

## Types Of Discipline- Church, Pt. I

We now come to the third aspect of discipline, the discipline of the church.

Similar to personal and family discipline, church discipline is also covenantal in its context, theological in its basis and holy in its purpose. Overall, its design is to ensure that the vital marks the church as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic” body are maintained and strengthened. Because of the prevailing antinomian and anarchistic spirit of modern-day society, its recognition and practice have, except for their presence in a limited number of congregations, have all but disappeared from the life of the local church. Such extant practices are mainly but not solely found in those congregations upholding the distinctives of the Reformed tradition. One primary example of such a commitment is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), XXX.3:

Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor 5; 1 Tim 5:20; Mt 7:6; 1 Tim 1:20; 1 Cor 11:27-34; Jude 23.

In the upcoming weeks, we will examine in detail each of the purposes stated above. However, for today it is important to note that the aim of restoring the sinning Christian is listed at the top of the motives. Thus church discipline is not to be practiced for its own sake but above all, with the noble intent of regaining and restoring the lost sheep of the kingdom.

[Where in the Bible do we find specific examples of church discipline?](#) It is advocated and implemented in:

[Mt 16: 18 - 19](#) – Jesus' teaching on the power of the keys. Here our Lord institutes corporate discipline by authorizing the apostles (through Peter) to use the keys of the kingdom to loose or permit and to bind or prevent, those matters pertaining to the church as those very matters were loosed or bound in heaven.

[18: 15 -18](#) – our Lord's instruction on the settling of disputes among believers

[1 Cor 5:1-11](#) – Paul's admonition regarding the brother guilty of gross sexual immorality

[2 Cor 2:5-11](#) – the apostolic teaching on forgiveness and restoration of the repentant offender

[How is church discipline to be exercised?](#) Those entrusted with the leadership of the church are to carry out such discipline in a very humble, prayerful, gentle and circumspect manner, with the intent of restoring the offending brother or sister as their most important goal, Gal 6:1. Foremost in their consideration is to be the fact that the members of their congregations are above all, God's flock, 1 Pe 5:2, the sheep of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for them, Jn 10:11, who knows them and whom is known of them, v. 14. Therefore, they are required to be faithful shepherds (that is, pastors) of "the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight (watching over, taking care of or "bishop-ing"), not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock." The reason and motivation for this solemn leadership privilege are clearly stated: "And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." 1 Pe 5:2-4.