

# Discussion of "Church Discipline and Restoration"

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 07 March 2021

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0:00] 1 Corinthians 5, 1-11 was the main text from this morning, so if you have your Bible, you want to re-read that and then we'll go through the three application questions that we have to consider.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife, and you are arrogant.

Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit, and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing.

When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump as you really are unleavened.

[1:09] Unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I write to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard or swindler, not even to eat with such a one.

So the first question for us to talk about tonight in thinking about church discipline, also thinking about Matthew 18 and the outline that the Lord gives us to follow whenever we are to carry out church discipline, is what are the consequences when a church avoids church discipline?

I'm going to grab another microphone up here, but what are the consequences when a church avoids church discipline? Okay, what are the consequences?

[2:16] If we don't do this, if we ignore Matthew 18, if we ignore Scripture, and something like that happens in our church and we choose to do nothing about it, and what's the consequence going to be?

Julie. Julie. Well, I believe that any consequences that would result would result from the nature of sin itself, which is that it's insidious and it puts out its tentacles into every aspect of life.

Your relationship with the Lord, with your family, with your friends, within your church, it will just eat away and eat away and eat away.

Good. Yeah, it will erode the church from within. As we choose to avoid to do church discipline, that means that we let it go.

And if we let it go, it's going to continue to fester and grow in ways that maybe we didn't foresee coming, but it's not a good thing.

[3:33] It's like a disease left untreated. It's not just going to disappear. It's going to continue to attack and take over. Who else?

Mike. One of the things I think that is a result is the church may lose something it never realized it had.

The power of God would not be present there. And sometimes I worry about our modern churches that we don't understand. We're doing a lot of stuff, but most of it in our own power.

And if we had the power of God, if we were holy, even as God is holy, if we would confess, if we would come with clean hands and pure hearts, then the Lord would not only bless, it would be his power.

And when we avoid that type of discipline, we lose that power. Good. Good. Good. Yeah. And back to Julie. The Lord will not be mocked, right?

[ 4 : 33 ] And to use a church that doesn't take his word seriously. Go ahead. Sorry, I thought about this a lot today. Okay. But I think the other thing that we lose is the beauty and the joy and the gift of restoration.

And the crucifixion, we know that Jesus died for our sins, but do we latch on to that every day? Do we consider that a gift? Do we keep short accounts with God? Do we keep short accounts with each other? And there's joy to be had in that.

And that was the whole purpose of the cross, to restore us and restore a relationship for us with God. And that's the basis of all our relationships is our relationship with him.

Good. Yeah, we lose out on that opportunity to see restoration take place. I think like what Mike said, we just sing about desiring and wanting to be holy and righteous.

[ 5 : 54 ] But if we're avoiding all of this stuff, we're singing words, but we don't really mean it. And we're preaching the Bible maybe even, but we don't really mean it because judging by our lack of action, we're showing that we don't take sin all that seriously.

So I'll just run over this way. Okay, Nick. Yeah, I think piggybacking on what you just said about not taking sin seriously, I think one of the consequences is that the church loses its reputation with outsiders.

Because if we don't practice church discipline, then we're too comfortable with sin. And if we're too comfortable with sin, then the outside can look in on us and say that we're hypocritical.

And I do think that that's one of the reasons why the American church doesn't have a good reputation in American society. It's that they think that we practice the same sins they do.

We just act like we don't. And I think that's one of the reasons why church discipline is so important.

Good. Yeah, we lose our witness. We lose our—we have no integrity.

[ 7 : 05 ] Ben? Yeah, and just piggybacking off of that, I mean, I think of the church as being the bride of Christ. And Paul in 2 Corinthians 11, he talks about that he wanted to betroth to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

And so the effect in that—and I filter this through honor, shame, having lived in that in the last 10 years. You know, it's to the shame of the groom that the bride is soiled.

And so that's what we are putting out to the world is that it is not a pure bride for the world to see. Good.

