

Key Text:

Matthew 18:15-20

Romans 16:17

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven...” Matt.18:18

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD

God has ALL Authority. **Psalms 115:3 & 135:6 both of these scriptures state that God does whatever He wants or pleases.** God doesn't answer to anything or anyone except himself. Nobody has more power than God and no-one can tell God what to do. Just think about that... that is true and total authority. Now consider that Jesus who is God has ALL authority.

(Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 5:8) How is authority illustrated in the analogy of the Church as the visible expression of God's body? There are many members of the body of Christ, but there is only one Head or authority, the Lord Jesus Christ. The members of His body cannot function properly without full submission to the Head, who provides direction to the whole body. **(Ephesians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7).** Imagine a body where every member has total autonomy without any restraint or submission to anything will but self-will. The result would be chaos and anarchy. Thankfully God has no threat to His power so it boils down to submission to Him as the head. There are four respects in which the Christian believer must demonstrate submission to God's authority:

- Submission **to God and His Son Jesus:** Eph. 5:24; Heb. 2:8; 12:9; James 4:7
- Submission **to God-appointed leaders** of the Church: Heb.13:17; 1Cor.16:16; Phil. 2:12; 1 Thess. 5:12-13.
- Submission **to one another in Christ:** Eph. 5:21-6:9; 1 Pet. 5:5.
- Submission **to Rulers of society**, when such submission does not require disobedience to the plain teaching of Scripture: Acts 4:19-20; 5:29; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet.2:13-17.

There is a problem that arises in response to God's authority...our sinful flesh refuses to submit and so we REBEL! "Rebellion" is the open resistance to lawful authority. **(Romans 8:7; Col. 1:21)** What is the Biblical response to Rebellion? God's spirit will resist you and you will experience judgment in the form of consequences and pain. What should be our response to judgment and its painful consequences? Repent and run to the "Mercy-Seat" of God. **(Heb.9:5 & Ex.25:17-22)** The tool used most by the Holy Spirit for teaching us submission to God's authority is **DISCIPLINE**. The Word of God disciplines, established authorities in life discipline us, and so will fellow believers in the established Church. **Discipline is painful. What have been some painful disciplines you have experienced?** There are two contrasting purposes for discipline which are condemnation or redemption. There are specific areas of misconduct the Bible requires discipline for and finally, there is a general procedure for Biblical discipline within the Church.

AUTHORITY IS
“The Freedom to do as one pleases; a right to exercise power.”

DISCIPLINE IS
“To cause or apply pain; to impose a penalty.”

DISCIPLINE CAN BE MOTIVATED BY CONDEMNATION! OR REDEMPTION!

While it is true that ALL authority is established by God, *(Romans 13:1-3)* not all of it carries the same motivation. Godly discipline is redemptive and has built-in mercy. He never treats us as our sins truly deserve...WHY? God's goal is always a redemptive one. **God always disciplines us for our GOOD and not for our DESTRUCTION. (Hebrews 12:10)** God also mixes His discipline with "RICH MERCY". *(Ephesians 2:4; Psalms 103:10)* Jesus Himself embodies mercy so He gives mercy to anyone who "FEARS" or reverences Him. *(Luke 1:50& Rom. 2:23-26)* All authority that disciplines in a Godly way shares God's motivation for painful consequences. For example, **Paul the apostle clarified that his authority was given to "Build" up instead of "Tear" down. (2 Corinthians 13:10)** But don't be naive, the pain will never feel like "fun" or be sweet like "candy" just because we understand that it is serving a redemptive purpose. Most of us will not see the benefit of discipline while it is happening. So what is our response? **TRUST GOD'S PURPOSES FOR DISCIPLINE.** *(Deut. 8:2-3; Romans 8:28)* There are authorities in life who do not share in God's purpose for discipline. The underlying motive here is often the elimination of any hope of redemption and a desire to maintain power or influence. Eventually, the use of discipline without mercy will be judged by the ultimate authority...GOD. **(James 2:13).** REMEMBER THAT MERCY TRIUMPHS OVER JUDGEMENT! **IF YOU HAVE AUTHORITY CHOOSE TO BE MERCIFUL.**

MERCY IS
“The attitude of pity & compassion for those in distress.”

WHY IS CHURCH DISCIPLINE NEEDED?

