

Delivered By Grace
Colossians 1:12-13
Rev. Josh Buice

PLAIN SPEECH ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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May 12, 2005

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Introduction

One of the biblical marks of a true church is the proper practice of church discipline.

However, this mark seems to be virtually non-existent in many evangelical churches in America.

Consider the 1984 survey, in which Laney states,

In a recent survey of 439 pastors on the matter of church discipline 50 percent acknowledged situations in their ministry where discipline would have been appropriate but no action was taken. Three major hindrances to the practice of church discipline were mentioned: (a) fear of the consequences or outcome, (b) preference for avoiding disruptive problems, and (c) ignorance of the proper procedures.¹

The first two hindrances are matters of personal conviction. The last hindrance is addressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:15-20. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to perform an exegesis of the aforementioned passage in order to draw some conclusions regarding proper procedures for church discipline.

¹Carl J. Laney, "The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (O-D 1986): 357. See also Carl J. Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), 142, where Laney states, "The pastors sampled came from a broad spectrum of denominations and theological persuasions. The largest groups of respondents represented the following: United Methodist (70); Southern Baptist (61); those who simply labeled themselves 'Baptist' (46); Missouri Synod Lutheran (20); the American Lutheran Church (19); the Lutheran Church in America (18); those who simply identified themselves as 'Lutheran' (22); the Assemblies of God (21); no denomination indicated (61) . . . The remainder of the 439 surveys came from pastors of such denominations as the Wesleyan Church, Church of God, Free Methodist, Christian Church, Church of the Nazarene, Salvation Army, Moravian, Conservative Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Mennonite, Church of the Brethren, Foursquare, Presbyterian Church in America, Church of Christ, General Association of Regular Baptists and many more." Laney's volume describes the survey at length on pages 140-150.

Defining Church Discipline: An Exegesis Matthew 18:15-20

The Structure of Matthew 18

Matthew 18 is the fourth of five major teaching discourses found in Matthew's Gospel.² Some claim chapter 18 is a loose collection of sayings.³ Others view the chapter as having definite structure (though they differ on the number of sections).⁴ It seems as though the theme of chapter 18 is the relationship of believers within the church.⁵ Verses 1-4 illustrate that entrance into the kingdom is through child-like faith. Verses 6-9 warn of the consequences of causing another believer to stumble. Verses 10-14 illustrate the value of each believer. Verses 15-20 set forth procedures of church discipline and restoration. Finally, verses 21-35 illustrate God's emphasis on forgiveness.

Matthew 18:15-20, therefore, is the fourth of five discourses in the chapter.⁶ It is neatly placed between sections discussing the value of each believer (10-14) and the emphasis of God's forgiveness. Davies and Allison state, "In short, the way in which Matthew encircles vv.

²Estella B. Horning, "The Rule of Christ: An Exposition of Matthew 18:15-20," *Brethren Life and Thought* 38 (Spr. 1993), 69; R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 269.

³Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 514.

⁴See Edward Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, trans. by David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 358; R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 269; Estella Horning, "The Rule of Christ: An Exposition of Matthew 18:15-20," 69-70; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 750-751.

⁵Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary, ed. Max Anders (Nashville: Holman Publishers, 2000), 285. Contra James L. Boyce, "Transformed for Disciple Community: Matthew in Pentecost," *Word and World*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Sum 1993): 313. Boyce states the theme to be the unifying theme of the 'kingdom of heaven'.

⁶See Dennis Duling, "Matthew 18:15-17: Conflict, Confrontation, and Conflict Resolution in a 'Fictive Kin' Association," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37, pt. 1 (1998): 257.

15-20 is proof of his deep pastoral concern.”⁷

Explanation of Matthew 18:15

Matthew 18:15: *If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother* (NASB).

This text begins with the words Ἐὰν⁸ δὲ (Moreover, if . . .). The δὲ (Moreover) may be placed in the text to contrast the “sinning brother” with the heavenly Father’s will that not one of the “little ones” perish in the previous verse 14.⁹ This contrast is followed by the phrase ἀμαρτήση [εἰς σέῃ ὁ ἀδελφός σου (your brother should sin [against you]). Three main issues should be addressed regarding this phrase.

First, the word ἀμαρτήση simply means “to sin”.¹⁰ Hagner believes the word “is probably left deliberately imprecise so that a broad variety of offenses can be included.”¹¹ It is the only time in Matthew’s Gospel that he uses the word in this form (aorist, active, subjunctive, 3rd singular).