Cameron? Cameron? And I think just to kind of piggyback on whoever talked about our culture—Piggyback.

Lots of piggybacking tonight. You know, the American church especially, you see them want to completely avoid confronting people.

[ 8 : 09 ] One of the conversations I've had with, you know, a friend I've been trying to, you know, reach out to is he's very against confronting people.

And that all our job is to do is just to love people. We just have to love people no matter what they do. And, you know, he's married to his husband and, you know, living in a lifestyle that's very contrary.

But yet he calls himself a Christian. And so, you know, they go to church every Sunday from what I can tell on, you know, social media and stuff like that.

And the thing that scares me is when churches avoid confronting sin, is it possible that they are just loving people straight to hell?

That it is giving people a false sense of salvation that, hey, I've gone to church every Sunday.

[ 9 : 15 ] I kind of checkmark these certain boxes. But when the church, quote unquote, the cultural church, the American church, is afraid to confront sin, to approach something like church discipline, are we creating a whole generation of false, you know, false converts or just, you know, a false sense of security among people that don't know any better?

And I think that's become one of my biggest fears with the American church. Yeah, we avoid church discipline.

We normalize sin within the church and grow to accept it and turn a blind eye to it or even not even turn a blind eye to it.

Look straight at it and declare that it's good. Nick? Nick? The consequence is that when we avoid church discipline because it's hard, we establish a precedent that if there's something in God's word that appears difficult, we can just skip over that and do the other things that are easier.

Yeah, because if you can avoid listening to Jesus and to Paul on this matter, well, then what other matters can you ignore them on? Yeah, I get to a point where maybe even as a pastor, you say, ooh, I'm going to skip that passage because that's dealing with some issues that I know people are living with right now in their life and I'd rather not offend.

[11:08] And then what we're saying is I would rather offend God than man. And when that becomes the case, I mean, what a church is lost. We've lost our way.

So if you look at, obviously, the supreme example is Christ, and he wasn't afraid to offend people with the truth. Neither was Paul. They spoke the truth in love and the rest of the apostles.

But they never turned a blind eye to it. That's the one thing you've got to appreciate what Paul does here is he exposes it. You know, he's not going to beat around the bush.

I mean, he doesn't jump right into it in chapter one, but he's got some other things that he's got to talk to them about, but he doesn't avoid it either. But if we do, we stand to lose a lot.

A lot more than we maybe think. I mean, the easy way is, I think especially when we're talking about the Christian life, the easy way is usually not the way to go.

[12:11] You know what I'm saying? It's hard to do these things, but to avoid them produces much worse things.

Far worse than probably we even could have imagined. Just thinking, well, if we just don't talk about it, they'll stay and we can just keep going on. We stand a lot to lose. God's using us.

It's one thing that we stand to lose as well. Who else? What are the consequences when a church avoids church discipline? Brandy.

Brandy. I was just going to say something that came to mind. Like, when the church isn't the church and we're not living for the truth, you have people coming in the church, broken people desperate for truth, and you come into a church that's just like the world.

You lose those people. They go away hurting, you know? So it's so important that we live that truth, you know, because, you know, the world, that's all they know is my truth, your truth.

[13:19] We have to have that, you know what I'm saying? The truth. Like, people are starving for truth, so we have to do it the way that God has told us to do because it can, you know, trickle down, lose those opportunities to, yeah.

Yeah. Good. Good. Yeah, they're not able to be fed by us because, again, you know, what we say and what we do are completely different things.

Or maybe, again, if we're not practicing church discipline, then I think it goes back to other issues that we don't really believe the Bible. And we don't really trust that God's ways are better than our own. And what does a church like that have to offer the world besides just to be another place where they gather for, you know, a good worship experience, an encouraging message.

And they can get that from the world and they can be better entertained by the world than they can be by the church. So, eventually, they're just, I think, going to stop coming altogether. Any other responses?

What are the consequences when a church avoids church discipline? Paul.

