Retrieved December 23, 2025.

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potentially leading to a damaged public witness, a shallow community, and the loss of spiritual vitality, and an increased risk of tolerating blatant sin. This failure to hold members accountable leads to compromised doctrine, an unbiblical, “watered-down” definition of love, and a failure to protect the reputation of Christ.

Over one hundred fifty years ago John Dagg suggested that “when discipline leaves a church, Christ leaves with it.” At that time, Baptists and most other evangelicals practiced a thorough church discipline. Over the next fifty years most evangelicals abandoned the practice. For at least three generations now, evangelical churches in the West have neglected it. Yet during this period, the Lord has blessed many of these churches in spiritual and material ways.⁵

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So, was Dagg right? To neglect church discipline is to disobey to Jesus Christ. The Lord commands churches to exercise church discipline in Matthew 18:15–17, as well as in many other passages in the New Testament. Yet Christ evidently has not yet abandoned our evangelical churches, despite the fact that our churches have abandoned discipline.

This fact reminds us that there is no simple correlation between a church’s disobedience on the one hand and spiritual blight and abandonment by Christ on the other. Our Lord judges our disobedience in the time and measure of His wisdom.⁶ Thus, it appears that John Dagg was absolutely right!

When John Calvin came to preach in Geneva in 1541, one of the first moves he made was to establish the church with the authority to discipline those claiming membership in the local church. In no other reformed city had this type of order been constructed. History confirms, exhorting the church to walk in the power of discipline was a critical turning point in the spiritual strength of the reformation church. But while Calvin moved to establish discipline back in the church, we seemed to have drifted away from it. The church today has mostly removed the discussion of sin altogether in favor of inclusivism—the unbiblical strategy to make visitors feel welcomed and comfortable in their sin.⁷

This is one of the most serious concerns with modern day “Seeker Sensitive” churches. However, this is not the only issue we have with the Seeker Sensitive Movement.

There are certainly others that are just as consequential—and, I might add, dangerous.

⁵ Wills, G.A. (2010). “Was Dagg Right?” © 9Marks. <https://www.9marks.org/article/was-dagg-right/>. Retrieved December 23, 2025.

⁶ Wills (2010).

⁷ Zenk (2020).

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TEN COMMON PROBLEMS AMONG CHURCHES THAT WILL NOT PRACTICE CHURCH DISCIPLINE⁸

1. A dangerous approach to God and his word.

God commands the sacred practice of church discipline. In addition to Christ's clear command in Matthew 18:15-20, it shows up in passages like Romans 16:17-18, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Galatians 6:1-3, 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15, and Titus 3:9-11.

There is no distinction between how we approach God and how we approach his word. Attitude towards the latter is a barometer for attitude towards the former (Psalm 119:48, 138:2). Consequently, the issue of a church refusing to practice church discipline is much more than an issue of a church refusing to practice church discipline. There are deeper problems, for example, pertaining to the sufficiency of Scripture, God's authority vs. man's, and God's wisdom vs. man's. And that problem will not be isolated in a church anymore than an apple tree sick in its roots will only produce one bad apple.

2. An erroneous view of regeneration.

A church that spurns church discipline may have a diluted understanding of the miracle of regeneration. How so? Church discipline, in part, is for the purpose of demonstrating that the converted and unconverted are two entirely different creatures, spiritually speaking (2 Corinthians 5:17). When it's practiced, both repentance and the tragedy of discipline demonstrate what it means to be "in Christ."

For example, when we repent in response to step one (Matthew 18:15), our regenerate condition is on display because there is no way we could have such a response unless we are in Christ and experiencing the convicting grace of the Holy Spirit. When someone is disciplined, that actual distinction between regenerate and unregenerate is also on display. Granted, a disciplined individual may be regenerate, but they are to be treated as if not because they are blatantly acting as if not. So, practicing church discipline is a prescribed way to showcase the radical miracle of regeneration by faith in Christ, which means refusal to discipline propagates an erroneous understanding of what it means to be converted.

⁸ Davis, Eric (2017). © CrippleGate. "Here are 10 common problems among churches that will not practice discipline on you, making them unsafe." <https://thecripplegate.com/why-christians-should-avoid-churches-who-will-not-practice-church-discipline/>. Retrieved December 23, 2025.

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That is unsafe because we risk being given false assurance as to our salvation. And maintaining the biblical distinction between the converted and unconverted is not to keep people out of heaven, but bring them in. Bucking church discipline can muddy the waters here.