Second, the word “brother” is referring to a Christian brother. Davies and Allison state, “Here it clearly means ‘Christian brother’.”¹² Nearly all scholars agree with their

⁷Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 751.

⁸Ἐὰν plus the aorist subjunctive occurs nine times in Matthew 18:15-20. See Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, vol. 33b, 531. Hagner states, “Each of these clauses, except the last, introduces a potential situation and is followed in the apodosis by what is deemed the appropriate action.”

⁹See Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 367.

¹⁰ Cleon Rogers, Jr. and Cleon Rogers, III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 41.

¹¹Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 530. See also William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 698. Hendriksen comments that the word “is of a very general nature.”

¹²W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 782.

statement.¹³

Third, scholars debate whether the phrase εἰς σε (against you) is part of the Greek text.¹⁴ Some scholars reject the phrase on textual grounds.¹⁵ The manuscript evidence to support their view revolves around the fact that א B^f pc bo^{pt} Or Cyr omit the phrase, while NA²⁶ places the words in brackets.¹⁶ Interestingly, the parallel passage in Luke 17:3 omits the phrase as well.

Conversely, some scholars favor the phrase on linguistic and contextual grounds.¹⁷ Regarding linguistics, Blomberg states that it was most likely omitted from the aforementioned manuscripts “due to ‘homophony’—parts of different words that sound alike so that part of the text is accidentally omitted.”¹⁸ Contextually, Gundry states that Matthew’s inserting ‘between you and him alone’ in the next clause and the subsequent expanding of the section about forgiving a ‘brother’ who has sinned against a ‘brother’ (vv. 21-35) favors the phrase’s

¹³ See Hagner, *Matthew*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol 33b, 531; R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 274; Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 278. Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 452.

¹⁴ See Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 45. Note that the NASB, cited above, decided to leave the phrase out.

¹⁵ See R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 274; See also Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 268, where Harrington states, “This phrase is absent from many important manuscripts. It was probably a scribal addition under the influence of Matt 18:21.”

¹⁶ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 782, fn. 3. The manuscripts which include the phrase are D L W Q ^f3 TR latt sy mae bo^{pt}. See also Hagner, *Matthew*, 529

¹⁷ See Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, 278; Robert Gundry, *Matthew*, 367; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, trans. by James E. Crouch, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 451; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, 782; Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 453, fn. 20.

¹⁸ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 279. He further explains, Αμαρτήση ends with identical sounding two syllables as the next two words, εἰς σε.” See p. 278, fn. 39.

originality.¹⁹

At this point, one must make an interpretational decision based on the facts since the phrase (or omission thereof) will affect the interpretation of the passage as a whole. The fact remains that the phrase is not in the earliest manuscripts. Further, an omission of the phrase based on the textual evidence would *include* those sins committed against individual brothers. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the phrase should probably be omitted.

The next phrase reads ὑπάγε ἔλεγξον αὐτὸν μεταξύ σοῦ καὶ αὐτοῦ μόνου (you [singular] go and you [singular] expose between you [singular] and he alone). Two imperative verbs appear next to each other. The first, ὑπάγε (present, active, 2nd person, singular), means “to go.”²⁰ The second, ἔλεγξον (aorist, active, 2nd person singular), means “to lay open, expose, uncover, reveal.”²¹ It seems here that Christ was commanding that a single disciple was to privately go and expose the sin to the individual.

The last phrase reads εἰάν σου ἀκούση, ἐκέρδησας τὸν ἀδελφόν σου (if he hears you [singular], you [singular] have won your brother). The verb ἀκούση (aorist, active, subjunctive,

¹⁹Robert Gundry, *Matthew*, 367.

²⁰Cleon Rogers, Jr. and Cleon Rogers, III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 41. Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, 291, notes that the present tense implies a “gentle, patient series of confrontations.”

²¹Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 783. See also Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 41. They add, “. . . the implication that there is adequate proof of wrongdoing.”

Scholars note that there may be an echo of Leviticus 19:17. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 269, states, “The verb *elegxon* suggests the influence of the Septuagint text of Lev 19:17 (*elegmo elegxeis*). See D.A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, Expositors Bible Commentary, vol. 8, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 402; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 783; Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 367; Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, vol. 33b, 530; Edward Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 358.

