

A Neglected Commandment

The topic of church discipline is probably the most neglected topic in the Bible. It is neglected both when it comes to being studied and carried out. It is a topic that is often met with resistance among the family of God.

And yet, the topic challenges us in a variety of different ways. It challenges our trust in God. Do we believe that God's way is the best? It challenges our love for God (John 14:15). It challenges our love for one another.

Church discipline is promoted in the Bible.

- Jesus gives clear instructions for it in Matthew 18:15-17. Go to the brother in private (vs. 15). Take one or two more (vs. 16). Bring the matter before the church (vs. 17a). No longer count him among the faithful (vs. 17b).
- The Apostle Paul teaches on the subject several times in the New Testament (Romans 16:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13).

Church discipline is not easy.

- It is not easy to confront someone with sin (Matthew 18:15-16).
- The third and fourth steps often come at the end of a long process. Usually, the process involves judgment from the leaders. We need always to be mindful of Hebrews 13:17.
- This can be a complicated and sensitive matter for a local church.

Church discipline is an act of love.

- Why do parents discipline their children? Because they hate them and want to make their lives miserable? Or because they love and want to help them have a great future?
- Real love for a brother involves taking notice when he falls into sin. It involves confronting him with his sin (Galatians 2:11-14) and being willing to pull back fellowship from him until he repents (Matthew 18:17).

Church discipline is not to be our final act.

- Even after a sinful brother is "withdrawn" from, there is more that God wants us to do (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). We are not to give up entirely on him!
- The goal of this process is to save a soul (1 Corinthians 5:5).

Conclusion:

Do you trust God's plan?

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