[14:36] I was thinking that it's easy for us to look at the world and some things the world does and say that's a slippery slope and they're heading in the wrong direction.

But it's much harder for us to look at some of our actions inside the church and realize there's a slippery slope inside the church as well. And that first issue of discipline that doesn't get done makes it easier to then avoid the next one and the next one.

And slowly, the church becomes less and less holy instead of more and more holy and less and less pleasing to God instead of more and more pleasing to God. Yeah.

Yeah, the more that we allow to happen, yeah, it just sets up for the next time. Well, we didn't do anything about that, so why should we do anything about this? We stand to lose a lot as a church and our people stand to lose a lot if the church avoids church discipline.

We talk about, you know, we continue to normalize their sin or say nothing about their sin. Not seeking restoration, there's going to be pain and problem there and for other people in their lives as

well.

[15:54] We think about families. You know, if we're not confronting some of these issues, then we stand to see some of our marriages fall apart and divorce and families ruin because we're not willing to step in and say what needs to be said because, you know, the world's not going to.

The world's not going to come in and confront those people because they're just going to continue. They're going to cheer them on, you know. Good for you. Live your truth. And so it's something that we can't avoid or it will be destructive for the church and for the people who are part of that church. Any other responses for this question? Okay, I hope that we all are aware that this is something that we shouldn't avoid.

And yet we've got to make sure that we go about church discipline the Lord's way, which is following his method, one-on-one, two or three, the church, before we remove that person from membership.

But all along the way, I think it's very important that we remind ourselves that the hope that we have here is that that person will be restored.

[17:14] And we're doing this out of love. And so I think that, you know, one time, you know, we hear people talking about, well, Christians, you know, and being judgmental and whatever. And the Bible tells us to judge on certain matters, especially when it comes to matters like this.

But I think that when we do so, it's not something that we should just. Some situations are different. I see somebody in the act, man. I'm going to confront that person right away, right?

But in other matters, we want to make sure that we are making sure that we know the situation well and that we have examined ourselves, too, so that we make sure that we're going to proceed in a way that the Lord would be pleased with.

Let's move on to question number two. What are the consequences when a church abuses church discipline? So interesting enough, if you turn to 2 Corinthians 2, let's start in verse 5.

Now, if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure not to put it too severely to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough. So you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

[18:27] So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you're obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive.

Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.

You know what's going on here, it appears, is that this brother from 1 Corinthians 5, who has been dealt with through church discipline, is now trying to come back.

He's repented, and he seeks restoration with this church, and the church is doing what? No, we're not ready to forgive you, right? And so Paul is here, I think again, speaking on behalf of this brother to this church.

Forgive him. Restore him. If he has repented, then you need to welcome him back into the congregation. And so this church that at one point was not taking church discipline seriously at all, now was beginning to be abusive in their continuing to carry out the church discipline of this individual.

[19:34] So what are the consequences when a church abuses church discipline? Cameron. So when I was thinking about this question, I was, you know, trying to think of any examples or any time I've witnessed and, you know, when church discipline is abused, and for some reason, you know, we as a church want to reach out, and unfortunately sometimes we as a church, quote-unquote, I'll use church, within our country, we make national news.

And unfortunately, one sticks out very highly when I started thinking about this question, that's Westboro. And we've seen the amount of people Westboro has turned away, or turned off, because of the way they act, because of this.

I'm holier than thou. God hates you. You know, it just, I mean, obviously they're the extreme example of, you know, quote-unquote, church discipline too far, but I think it easily will push people away if we're consistently looking at how we can get on to people, how we can berate people.

I've sat in troubling conversations where a person said, here's my holiness level, and here's yours. You need to get to me. And it's, you know, how quickly that can just, what?