3rd singular) means ‘to hear’, but has the connotation ‘to obey’ (cf. Jn. 5:25; 9:27; Acts 28:28).²²

The verb ἐκέρδησας (aorist, active, indicative, 2nd person, singular) means “to win, to gain.”²³

Christ is apparently saying that if a person repents of their sin, then the brother has been won and should be restored to fellowship within the community of believers.

It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that Christ is addressing his disciples in verse 15. He states that if a Christian brother sins, then a single disciple should privately confront the sinning brother. He should then expose the sin to the sinning brother. The purpose of the confrontation is to persuade the sinning brother to repent so that he might be restored to fellowship within the community of believers.

Matthew 18:16

Matthew 18:16: “*But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED* (NASB).

The first phrase contains the exact same verb (ἀκούση) as the previous verse and presents the scenario of a brother who refused to repent. The second phrase reads, παράλαβε μετὰ σοῦ ἕτι ἕνα ἢ δύο (you [singular] take one or two more with you [singular]). The imperative verb, παράλαβε (aorist, active, 2nd person, singular), means ‘to take’, indicating that the single disciple should take one or two more people to confront the sinning brother. The third phrase, ἵνα ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν σταθῆ πᾶν ῥῆμα· (that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed), is almost an exact quotation from Deuteronomy

²²See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 783; Carl J. Laney, “The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline,” 359; Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, vol. 33b, 530, notes that ἀκούση has the sense of responding appropriately.

²³Rogers and Rogers, *Keys to the Greek New Testament*, 41; Matthew K. Parackel, “Authority and Discipline,” *Cummunio Viatorum* 28, no. 3-4 (1985): 123.

19:15 of the LXX.²⁴ Calvin states that the purpose of these witnesses is “to give greater weight and impressiveness to the admonition.”²⁵ Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that Christ commanded the unrepentant brother to be confronted privately by one or two additional witnesses. The purpose of the witnesses was to persuade the sinning brother to repent so that he might be restored to fellowship within the community of believers.

Matthew 18:17

Matthew 18:17: If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (NASB).

The first phrase reads, ἀν δὲ παρακούσῃ αὐτῶν ἰπὲ τῆ ἐκκλησίας· (If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church). The verb παρακούσῃ (aorist, active, subjunctive, 3rd person singular) means “to ignore, to refuse to listen to.”²⁶ The word ἐκκλησία is first used in Matthew 16:18. Nearly all scholars view this as the local assembly of believers rather than the universal church.²⁷ Therefore, if the unrepentant brother refuses to listen to the witnesses, then the matter is to be told to the local church.

The second phrase reads, ἐὰν δὲ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας παρακούσῃ, ἔστω σοι ὡσπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης. (and if he refuses to listen to the church, treat him as you would a pagan

²⁴William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel of Matthew*, 700, fn 658, states, “The Hebrew text of Deut. 19:15 literally reads, ‘Upon the mouth . . . of two witnesses or upon the mouth of three witnesses the matter shall stand.’ The Septuagint inserts ‘all’ . . . Clearly Matthew’s slight variation is not of any material nature. The rule as expressed in Hebrew was meant to apply to every case. And Matthew’s ‘by the mouth of two witnesses or three’ is identical in meaning to the fuller Hebrew phrase.” See also Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, vol. 33b, 532.

²⁵John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. by William Pringle, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 355. Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, 292 states that reasons for the witnesses might be (1) to bring loving persuasion; (2) to prepare for the straying brother’s resistance; or, (3) to provide one or two moderators.

²⁶Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 41.

²⁷See W.F. Albright, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 220-221; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, vol. 2, 785; Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, vol. 33b, 532; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 268.

or a tax collector). Notice two things. First, the verb παρακούση (to refuse to listen) is repeated. Second, the word σοι (you) is singular, i.e., “he is to you [singular] as a pagan . . .” Carson states, “This suggests that each member of the church is to abide by the corporate judgment and reminds the reader of the individual responsibility each believer has toward the others, already presupposed by the singular ‘your brother’ in v. 15.”²⁸ In other words, each individual member of the church is to treat the unrepentant brother as a pagan or tax collector.