3. A low view of sanctification.

Similarly, a refusal to practice church discipline demonstrates a de-emphasis on sanctification. If sin is not going to be confronted, then sin is not a big deal, which means Christ-likeness is not a big deal, which means sanctification is not a big deal, which means souls and eternity are not a big deal. Again, the issue is not isolated. If church discipline is less important then, despite credal affirmation, so is walking by the Spirit, personal holiness, and bearing fruit. And, as in #2, the danger here could also be false assurance for the unconverted.

4. A lack of love to both the church and the unconverted.

In his excellent book, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, Jonathan Leeman writes:

Church discipline...is a clear implication of God-centered gospel love. It's an inevitable and loving tool in a world where Christ's kingdom has been inaugurated but not consummated. If God's love was centered on man, then discipline would be cruel, and to those who remain convinced of Satan's God-toppling lie (Genesis 3:5), it will always sound that way. Yet for the holiness-seeking church, church discipline is the refusal to call the unholy "holy." It's a way of removing an affirmation so that self-deception no longer reigns. In radical defiance of the wisdom of this world, it helps to clarify exactly what love is (pp. 221-2).

Which means the accusation that church discipline is unloving needs rethinking. It may be done unlovingly, but church discipline itself is not unloving. Discipline is an expression of God's secure, fatherly, unchanging love on his people to further Christlikeness (Hebrews 12:7-11). Moreover, Paul calls the Corinthian church "arrogant" (1 Corinthians 5:2) for refusing to practice church discipline. I wonder how often we have used the term "arrogant" in such a way. This means that refusal to lovingly confront sin, even to the point of church discipline, is arrogant and unloving. In this case, love is going to mean caring for friends more than friendship.

Furthermore, church discipline is a means to help the unconverted, but professing, see their perilous state. In such a case, refusing church discipline would be hateful.

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5. Inadequate shepherding and soul-care.

Sheep and shepherding are the predominant metaphors for people and church care, respectively. Sheep need boundaries, oversight, and belonging. That's what a sheep-fold with a shepherd provides. The door for safe entrance, the fence for safe boundaries, and the shepherd to guide—they all provide the care necessary for the sheep.

Church discipline exists, then, because of who sheep are, what they need, and how much God loves them. But a church who refuses to practice it likens itself to a doorless, fenceless sheepfold, with apathetic shepherds. In ancient times, such a thing would not be considered a sheepfold and sheep subjected to such treatment would be considered abused.

A church that will not discipline professing believers is inadequately shepherding souls. It shows a dangerously truncated view of individuals. It's tunnel-vision shepherding; seeing souls in terms of this life only. They forget that without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). Care is wrongly defined in terms of how we make people feel at any given moment. For that reason, it's a significant shepherding failure.

Jay Adams puts it this way

The failure to discipline church members amounts to withholding from them the privilege of being confronted by others, and by the church, when they err in doctrine or life. Christ granted them this right; we have no right to withhold it from them (*A Theology of Christian Counseling*, p. 286).

And on a personal note, I praise God for men around me who love me enough to not withhold my right to church discipline. It's a sobering grace knowing that if I stray, for example, in my marriage or in doctrine, I have brothers who love me enough to shepherd me all the way out of the church if necessary. That is true care.

6. A shallow approach to biblical community.

In part, biblical community looks like converted individuals practicing the one another's in committed, consistent, and candid relationships in the local church. But where church discipline is refused, life "in Christ" is de-emphasized, which means christlikeness and sanctification are de-emphasized, with the result that biblical community will become shallow. Those great hallmarks of love, confessing and confronting each other's sins as a family under grace, will thereby be absent, which atrophies genuine biblical community (Proverbs 27:5-6, Hebrews 3:12-14). The local church then becomes more about living life at a safe, calculated distance from one another. And without the means of grace of

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exhorting one another, it's possible we are being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and may end not having been genuinely converted.

7. A low importance of the witness of the local church to the world.

The godliness of a local church is what makes them salty salt and bright light to their respective community. Holiness among church members adorns the gospel they preach (Titus 2:10). But when church discipline is omitted from that church, there is that absence of care for sanctification in the church's DNA. The inevitable result is a lack of witness to the world.

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8. A lack of love to those against whom the offender is sinning.