And so, just the very ways we were kind of talking about, if we avoid church discipline, how we can kind of push people away, we can quickly cross that line and push people away the other way if

we're abusing it, if we're too much in the face of people, if we're too much doom and gloom and knocking people down about how sinful they are and stuff like that, we can quickly kind of push people away from the church, because, you know, who wants to come to a church on a Sunday morning and leave feeling like they got beat up every Sunday morning?

[ 21 : 51 ] You know, obviously not physically, but, you know, I've... Mentally, emotionally, spiritually. Yeah, we've seen churches where people just feel, you know, mentally beat up when they leave.

And I think that, again, we're just in danger of pushing people away from Christ. And it's completely the opposite of what we're here for.

Yeah, so we lose sight of grace in the gospel that we're saved by grace through faith, and then it can become more of rule keeping.

If you don't keep all of these rules, you're going to get hammered by somebody, and it becomes not the gospel anymore. And, yeah, we can be known as being a hateful people instead of a gracious and loving people.

And that can tarnish our testimony, obviously, as well. Who else? What are the consequences when a church abuses church discipline? Mike.

[ 23 : 00 ] Mike. Mike. I got a kick last Wednesday night. You were down in the area where it's getting ready to meet, and Ted was going to bring the message that night.

And Ted asked how you was doing, and he said, I'm on heresy patrol. I'm going to be sitting in on this. That was... I love that. I don't know if Ted realized what you said or not, but Ted, I'll let you know again.

Now, there is a perfect example where we go out and we look for somebody to make a slip-up, and once they slip up, then we're going to jump on them. Our Sunday school lesson this morning was about a group of people back in the first church at Jerusalem, and where Peter had gone to Cornelius' house and witnessed to him, and the party of the circumcision called him on the carpet over it.

And they were a group that was looking out to make sure that we carried out all the Old Testament laws and things like that. And Peter told them exactly what God had done, and that group was silent.

And then they began to praise the Lord for what he had done with the Gentiles also. And I said, now, you know, we can go looking. Unfortunately, we don't have to look.

[ 24 : 25 ] It usually jumps up in the middle. But I think another thing we've got to remember, this is a brother or a sister in Christ, the only ones that we have the right to say, think about what you're doing.

Does this glorify the Lord? Is this wrong or is this right? And, you know, here is what I see the Bible saying. That makes no sense to an unbeliever. But, yes, I think when we abuse that power or abuse that rule, that we can, like Cameron says, drive people away and keep a world from coming to us because of the way we treat each other.

Yeah. Good. Looking for opportunities to tear each other apart instead of building one another up. I mean, you know, those issues we confront. But, yes, then we become like church police where everybody feels like they're under investigation whenever they come here.

And, you know, we're just collecting evidence so that we can prosecute you. Who wants to go to a church like that? You know? Good.

[ 25 : 43 ] Any other answers? What are the consequences when a church abuses church discipline? Ben. You know, as I think about, again, analogies of how the church is referred to as the family of God, and I think about my own family and extended family and how discipline has at times been harsh with members of the family, how that creates anger, it creates resentment, and it ultimately creates division and rejection from the family.

And I'm glad my wife isn't here tonight to talk about black sheep in the family because I know she would probably cry telling this. But just having those folks in the family that are living in sin, and when it's harshly confronted, they have the perception of you're too good for us, and so our family can't be around your family.

And I think that that can be a consequence within the church, too, when we are overly harsh and not looking for the good of bringing them back into the family, bringing them back into relationship, ultimately bringing back to their father is who they need.

And so I think that can be a consequence. Good. Yeah, we lose the ability for what church discipline is supposed to be for, which is restoration. We take it too far. Even if we're right to confront that person, but if we take it too far, we're too harsh in it.

We're not motivated by love. We're not seeking restoration, but just to hammer that person. The likelihood of that person. I mean, God is greater than us and our sinfulness, and He can certainly help that person.

[ 27 : 40 ] But the likelihood of that church being able to be restored by the church who was so harsh in disciplining them. Not very good. You don't have to raise your hand, but anybody been hurt by the church before?