The difficulty here is in understanding how a pagan or tax collector was to be treated. John Calvin clearly states “the meaning is, that we ought to have no intercourse with the despisers of *the Church* till they repent” (emphasis original).²⁹ Keener states that they should be treated as “unclean and to be avoided.”³⁰ Conversely, Laney exhorts, “It means to keep loving him as Jesus loved the publicans and sinners.”³¹ Hence, a proper mode of behavior must be determined.

Matthew appears to have been writing to a mainly Jewish-Christian audience. As such, the Jews despised both pagans and tax collectors.³² Luz comments that Jews faithful to the Torah would have “nothing to do” with such a person and would break off all private contact

²⁸D.A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 8, 403; Contra Stephenson Brooks, *Matthew’s Commentary: The Evidence of His Special Sayings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 101. Brooks states, “The singular *soi* can only refer to the original brother described in v. 15.”

²⁹John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 358. D.A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 403, states, “It is poor exegesis to turn to 8:1-11; 9:9-13; 15:21-28 and say that such people should be treated compassionately. The argument and the NT parallels (Rom 16:17; 2 Thess 3:14) show that Jesus has excommunication in mind.”

³⁰Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 454; See also R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 275; Ulrich Luz, *Hermeneia*, 452; Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (James Family Christian Publishers, Reprint), 254.

³¹J. Carl Laney, “The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline,” 362; See also Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, v. 22, 279; James L. Boyce, “Transformed for Disciple Community: Matthew in Pentecost,” 313.

³²See Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, vol. 33b, 532.

with the person.³³ Since Jesus was speaking to Jews (the disciples), Matthew was writing to Jews (the audience), and the sinning brother had been given at least three chances to repent, it seems reasonable to conclude that normal intercourse should cease until the sinning brother repents. However, the person should be actively evangelized.

Matthew 18:18

Matthew 18:18: Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven (NASB).

Richard Hiers lists five main interpretations of this passage.³⁴ First, some interpret the text to mean that authority was given to absolve or release a person from some sort of vow.³⁵ Second, some interpret the text to mean that authority was given to determine which actions were forbidden and which permitted.³⁶ Third, the vast majority of scholars interpret the text to mean that authority was given to exclude persons from the community.³⁷ Fourth, some interpret the

³³Luz, *Hermeneia*, 452.

³⁴Richard Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing’: The Matthean Authorizations,” *The Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (Je 1985): 233-235. Hiers ultimately concludes that the verse expands on Jesus’ authorization to exorcise demons by resolving whatever problems arise in the church.

³⁵Hiers cites Z.W. Falk, “Binding and Loosing,” *JJS* 25 (1974) 92-100 as defending this view. This author was not able to locate any other reputable scholars who take this position.

³⁶See R.T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 275; Mark Allan Powell, “Binding and Loosing: A Paradigm for Ethical Discernment from the Gospel of Matthew,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 30, no. 6 (D 2003): 438-445; Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2004), 620.

³⁷Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 280; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The Mellen Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, book 2 (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1996), 740; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, ICC, 787; Donald Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 532-533; Douglas Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 215; Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 269; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 702; Robert Gundry, *Matthew*, 369; Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 454-455; Robert Mounce, *Matthew*, New International Bible Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 176-177; Frank Stagg, *General Articles: Matthew-Mark*, The Broadman Bible Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), 184; Stuart Weber, *Matthew*, The Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman, 2000), 294.

text to mean that authority was given to forgive or withhold sins.³⁸ Fifth, some interpret the phrase to mean that Jesus' judgment pronounced upon the cities of Jerusalem would be ratified at the judgment before the Son of man.³⁹

One issue to consider is that the verse also appears in the context of the ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16:19. However, three interesting differences should be noted between that passage and this one. First, the first line (I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven) is missing in Matthew 18:18.⁴⁰ Second, Peter is addressed individually in Matthew 16:19, whereas the verb is plural in Matthew 18:18 (δύσητε, δεδεμένα, λύσητε, λελυμένα). Third, the context of Matthew 16:19 concerns matters of conduct generally, whereas Matthew 18:18 concerns church discipline specifically.

A second issue to consider is that the verbs δεδεμένα (from the root 'to bind') and λελυμένα (from the root 'to loose') may be translated one of two ways in both Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18. First, they could be translated by the periphrastic future perfect passive tense, i.e., 'shall have been bound'. Second, they could be translated as a simple future tense, i.e., 'will be bound'. If the former, the action of the church has already been anticipated in heaven. If the latter, the action of the church will be validated by heaven. Stagg states, "Either way, agreement between heaven and church is pictured."⁴¹

Based on the evidence presented above, the correct interpretation seems to be Hier's

³⁸See John MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, XXXXX.