In a church discipline situation, there are always others, such as a wife, kids, or coworkers who are pulled into the carnage by the offender. This means that when a church will not discipline, the offender is not the only one they fail to love. For example, if a church will not discipline a husband in unrepentant adultery, the wife is not given that clarity of God's pronouncement on him. The mess remains in confusing ambiguity because the church will not bring finality through discipline. The result is that the spouse, and even kids, church members and relatives, are left in unnecessary confusion (which can also be a poor witness). It need not be, however. Church discipline is that heavenly-sanctioned, definitive statement made through leadership to bring peace in the hurt (Matt. 18:18-20).

9. A shallow view on relational reconciliation.

Church discipline has reconciliation as its goal. The hope is always repentance so as to win our brother (Matthew 18:15). But real reconciliation is never found along the road of ignoring sin. Quite the contrary. For this reason, refusal to have discipline in church practice demonstrates an inadequate view of relational reconciliation.

But the church where discipline is correctly practiced is the one in which the biblical one anothers are already in fluid motion. Biblical relationships are being attempted which means reconciliation is happening because this side of heaven, there is no such thing as a relationship without the need of dealing with sin. God's kind of a church is where it's weird to *not* get lovingly spoken to about sin. It's a place where sin is confessed. It's a place where, almost paradoxically, sin is safe but unsafe. Interpersonal issues are not swept under rugs, but confessed and repented of, so that reconciliation can occur.

10. A refusal to define itself as a New Testament church.

Jay Adams rightly says that a church which refuses to practice church discipline is a "no church since they will not draw a line between the world and the church by exercising

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discipline” (*Handbook of Church Discipline*, p. 103). As stated above, previous church generations would agree.

That may seem like a strong statement. But, again, a church’s refusal to discipline is symptomatic of other hazards in that house of God; a selective approach to Scripture, a supplanting God’s wisdom with man’s, a potentially dangerous view of salvation and sanctification, a lack of love, inadequate leadership in the church, a worldly view of life in Christ together, a low view on the importance of witness, and a cheap view of reconciliation.

Those are reasons enough to avoid a church that will not discipline you. So, think carefully before jumping in where you won’t get booted out. God’s best for his people is a local church safe enough to get disciplined out of.

KEY CONSEQUENCES INCLUDE

- ⌘ **Compromised Holiness and Witness:** When blatant sin is not addressed, the church fails to represent Christ accurately, making its witness to the world ineffective.
- ⌘ **Diminished Witness:** A church that ignores clear, unrepentant sin loses its credibility and authority within the surrounding community.⁹
- ⌘ **Misleading Members:** Neglecting discipline can create a false sense of security for those living in open disobedience, essentially suggesting that they can follow Jesus on their own terms.¹⁰
- ⌘ **Moral Laxity:** A “subtle moral laxity” can spread throughout the congregation, as unrepentant sin is tolerated rather than confronted.
- ⌘ **Ineffective Shepherding:** Leaders fail to protect the flock, often focusing only on temporal comfort rather than the eternal, spiritual welfare of individuals.
- ⌘ **A Shallow Community:** Fellowship within the congregation, which relies on mutual accountability and care, becomes superficial.

⁹ Davis, Eric (2017). “Reasons to Avoid Churches Who Will Not Practice Church Discipline.”

¹⁰ Wills (2010). <https://www.9marks.org/article/was-dagg-right/>
<https://www.9marks.org/article/good-and-bad-excuses-not-to-practice-church-discipline/>

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- ⌘ **Declining Spiritual Health and Moral Drift:** Without accountability, sin is tolerated rather than addressed, causing the church to become worldly and lose its spiritual “saltiness.”
- ⌘ **Distorted Understanding of Grace and Love:** Discipline is mistakenly viewed as unloving, when in reality, its absence denies believers the opportunity for repentance and restoration.
- ⌘ **Disregard for Biblical Mandate:** The church fails to follow direct, biblical commands, such as those in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5, which are intended for the purity of the church and the restoration of the sinner.
- ⌘ **Internal Division and Confusion:** The absence of clear standards can lead to a lack of cohesion, as there is no consistent, biblical boundary between the church and the world.

Ultimately, rather than being unloving, the lack of discipline is considered unloving because it fails to protect the community and to warn the individual of the danger of their sin.¹¹

THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

The purpose of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of fallen members and the consequent strengthening of the church and glorifying of the Lord. When a sinning believer is rebuked and he turns from his sin and is forgiven, he is won back to fellowship with the body and with its head, Jesus Christ.