Yeah? I'll raise my hand. It's painful, isn't it? And, you know, maybe it wasn't a church discipline that was overly abusive. Maybe it was something else. But those wounds are deep, and they take a long time to heal.

And I can think of a story in our church in Leavenworth where a family, a couple, had been coming to our church for a while and had joined our church.

They had an adult daughter that was probably Danny and I's age. And she finally came with her family one Sunday. And I remember with tears at the door, she was just so thankful to be back in church.

And it had been years. And she had just said on the way out, you know, I'll tell you more eventually. And then eventually when they did join the church sometime later, I heard more about what had happened.

[ 28 : 49 ] And I mean, this church was very... And you can, I mean, maybe you can disagree with me on this, and that's okay. I think that yes, when you're a member of a church, you're submitting to the church, the pastor, leaders, and matters of church discipline and spiritual matters.

But I'm not going to tell you who to marry. Let me take that back. I will advise you on what Scripture says. What God says and who you are to marry.

But I will not try to arrange a marriage between you and someone else in the church if you don't love that person. And that's what was going on here is that the pastor had a man in mind, a single man in mind, who he thought that she should marry.

And really pushed for that and pushed for it in really some painful ways. And there was other things not worth going into. But that really hurt her and prevented her from coming to church for a long time.

The man that he didn't want her to marry, she eventually did marry. And they both joined our church, still going there and still involved with it. So I think that, you know, sometimes we can fail.

[ 30 : 09 ] Well, we have authority, but we can take it further than I think that God intends for us to. So I hope I was clear in that.

If I see a single Christian woman and man in our church, I'm not going to try to force them into a marriage.

Maybe you might say like, hey, you know, have you ever thought about so-and-so? I think they're available or something like that. Because we do promote Christian marriages, right? And we don't want to be unequally yoked.

And certainly that's scriptural. And we're going to preach that. And if we know that a situation where that isn't the case, then, you know, I think it's good that we go to that person with Scripture and love and show them what the Word says.

But sometimes we can just go too far in a situation like that. Unless you want me to arrange marriages around here. I mean, I really don't want any part of that.

[ 31 : 09 ] I really don't. I mean, maybe one of our elders does. And we can play matchmaker. I really don't think that that's our, I don't think that falls under the requirements of an elder.

It's like we could take that illustration a little bit further than necessary. It's probably better to just keep going on. But anyhow, there's people who are, you know, they're dealing with a lot of pain and trauma because the church was abusive towards them in the way that they carried out church discipline or the way that they really tried to pry into their lives, maybe beyond what was biblical. Anybody else? Paul. I think that one way a church can be abusive of discipline is by being inconsistent.

And by that I mean we discipline somebody for homosexuality, but we don't discipline for fornication or adultery, which are equally heinous sexual sins.

Or we discipline for drunkenness, but not for maybe blatant unethical business practices. And so we come across hypocritical again to the world because we kind of pick and choose what we think is good instead of living by God's standards consistently.

[ 32 : 41 ] Good. And I, to go along with what you're saying too, I think we can even do that with different people in the church based upon their importance, how we view their importance.

So, you know, a deacon or an elder we might give a pass to. Now, I think, you know, when Paul talks about qualifications for an elder, whenever, you know, a charge is levied against one, that there should be two witnesses because chances are they're going to be more likely have things thrown at them.

And so there's reason for that, which is good. But I think we've all, I know I have heard a lot of stories about, you know, this couple was living together before they got married, and the pastor and the deacon said, well, we're not going to do that.

You guys are going to have to live apart if we're going to follow through with this wedding. And maybe that couple did or did not follow through. But then when it was the deacon's children, the deacon was kind of like, you know, why wouldn't you, they're offended, why wouldn't you, why are you going to make them do that?

So I think it can be the same thing too, where we're tempted to turn a blind eye to others in the church based upon what kind of influence we think that they have. It's easier to follow through with church discipline where maybe we think that there's not going to be as much repercussions for that person.