³⁹Hiers cites A. Schweitzer and Bornkamm as defending this position. This author was not able to locate any other reputable scholars who take this position.

⁴⁰See John Emerton, "Binding and Loosing—Forgiving and Retaining," *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (O 1962): 325.

⁴¹Frank Stagg, *General Articles: Matthew-Mark*, 184.

third option listed above, i.e., that authority was given to exclude persons from the community. It remains difficult to disagree with Calvin when he says “whoever treats with ridicule the reproofs and threatenings of *the Church*, if he is condemned by her, the decision which men have given will be ratified in heaven” (emphasis original).⁴² At the same time, the very fact that the disciplinary procedure has escalated to this point illustrates evidence of Hier’s second option, i.e., that authority was given to determine which actions were permitted and which actions were forbidden. In other words, it appears that the church has the authority to determine what is or is not sin *for the purposes* of church discipline. As mentioned above, the word ἁμαρτία (to sin) is an imprecise term that could include any and all sins. It follows that the term may have been deliberately left imprecise so that the church could define for herself which sins are disciplinable offenses.

Therefore, this paper proposes a combination of options two and three of Hiers. The ‘binding/loosing’ refers to excommunicating/readmitting the erring brother. However, it can only refer to excommunication/readmission because of the church’s conviction of what the church has deemed as sin (‘whatever you bind on earth’) or not sin (‘what you loose on earth’). Christ seems to be granting the church authority to “declare the terms under which God either forgives or retains sins (cf. John 20:22b-23).”⁴³ Based on that authority from Christ, church discipline is possible. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude with J.D.M. Derrett that Matthew 18:18 “grants a power finally to expel the recalcitrant; but the text itself speaks of a power which is not limited in this way: it does not necessarily have to do with forgiveness, or refusal to forgive sins. It enables, rather, conduct to be categorized, defined, both for the past

⁴²John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 358.

⁴³Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary, 620.

and the future.”⁴⁴ In short, Christ seems to grant the church power to define what constitutes a disciplinable offense *and* to exercise discipline for the said offense.

Matthew 18:19

Matthew 18:19: *Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven (NASB).*

Some scholars believe this verse is not in the original. Albright states, “It is unlikely that this verse is in its original context, for while vs. 18 dealt with conduct on the part of the community’s [sic] members, vs. 19 is an exhortation to faithfulness in prayer.”⁴⁵ This quotation neglects to recognize the context of the passage. First, the phrase begins with the connective phrase Πάλιν λέγω ὑμῖν (Again, I say unto you), clearly connecting this verse to the previous discussion of church discipline. Most biblical scholars agree on this point. Second, the theme remains constant. Blomberg notes, “In this context v. 19 simply restates the theme of v. 18.”⁴⁶ Third, in no way does it violate the context of the previous verses. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that this verse is set in its original context.

There are three issues to discuss regarding this text. First, J.D.M Derrett proposes that this verse does not refer to prayer at all.⁴⁷ Derrett claims that the two who agree are the offender and the person who was offended. He argues that the word αἰτήσονται (they [should] ask) can refer to out of court settlement disputes. Consequently, two individuals who come to such an

⁴⁴J.D.M. Derrett, “Binding and Loosing (Matt. 16:19, Matt. 18:18, John 20:23),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (Mr 1983): 116. Contra Herbert W. Bassler, “Derrett’s ‘Binding’ Reopened,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (Je 1985): 297-300.

⁴⁵ W.F. Albright, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 221.

⁴⁶Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 281.

⁴⁷J.D.M Derrett, “‘Where Two or Three Are Convened in My Name . . .’: A Sad Misunderstanding,” *Expository Times* 91 (1979): 83-86.

agreement will receive the approval of the Father in heaven. Derrett is seemingly by himself in holding this position.⁴⁸ Clearly, this verse is referring to the matter of church discipline in verse 17.