The goal of church discipline, then, is not to throw people out of the church or to feed the self-righteous pride of those who administer the discipline. It is not to embarrass people or to exercise authority and power in some unbiblical manner. The purpose is to restore a sinning believer to holiness and bring him back into a pure relationship within the assembly.

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus says, “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” The Greek word translated “won” was originally used of accumulating wealth in the sense of monetary commodities. Here it refers to the gaining back of something of value that is lost, namely, an erring brother.

¹¹ Leeman, Jonathan. “Church Discipline.” © The Gospel Coalition. See also: Jonathan Leeman (2012). *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Crossway, 2012).

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/church-discipline/>

<https://www.9marks.org/article/4-reasons-churches-dont-practice-church-discipline/>

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When a brother or sister strays, a valuable treasure is lost, and the church should not be content until he or she is restored. The body of Christ is in the business of recovery (Galatians 6:1), and such is the purpose of church discipline.

The decline of church discipline is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church. No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other.¹²

Albert Mohler, PhD

THE PROCESS OF DISCIPLINE

[The following is the process of Church Discipline practiced by Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. It is adapted from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 16–23* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988); John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991); and Stuart Scott and George Crawford, "Restoring the Wandering Sheep," (unpublished paper).]

In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus sets forth the four-step process of church discipline: (1) tell him his sin alone; (2) take some witnesses; (3) tell the church; and (4) treat him as an outsider.

Step One (Matthew 18:15). The process of church discipline begins on an individual level. Jesus said, "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private" (v. 15a). Here, an individual believer is to go to a sinning brother privately and confront him in a spirit of humility and gentleness. This confrontation involves clearly exposing his sin so that he is aware of it and calling him to repentance. If the sinning brother repents in response to the private confrontation, that brother is forgiven and restored (v. 15b).

Step Two (Matthew 18:16). If the sinning brother refuses to listen to the one who has rebuked him privately, the next step in the discipline process is to take one or two more believers along to confront him again (v. 16a). The purpose of taking other believers is so that "by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed" (v. 16b). In other words, the witnesses are present not only to confirm that the sin was committed but, in addition, to confirm that the sinning brother was properly rebuked and that he has or has not repented.

¹² <https://www.theologyquotes.com/?qid=1426>.

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The presence of additional witnesses is as much a protection for the one being approached as it is for the one approaching. After all, a biased person could erroneously say, “Well, I tried to confront him, but he’s impenitent.” It would be presumptuous to think that one person could make that ultimate determination, especially if he was the one who had been sinned against. The witnesses need to confirm whether there is 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 the report of one individual.

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At this point, it should be hoped that the one or two who are brought along to confront the sinner will not have to become public witnesses against him before the rest of the church. Ideally, their added rebuke will be sufficient to induce a change of heart in the offending brother that the initial rebuke did not cause. If this change of heart does occur, that brother is forgiven and restored, and the matter is dropped.

Step Three (Matthew 18:17a). If the sinning brother refuses to listen and respond to the confrontation of the witnesses after a period of time, those witnesses are then to tell it to the church (v. 17a). This is most appropriately done by bringing the matter to the attention of the elders, who in turn oversee its communication to the assembly as a whole.

How long should the witnesses continue to call the person to repentance before telling the church? The elders at Grace Community Church avoid carrying out the third or fourth stage of church discipline until they are absolutely certain that the erring believer has truly sinned, or is continuing to sin, and that he has refused to repent when appropriately confronted. The elders will routinely send a letter by registered mail warning the individual that the third (or fourth) step of discipline will be taken if they have not received word of repentance by a specific date. When this date has passed, the person’s sin and refusal to repent are made known publicly, either before the entire assembly during a Communion service or through a fellowship group in which the person is known.

It has been the custom at Grace Community Church, upon enacting this third step, to clearly indicate to the congregation that they are to pursue the person aggressively and plead with him to repent before the fourth step becomes necessary. That crucial and potent procedure often draws the sinner to repentance and obedience. If repentance does take place, the sinning believer is forgiven and restored.

Step Four (Matthew 18:17b). The fourth and final step in the process of church discipline is ostracism. If a sinning believer refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be ostracized from the fellowship. Jesus said, “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer” (v. 17b). The term “Gentile” was primarily used of non-Jews who held to their traditional paganism and had no part in the covenant, worship, or social life of the Jews. On the other

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hand, a “tax-gatherer” was an outcast from the Jews by choice, having become a traitor to his own people. Jesus’ use of these terms doesn’t mean that the church is to treat these people badly. It simply means that when a professing believer refuses to repent, the church is to treat him as if he were outside of the fellowship. They are not to let him associate and participate in the blessings and benefits of the Christian assembly.