[ 34 : 07 ] They're not going to put up as big of a resistance. We're more behind it. And so, yeah, I think even with that, not just judging different sins in different ways, but even different people in different ways. Yeah, who's, you know, well, that person drives a BMW.

That person drives, I don't know, an old car. Yeah. A Chrysler 200, that's what I drive.

There you go. And say, well, you know, maybe I'm not so. But we do that. We're fallen, but we can't do that. But that would be another example of an abuse of church discipline.

We apply it to some, but not all. In some cases, but not in all the cases where we should. Any other answers? What are the consequences when a church abuses church discipline?

Okay. Question three. What positive outcomes result from a church that practices church discipline biblically? So what are the positive outcomes if we do this the Lord's way, the right way?

[ 35 : 26 ] What are some positive outcomes? Cameron. I think the most obvious one and possibly one of the most important ones is just our relationships with each other.

You know, when I think back over life and when we talk about church discipline, we can even kind of look at worldly discipline and just see how that kind of plays in.

And some of the closest relationships I've ever had over my life is other friends who are willing to look at me and say, hey, you're kind of being an idiot right now.

You know, it's some of your closest friends ends up being the ones that aren't afraid to tell you the truth. And you may not like it at the time. You may not like them for that day.

You may not talk to them for a few days or a week. But later on, you may eventually go, hey, you know what? They were right. And with that, I realized that they had my best interest in mind.

[ 36 : 34 ] And they were doing it out of a place of love and affection. And it's something that you can build upon going forward. But again, that all falls back on how do we approach the discipline?

Are we approaching it out of a place of love and care and wanting restoration and wanting the best for that person?

Or are we facing it with, you know, hey, I can, aha, you know, jab you or take a shot at you. Yeah. One of the things I've constantly told the youth when it comes to church discipline and how we love one another is, I say, if you have a friend and they start doing meth, we're not just going to go, you know what?

I love you, so I'm going to help you find the best meth you can get. You know, just a crazy extreme example. But, you know, if you're truly a friend, you're going to take that person aside and you're going to say, hey, meth probably isn't the best thing for you.

We should probably avoid it. And so I think, and I loved how you said it this morning, you know, 98%, it's a one-on-one conversation and there's restoration. And how much growth will we see in our relationships with one another when we can approach each other out of love?

[ 38 : 06 ] And when we are being approached, we know it's coming from a place of love, that it's not coming from a place of vengeance or anger. And slowly but surely, we as a church have been so focused on our relationships and our community groups.

And I think this is something that can just take it even a step further. And just the relationships we can build through church discipline, through tough conversations is immeasurable.

Good. Yeah, I think that, yeah, one of the benefits is stronger and deeper relationships with one another. If you know that the person who is coming to you is someone who you trust, someone who has shown that they care for you, has exhibited love towards you, and if there is something that they come to you with, they've noticed something, I'm a lot more likely to listen to that person than if they haven't shown all of those things to me.

And not only am I likely to listen to that person, and if I agree with what they say is true, then I realize that this is somebody who I trust even more, I love even more, I appreciate any more, even more because they were willing and they cared enough to address something in my life.

They went out of their way to do something hard because they cared about me. And ultimately, you know, the motivation because they love the Lord. So in college, I'll tell a quick story.

[ 39 : 40 ] We still have time. So going back to the abuse and to the positive, so you guys know a lot of my story in freshman year in college, especially I was starting to drift away from the church on one Sunday.

We had a big, giant church that was, like, seriously in our parking lot, just right behind our dorm, not far from our dorm. I lived with two other teammates from the baseball team, and then our RA was also an upperclassman, a baseball player.

And one Sunday, I remember, so I had a bullhorn, and our dorm room was on the lower level, so we would open our window and we would talk through the bullhorn at people while they were going to and from class and just doing stupid stuff.