Second, in keeping with the context, the term *πράγματος* is sometimes used to refer to a legal matter (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1). Despite this fact, Luz states, “*πράγμα* is a general term and is by no means a *terminus technicus* for ‘legal matter’. When the reference is to a legal matter (as, e.g., in the case of 1 Cor 6:1) the context must clearly indicate as much.”⁴⁹ Apparently, Luz has lost sight of the judicial context of Matthew 18:15-17. Carson refutes his position, saying, “Scripture is rich in prayer promises . . . but if this passage deals with prayer at all, it is restricted by the context and by the phrase *peri pantos pragmatos* . . . which should be rendered ‘about any judicial matter’.”⁵⁰ Once again, this legal connotation is in keeping with the context of the matter of church discipline.

Third, both verse 18 and verse 19 have the combination ‘earth . . . heaven’ (though ‘heaven’ is in a different form in the original). Hendriksen comments, “According to verse 18 the discipline [sic] exercised on earth is confirmed in heaven; according to verse 19 the prayer offered on earth is answered by Christ’s ‘Father in heaven’.”⁵¹ This play on words illustrates further evidence of the development of the thought of the author.

It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that this verse is a continuation of the

⁴⁸However, one other scholar was found to support the view. See Douglas Hare, *Matthew, Interpretation*, 215.

⁴⁹Luz, *Hermeneia*, 458.

⁵⁰D.A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 403.

⁵¹Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 702.

discussion of church discipline. The promise remains that if two are in agreement (possibly referring to the two in v. 16) on the matter of church discipline, then it will be done for them by the Father in heaven.

Matthew 18:20

Matthew 18:20: For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst (NASB).

Many have commonly misunderstood this verse as saying that Jesus is with two or three persons who are gathered in his name. Weber accurately points out the weaknesses of this interpretation, saying, “But such an interpretation is wrong for two reasons: (1) it takes the statements out of the context of church discipline and the pursuit of the straying brother; and (2) the conclusions that it leads to regarding prayer is contrary to Scripture.”⁵² The context of church discipline continued from verses 15-19 and carries through the end of this verse.

The first phrase οὐ γάρ εἰσιν δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἕμὸν ὄνομα (For where two or three have gathered in my name) probably expands from the ‘two’ mentioned in the previous verse⁵³ and has to do with the decision concerning the erring brother of the believing community.⁵⁴

This verse is also intended to provide assurance in the midst of practicing the difficult task of church discipline. Church discipline actually brings about the presence of Christ. The phrase ἐκεῖ εἶμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν (I am their in their midst) may be referring to a Jewish belief. Davies and Allison explain,

⁵²Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, The Holman New Testament Commentary, 294.

⁵³William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 703.

⁵⁴Robert Mounce, *Matthew*, 177.

V. 20 especially recalls a saying in *m. 'Abot* 3.2, recorded in the name of R. Hananiah b. Teradion (who was killed in the Bar Kokba revolt), the father-in-law of R. Meier: 'But if two sit together and words of the Law (are spoken) between them, the Divine Presence rests between them . . .'. Similar is the saying attributed to R. Simeon ben Yohai (A.D. 100-70) in *m. 'Abot* 3.3: 'If three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of the Law, it is as if they had eaten from the table of God.'⁵⁵

Regardless of the Jewish reference, the assurance of having Christ would have been especially comforting considering the nature of the disciplinary circumstances.

Concluding Remarks

Matthew 18:15-17 clearly sets forth the proper procedures with respect to church discipline. First, a sinning brother is to be confronted privately and individually (v. 15). Second, the unrepentant brother is to be confronted privately by one or two more (v. 16). Third, the matter of the unrepentant brother is then to be told to the church (v. 17). The purpose of each of these three steps is to persuade the sinning brother to repent that he may be restored to fellowship within the community of believers. Fourth, normal intercourse with the unrepentant brother should cease except for evangelistic purposes.

Verses 18-20 provide three promises concerning church discipline. First, Christ promises that whatever the church binds and looses on earth will agree with heaven. This binding/loosing appears to be the authority to define what constitutes a disciplinable offense *and* the authority to exercise discipline for that offense. Second, Christ promises that if two are in agreement (possibly referring to the two in v. 16) regarding church discipline, then it will be done of them by the Father. Third, Christ promises to be in the midst of those who are gathered for the purpose of disciplining a wayward brother.

⁵⁵Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 2, ICC, 789-790.

