

Seven Questions About Discipline

“Discipline” is seen as important by all, but often there is disagreement on what constitutes discipline. The disagreement usually stems from one or more of the following: (1) relying on “I think or I feel”; (2) being guided by brotherhood traditions; (3) stressing punishment while omitting the instructional and remedial aspects; (4) misunderstanding the true purpose. The following seven questions are designed to help clarify “discipline.” Six of which will deal with the correctional aspect.

① WHAT IS ‘DISCIPLINE’?

A system of rule or conduct (noun).

To train to obedience (instructional and correctional) (verb).

Thus a disciple is one taught, a follower, an adherent. Mat.28:19, Joh.8:31

Correctional discipline must be done so as to convict one of error. Not to “score points against,” but to “win over.”

② WHAT DOES ‘REMOVE FROM YOUR MIDST’ MEAN? 1 Corinthians 5:1-2

Problem: A brother, who entered a sinful relationship, continued as one in fellowship (good standing) with the tacit approval of some.

The acceptance and defense by some had to be stopped.

Sin had to be removed to spare the congregation. If the brother refuses to repent, he must be put out (removed from fellowship) with the sin.

Goal: *To protect church; to have him see the error of way and repent.*

[Concerning other sins at Corinth: factions, questioning the Apostle’s authority, high-mindedness, suing each other, envying spiritual gifts, questioning the resurrection – disfellowship (excommunication) was not ordered because such sins are corrected by teaching, reproofing and rebuking, which require association.]

③ WHAT DOES ‘AS A GENTILE’ MEAN? Matthew 18:15-17

Problem: A brother has been sinned against.

If “going to” and “church discipline” prove ineffective, then “do not associate” becomes necessary.

Treat the erring one as a “Gentile” “taxgather” (i.e., not one of us, an outcast).

Social interaction is to be restrained. Mat.9:10-11; Act.10:28, 11:3

Goal: *To bring the erring one to his senses, seeking to effect a favorable change.*

④ WHAT DOES ‘KEEP ALOOF’ MEAN? 2 Thessalonians 3:6

Problem: Some were undisciplined and busybodies. :7-12

Distance oneself from them. “Do not associate.” :14

Treat them, “not an enemy, but a brother.” :15

Goal: *To shame the unruly, attempting to produce a favorable change.*

⑤ WHO IS A 'FACTIOUS MAN'? Titus 3:10-11

Problem: One was being contentious and stirring up trouble.

Definition: (KJ: heretic) One who champions foolish controversies: holding peculiar ideas, opinions, judgments.

"Perverted:" More than turned away, but turned in-side-out.

"Reject:" to beg off, excuse oneself from. Don't listen to, give heed to, or countenance such a person. Assigning him the position he deserves: a trouble-maker to be shunned.

Goal: *To warn and protect the disciples.*

⑥ WHAT IS MEANT BY 'GIVE HIM A GREETING'? 2 John 9

Problem: Some were teaching "another Gospel" (promoting corrupt and false doctrine).

"Do not receive" (Do not provide hospitality and aid).

"No greeting" (Do not give a salutation thereby showing affinity)

Goal: *To notify of danger and protect the disciples.*

⑦ WHAT IS INVOLVED IN 'MARKING THEM'? Romans 16:17

Problem: Some that were coming would cause dissension by contrary teachings.

"Mark." Keep eye on them, take note of them, identify them.

"Turn away from them." Do not receive them as teachers.

Goal: *To warn and protect the disciples.*

Properly understood and applied, church discipline is effective in keeping the church free from corruption by false and misguided teachers, and keeping it pure from internal corruption caused by members who continue to sin. Saving souls is the work of the church. Saving souls from sin (by conversion), and saving the souls of the disciples (by discipline).