But it was, oh, it was funny. And so he knew we had that, and one morning I slept in, I didn't go to church, and he was in my face with his, Wake up, wake up, you didn't go to church, you're a sinner. And then he threw it, and then he, so we had bunk beds, and we had a guy on the floor, a guy in the middle, and I was all the way on the top. And he pulled my mattress off with me on it.

[ 40 : 53 ] Needless to say, I was not happy, and I was not encouraged to go to church the next week because of those actions. But I did have good friends. They didn't do that. They didn't get to know how to take a bullhorn and get my face.

But they would say things in a way that I knew that they cared. Hey, we missed you. It says, you know, we missed you today. Things like that.

Or just even to ask other things. Man, that goes much further than the opposite. Okay, who's got the microphone? Amy. I do. I wasn't, I'll share this with you.

It's from Matthew 12, 20. And Teresa and I have a friend named Kathy who often refers to this verse, and it's something that I think that we can apply for this.

It says, and I'll read it in the NIV, which I don't like, but I'm going to use it anyway. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.

[ 42 : 02 ] And if he won't, we shouldn't. Yeah, we should be gracious people. Yeah, we need to encourage, when we see somebody who's been gone, or somebody who is trying to come back, or something like that, part of the positive discipline is encouraging them in the good behaviors, too.

You know, because they know what they've done. They're quite aware of the sin within, aren't we all?

But when we come to church, give them a smile, talk to them, you know, include them in what's going on, bring them back into the fold.

I mean, it's not our place to kick them out. That's God's business. Unless they're in complete sin, which we all know about that. And then, like we did earlier today, it's time for you to go out there in the world and see how that works for you.

But, yeah, if Jesus won't snuff out that flickering wick, and I've been one, it's not our place to do it either.

[ 43 : 21 ] So, yeah, be positive. Be so glad when you see a wandering soul come home. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, so another positive outcome is we get to see the restoration take place, be a part of that, see how God has led this person to repentance and back to our body.

We can continue to be a part of our family. Yeah. Yeah. Other, Nick over here, what other positive outcomes result from a church that practices church discipline biblically?

If the church practices church discipline, it means that the church is, in a sense, policing the behavior of its own members. So it's staying ethically consistent with what it says it believes. And groups that are consistent are healthy. And healthy groups are attractive to people who are outside. Because I don't think anybody in American society would look at American society as a whole right now and be like, you know, the major problem with America is that all of our social institutions and groups are just too healthy.

Nobody would say that. So if the church then watches the behavior of its own members so that they're lining up with God's word, it'll stand out dramatically.

[ 44 : 40 ] And I do think that that'll be attractive to people who are seeking consistency. Amen. Yeah, especially right now, as you pointed out, with all of the unhealthiness and all of the other organizations in our nation to see the church.

What a great opportunity we have to witness through our purity, through our taking seriously what God's word has said and our desire to be obedient to it.

It will send a powerful message. Any other responses? What positive outcomes result from a church that practices church discipline biblically?

James? I was looking back again at Matthew 18, verse 15. It says, If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. And I think that's the most important thing about the positive aspects of being able to discipline, is that you can restore that brother or sister back to where they need to be at.

[ 45 : 54 ] Good. Speaking of Matthew 18, I think it's important as well that we understand that the Lord has established steps to carry out church discipline.

Don't go to step two until you've done step one. Don't go to step four until you've gone to step two. And sometimes we get that mixed up, don't we?

In fact, a lot of times we don't even go to step one. Step one for us is, you know, say, and I'll use Brandy as an example because I know she'd never do this to me.

But say there was something there, right? Say, you know, whatever. I felt like Brandy had sinned against me and I'll use Brandy because, again, she'd never do that to me. I know she never would. But say that's the case.

And instead of going to Brandy, I go to Mike. And that's what we do a lot of times, isn't it? You know, let me tell you about what this person did to me. And then it just, and then we're gossiping.

[ 46 : 56 ] And so we're piling on sin after sin. So don't avoid step one. I think sometimes, depending on the situation, you might want some advice.