Defining Disciplinable Offenses

Defining what constitutes a disciplinable offense can become quite dangerous. Each situation is different and the elders in the church should exercise great wisdom in discerning such offenses. The following discussion must be predicated by stating Mark Dever's reasons for practicing church discipline:

- 1) For the Good of the Person Disciplined
- 2) For the Good of the Other Christians, as They See the Danger of Sin
- 3) For the Health of the Church as a Whole
- 4) For the Corporate Witness of the Church
- 5) For the Glory of God, as We Reflect His Holiness⁵⁶

Legalism is only a breath away. Therefore, caution cannot be stressed enough to move slowly and meticulously when disciplinable situations arise.

In discussions of this nature, scholars generally categorize disciplinable offenses into broad areas. For instance, Mohler categorizes sins into the following three areas: fidelity of doctrine, purity of life, and unity of fellowship.⁵⁷ These categories are helpful in seeing the overall picture. However, they do not detail specific disciplinable offenses. This leads to a dilemma that is brought to light by Littleton's interviewing of several prominent pastors on church discipline: No one is clear about what sins we are to discipline.⁵⁸

As such, the Apostle Paul provides specific commands to disassociate with certain persons

⁵⁶Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 186-192. See also Herbert Bouman, "Biblical Presuppositions for Church Discipline," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 30 (Jl 1959): 513-515.

⁵⁷Al Mohler, "Church Discipline: Missing the Mark," In *Polity*, ed. Mark Dever (Washington: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 43-56. Ted Kitchens, "Perimeters of Corrective Church Discipline," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148 (Ap-Je 1991): 201-213, categorizes disciplinable offenses into the following four areas: (1) private and personal offenses that violate Christian love; (2) divisiveness and factions that destroy Christian unity; (3) moral and ethical deviations that break Christian standards; and, (4) teaching false doctrine. Daniel Wray, "Biblical Church Discipline," *The Churchman* 110, no. 4 (1996): 330-349, categorizes disciplinable offenses into the same basic areas as Kitchens, although he names them slightly differently.

⁵⁸Mark Littleton, "Church Discipline: A Remedy for What Ails the Body," *Christianity Today* (May 8, 1981): 31.

on at least six occasions in Scripture. He commands the church not to associate (1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Thess. 3:14), to turn away (Rom. 16:17), to reject (Titus 3:10), to keep away from (2 Thess. 3:6), and to avoid (2 Tim. 3:5) certain types of people. There is also an instance in which Paul himself “handed over to Satan” certain individuals (1 Tim. 1:19-20). It should also be noted that Galatians 6:1 contains an inference to disciplinable offenses. While space prevents a detailed exposition of the above-mentioned passages, a few general observations will prove helpful in defining specific disciplinable offenses.

Disciplinable Offenses in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

In 1 Corinthians 5, a grievous situation arises: a man commits sexual immorality with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5:1). Paul laments the fact that the Corinthian church has not mourned over this grievous offense (1 Cor. 5:2). He then states that he has decided “to deliver such a one to Satan” (1 Cor. 5:5), indicating excommunication.⁵⁹

He later commands the church “not to associate” or “not even to eat” with a sinning brother (1 Cor. 5:11). It remains unclear if the latter phrase refers to the Lord’s Supper or not. However, the phrase “not to associate”(μὴ συναναμίγυσθαι) means to have no company with.⁶⁰ A litany of vices defining what constitutes a sinning brother follows: the immoral,⁶¹ covetous,

⁵⁹See Harold Mare, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1976), 217-218; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 99.

⁶⁰Archibald Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament. Vol. IV, The Epistles of Paul* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1931), 115. This word is used only three times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 5:9, 11; 2 Thess. 3:14).

⁶¹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 855, defines this term (πόρνος) as “one who practices sexual immorality.”

idolater, reviler⁶², drunkard, or swindler⁶³.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that disciplinable offenses may include, but are not necessarily be limited to, this litany of vices. The elders of the individual church may have to define more specific perimeters based on the authority vested in the church according to Matthew 18:18.

Disciplinable Offenses in Romans 16:17-18

Romans 16:17-18 is divinely placed near the conclusion of the letter to the Romans. It is a warning to watch out for false teachers. Paul actually says to “keep away from them” (ἐκκλίνετε ἀπ’ αὐτῶν)⁶⁴ (Rom. 16:17). The particular sins of these heretics are that they “cause dissensions (διχοστασίας)⁶⁵ and hindrances (σκάνδαλα)⁶⁶ contrary to the teaching which you have learned.” Paul states in verse 18 that these heretics do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that disciplinable offenses may include, but are not necessarily limited to, these two types of sin. The elders of the individual church may have to define more specific perimeters based on the authority vested in the church according to Matthew 18:18.