When a man in the Corinthian church refused to forsake an incestuous relationship with his stepmother, the apostle Paul commanded that the man be removed from their midst (1 Corinthians 5:13). The believers there were not even to share a meal with him (1 Corinthians 5:11), for dining with someone was symbolic of a hospitable and cordial fellowship. The one who is persistently unrepentant is to be totally ostracized from the fellowship of the church and treated like an outcast, not a brother.

As far as the welfare of the church is concerned, the purpose of putting the brother out is to protect the purity of the fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:6), to warn the assembly of the seriousness of sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to give a testimony of righteousness to a watching world. But as far as the welfare of the brother himself is concerned, the purpose of the ostracism is not to punish but to awaken, and it must therefore be done in humble love and never in a spirit of self-righteous superiority (2 Thessalonians 3:15).

When a church has done everything it can to bring a sinning member back to purity of life but is unsuccessful, that individual is to be left to his sin and his shame. If he is truly a Christian, God will not cast him away, but He may allow him to sink still deeper before he becomes desperate enough to turn from his sin.

The command not to have fellowship or even social contact with the unrepentant brother does not exclude all contact. When there is an opportunity to admonish him and try to call him back, the opportunity should be taken. In fact, such opportunities should be sought. But the contact should be for the purpose of admonishment and restoration and no other.¹³

SPURGEON ON BENEFITS OF GOD’S DISCIPLINE¹⁴

For Charles Spurgeon, God’s discipline isn’t separate from His love and care for us. To discipline is to teach and to train, just like parents discipline their children through both instruction and correction. His sermon, “Blessed Discipline,” is one of the most helpful

¹³ © Grace Community Church, “Church Discipline.”

<https://www.gracechurch.org/about/distinctives/church-discipline>. Retrieved December 24, 2025.

¹⁴ Spurgeon, C. H. (1894). “Blessed Discipline.” In *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*. London: Passmore & Alabaster, 40:385-396. Public domain.

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summaries of the benefits and blessings associated with God's discipline. I encourage you to read it in its entirety, but here is a list of some of those benefits.

- ⌘ We learn to discern the evil of sin.
- ⌘ It teaches us the unsatisfactory nature of worldly things.
- ⌘ Our frailty and weaknesses are exposed.
- ⌘ We learn the value of prayer.
- ⌘ We look to the Bible for comfort, wisdom, direction, and power.
- ⌘ God himself becomes our teacher.
- ⌘ We learn to rest in the will of God
- ⌘ We grow in our spiritual education.
- ⌘ We learn to rest in God's timing for righting wrongs as our just judge.

A FINAL THOUGHT

J.I. Packer says: "Sometimes the chiselling process is painful, and the discipline irksome; but then the Scripture reminds us – 'The Lord disciplines *those he loves*, and he punishes *everyone he accepts as a son*. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons ... No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:6 f., 11). Only the person who has grasped this can make sense of Romans 8:28, 'All things work together for good to them that love God' (KJV); equally, only he can maintain his assurance of sonship against satanic assault as things go wrong. But he who has mastered the truth of adoption both retains assurance and receives blessing in the day of trouble: this is one aspect of faith's victory over the world. Meanwhile, however, the point stands that the Christian's primary motive for holy living is not negative, the hope (vain!) that hereby he may avoid chastening, but positive, the impulse to show his love and gratitude to his adopting God by identifying himself with the Father's will for him."¹⁵

Packer writes this in the context of our adoption showing us the meaning and motives of "gospel holiness" which is no doubt an unfamiliar phrase to some. It was Puritan shorthand for authentic Christian living, springing from love and gratitude to God, in

¹⁵ Packer, J. I. (1973). *Knowing God*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 251.

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contrast with the spurious 'legal holiness' that consisted merely of forms, routines, and outward appearances, maintained from self-regarding motives.¹⁶

However, this same principle also applies to Church Discipline within the local church, which is also very much a chiseling process. This is true both for the Congregation as well as for the errant sinner. Is this hard to do? Certainly! Is this painful? Absolutely! Is this unequivocally necessary? Without a doubt because it is commanded by Scripture!

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The alternative is the marginalization of the Biblical witness and effectiveness of that local church. Ultimately it will end in chaos as the congregation sinks lower and lower into the quagmire of tolerated sin.

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¹⁶ Packer (1973), 250.