You might want some encouragement. You might want some prayer. I think in those cases you have leaders in the church that you can go to. You have men in this church, I know, who have pastored churches before who you could go to for counsel, to give you some encouragement, to give you some prayer, who I think are trustworthy and aren't going to turn around and use that for gossip.

But don't avoid doing step one. And like I said this morning, and I don't know if my experience is typical of what others have experienced, but most times when you go step one, that situation gets resolved.

So it's important that we do that. It's important that we follow the order. That somebody doesn't come into a business meeting and we say, okay, you know, here's John Smith.

And John, we're kicking you out of the church tonight. And he's like, what? Well, you've done all these bad things. Oh, we're kicking you out. You're unrepentant. Well, we haven't even addressed him. We haven't even given him that opportunity before.

[ 48 : 23 ] So we've got to make sure that we follow this in the order in which the church described. Not skipping steps. Not adding steps. Not thinking that we're doing this in the right way and really not doing so.

I think that we've just got to be aware that Jesus has given us a pattern here. And again, there is not a time frame here, though I would say that it's something that shouldn't fester.

It's something that needs to be dealt with soon because there's much at stake. And you might want to talk to someone and get a little bit of wisdom. You know, pastor, you might want to get some

encouragement or wisdom with that, but don't avoid it.

And there are some occasions where, you know, we're going to have to, depending on the matter, we're going to have to move quickly on it. You know, if we know there's a situation where we pray it never happens, but one of our children is being abused, I mean, we're not going to wait around to handle that.

We're going to jump right on that, and we're going to handle it quickly. And there are some other situations where we're going to move a little bit more slowly, potentially. But the most important thing is that we don't avoid doing this because if we do, as we talked about tonight, there are tragic consequences that I hope and pray that none of us wants to see happening in our church.

[ 49 : 47 ] So, and I can tell just kind of looking around everybody, I mean, this is a heavy, it's a weighty subject. Perhaps that's why such little attention is normally given to it because it's not an easy thing to do.

But again, the Lord doesn't call us too easy. He calls us to be holy. And so we've got to make sure that we follow his example, that we'd be the kind of church that he's called us to be.

But in all of our church disciplining, we have to make sure that our motivation is love and our hope is restoration, that we're not trying to crush people and we're not looking for, you know, hey, I don't like that person.

They parked in my parking spot. They usually sit in my pew. What can I do to try to get them out of my church? You know, we can't do stuff like that.

And we, again, we shouldn't show partiality either in how we do this. We've got to be like Christ. So, let's pray.

[ 50 : 58 ] Lord, thank you for the time that we've had and for the conversation that we've had. Lord, as we've shared, we know that there are terrible consequences for your church whenever it fails to be obedient to your word.

Lord, especially in matters of church discipline, God, not only does our avoiding such things cause us to erode from the inside out, but we lose our witness for you.

We tarnish the name of Jesus Christ, your son. And we're not much good to one another or to the world. And so, Father, though this is not an easy thing to do, Lord, we pray that you would give us the strength and the courage and the love that we need to be able to handle these matters when they come about in a way that pleases you, in a way that honors you, in a way that keeps your church pure, in a way that does not tarnish your name, that does not cause us to lose our testimony because we don't practice what we preach and we've lost integrity.

And, Lord, as has been mentioned, now is a time where the church has a great opportunity to be a powerful witness to the world of what true health looks like.

And, Lord, we pray that they would look to the church and see that, that these people who are different in so many ways have such great love and affection for one another. They're so concerned for one another and that the world would see that the reason why that is is not because of who we are, but because of what you, because of who you are and what you've done in our life to transform us and to make us your people.

[ 52 : 51 ] And so, Father, we pray for your help in these things. Help us to be wise and help us to be discerning and help us, Lord, to do what you would have us to do.

Lord, we love you. We thank, we're thankful for you, thankful to be a part of your church. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.