Many times in the Bible we are warned not to despise discipline but value it. (Job 5:17; Prov. 3:11,12; 5:12) If you want to value discipline start by focusing on the many benefits and reasons for it. Discipline is not only part of life *Proverbs 6:23* points out that the God's commands and rebukes are a path toward LIFE! Without discipline there would just be anarchy and life would not even be sustainable. (See. *Prov. 19:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 9:27; 11:32; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; Rev. 3:19*) So with these verses in mind there are some more reasons for placing a high value on Church Discipline.

1. It Brings About **Abundant Life!**
2. It **Teaches** Wisdom and Understanding.
3. It **Guards** Against Self-Destruction and eternal Condemnation.
4. It proves the sovereignty *in* the local church.
5. It **affirms** that we are connected to each other as a **body** and that Ultra-individualism is sinful.
6. It teaches how **sin is contagious** or like yeast and must not be tolerated.
7. **It affirms the Holy Character of God.**
8. It saves people from all kinds of pain from foolishness.

It would not be a stretch to say that we learn more from discipline than we do from reward. Never the less, one issue that keeps many from freely celebrating Church Discipline is...still SELF-WILL! Along with our own self-will, we have to deal with apparent **abuse** of authority and an overall **distrust** of authority in our culture. These issues do not excuse the need and we must value Godly Church Discipline.

WHAT ARE SOME AREAS

(This is not a comprehensive list...) **MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE THAT REQUIRES CHURCH DISCIPLINE?**

- **The Greedy, Envious or Covetous:**
- **Idolaters** - This inordinately fond of a person or thing.
- **Revilers** -Abusive language that is scornful.
- **The Drunkard**
- **The Extortioner** - The manipulator and oppressor.
- **The Fornicator** - Illicit sexual activity.
- **The Idle or Lazy**
- **The Heretic** - One who believes & spreads bad teaching.
- **The Divisive** - Anyone undermining the unity with

WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL PROCEDURE FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

(A Study of *Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 4:19-5:13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15*)

What do these stories have in common?

- Samuel & Eli
- David & Saul
- Abigail & Nabal
- Daniel & Nebuchadnezzar

Answer: Submission to abusive authority. What is illustrated in them?

● **CONFRONT PRIVATELY (ONE TO ONE):** "If your brother listens, then you have won your brother. Many issues can be resolved through Overlooking the issue, or through simple-honest confession and forgiveness."

● **ESTABLISH THE MATTER WITH GENTLENESS AND RESPECT. (BRING A BROTHER ALONG):** "Confirm the matter with objective perspectives and continue to work towards unity and reconciliation. If serious issues continue which Hinders the faith of others, Undermines The Gospel Truth, Causes Division or if an individual is Causing Physical and Emotional Harm... more action is needed."

● **OPEN CONFRONTATION (CHURCH LEADERSHIP IS NOW ACTIVELY**

PARTICIPATING): "When a member of the church remains in direct rebellion to God's Word and does not submit to Godly authority, Open rebuke and confrontation are needed...Only those members affected by the sin should be addressed by Church Leadership. This step must be gradual and sensitive to the specific situation. This step must also be structured in such a way as to preserve the fellowship of the church while reflecting the seriousness of the situation. If nothing changes after time and testing, more action is needed.

● **REMOVAL FROM CLOSE FELLOWSHIP:** The person is no longer welcome at church functions or at sponsored events without first meeting with Church Leaders. Individuals are to no longer pursue or confront the individual in any form. All members should direct the individual To God first and then to Church Leadership.

● **RESTORATION AND PUBLIC AFFIRMATION UPON REPENTANCE.** When a formerly rebellious person is repentant and illustrating humility, a restoration, acceptance and public affirmation are needed. Specific boundaries should be established to protect all those directly involved from falling into a repeat situation. There should be a restoration of friendships, along with comfort and new opportunities to serve within the Church.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS A PROPER PROCEDURE!

The proper attitude is required from each individual who is involved with the Church Discipline. (Gal. 6:1) Believers should be "In step" with the Holy Spirit and free from the proverbial "Log" that can be hindering their own perceptions. (Matt. 7:3-5). Do not rebuke harshly, you could be wrong...**There is never a time to rebuke without respect and love. (1 Timothy 5:1 & 2 TIm. 2:24,25).** Humility is needed because you might find