

A Survey of the First Century Churches
The purpose, structure and activities
A Biblical and a historical perspective
Church Discipline

There is really two ways of looking at the topic of discipline as it relates to our relationship with God. There is Formative church discipline which consists of the teaching and training of believers relative to their responsibilities as Christians and church members. This teaching and training might well be called preventive discipline because the teaching, understanding and application of the Word is an adequate antidote to all manner of sin. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word," Ps. 119:9. However, there are often instances where an individual has neglected or refused to be disciplined by the Word in a formative or preventive way, and so must be dealt with in a corrective way. This is what we will be discussing in this lesson, the example and instruction given in the New Testament regarding the disciplining of erring Christians who choose to continue in their disobedience of the Word.

Please read:

Matt 18:13-17, Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thes 3:6-15; 2 Cor 2:1-13; Gal 6:1; 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Cor 2:5-11

- 1. What is the meaning of the phrase “to discipline?” What is it’s purpose or purposes?**
2. What instruction does Christ give regarding the act of discipline as it relates to brother sinning against brother in Matt 18: 13-17?
3. What should be the motive behind discipline? As it relates to the person? As it relates to the Church? What is God’s motive that is mentioned in Heb 12:5-11?
4. In 1 Cor 5, Paul gives very specific instructions on dealing with a member of the church who is in need of corrective discipline. What was this person doing and what was the impact on the church in Corinth?
5. What does this situation tell us about the importance of church discipline? What can be the consequences of not practicing this form of corrective church discipline?
6. Was Paul specific when he listed the activities of the person being singled out for corrective discipline?

7. What does “hand this man over to Satan” mean?

8. What does Paul say the purpose of the disciplinary action is in this chapter is?

9. Read 2 Cor 2:5-11 and tell us what was the result of the disciplinary action taken by the brethren in 1 Cor 5 ?

10. In 2 Thes 3:6-15 Paul discusses discipline. How does he say we should conduct ourselves toward the one “who walks disorderly” and “that does not obey this epistle”? What does he say our attitude should be with regard to the brother who is in error?

What some of the early Christians and Historians say:

“It is fitting, therefore, that you should keep aloof from such persons [ie. The Gnostics]. You should not speak to them either in private or public.” *Ignatius* (c 105)

“Cerdon, too, was Marcion’s predecessor....Having been denounced for corrupt teaching he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren.” *Irenaeus* (c.180)

“From all such persons [heretics and false shepherds], it behooves us to keep aloof. *Irenaeus* (c. 180)