⁶²Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the New Testament*, 358, define this term (λοιδόρος) as “one who attacks another with abusive language.”

⁶³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 134, defines this term as a “robber”.

⁶⁴Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the New Testament*, 345, state that this term means “to come away from someone, to shun, to avoid.”

⁶⁵Ibid. This term means division, offense, cause of stumbling.

⁶⁶Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 539, fn. 49, states that this term (σκάνδαλα) “is the bait stick of a trap, and then trouble generally.

Disciplinable Offenses in 1 Timothy 1:19-20

The situation in 1 Timothy 1:19-20 is similar to the previous discussion in that it confronts two false teachers, namely, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:19-20). Their specific sin was blasphemy. The Apostle Paul states in this text that he handed them over to Satan (οὐς παρέδωκα τῷ σατανᾷ.). Scholars debate the exact meaning of this phrase. However, it seems clear that the Apostle Paul is referring to some form of disciplinary action. Knight concludes, “Thus ‘delivering over to Satan’ is inextricably involved in putting a person out of the church fellowship (cf. Mt. 18:17).”⁶⁷ Lea and Griffin iterate that fact, saying, “By excluding them from the fellowship of God’s people, Paul hoped that Satan’s affliction of the troublemakers would teach them not to insult the Lord by their words and deeds.”⁶⁸

Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that disciplinable offenses may include, but are not necessarily be limited to, blasphemy. The elders of the individual church may have to define more specific perimeters based on the authority vested in the church according to Matthew 18:18.

Disciplinable Offenses in Titus 3:10

Titus 3:10 similarly addresses divisive people. This passage is divinely placed in the conclusion to Paul’s letter to Titus. The Apostle Paul here instructs Titus to reject (παραιτοῦ) a factious man. The term παραιτοῦ “probably has the sense *discharge, dismiss, drive out*

⁶⁷George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 111.

⁶⁸Thomas Lea and Hayne Griffin, *1,2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 81.

(emphasis original).”⁶⁹

The Apostle refers to the man as factious (αἰρετικὸν). This term refers to a “division-maker.”⁷⁰ Lea and Griffin comment that the words *heresy* and *heretic* are derived from the term,⁷¹ while Knight more specifically states that the term is used of those who chose to follow the teachings described in verse 9. Those teachings include such things as foolish controversies (μωρὰς ζητήσεις), genealogies (γενεαλογίας), and strife and disputes about the Law (ἔρεις καὶ μάχας νομικὰς).⁷²

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that disciplinable offenses may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the above-mentioned list of factions. The elders of the individual church may have to define more specific perimeters based on the authority vested in the church according to Matthew 18:18.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

The sin addressed in this passage is laziness. The Apostle Paul twice instructs how to deal with idle people. The first is to “keep away” (στέλλεσθαι) from them (2 Thess. 3:6). Rogers and Rogers state,

The word originally meant “to get ready,” “to equip,” esp. in reference to equipping an army for an expedition or for sailing. Then it came to mean “to bring together” or “to gather up,” as for instance one gathers or tucks up clothes. From this comes the sense of an inner gathering-up or withdrawal, and so of flinching and avoiding. Here it is withdrawal from brethren who are out of step.⁷³

⁶⁹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 764.

⁷⁰Ibid., 28.

⁷¹Lea and Griffin, *1,2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, 328.

⁷²Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 354, states, “The law in view here is undoubtedly the OT law, with which the false teachers were especially concerned (1 Tim. 1:7ff.).

The second is to “not associate” (μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι) with them (1 Thess. 3:14). This is the same word used with the incestuous man in 1 Corinthians 5.

The Apostle Paul had addressed idleness in his first letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:11-12). Greene states, “Some members of the congregation continued the practice of not working but depending instead on others for their daily bread (2 Thess. 3:11).”⁷⁴ Paul commands them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to withdraw from any brother “who leads an unruly life” (ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος). Leon Morris comments:

“Disorderly” is the adverb from the same root as that which we examined in the note on “idle” (1 Thess. 5:14). It shows us that the same people are in mind as in the former passage, and, that their offense was idleness. Paul speaks of the brother “that walketh disorderly” (*REB* “who falls into idle habits”); he is speaking of a continuing practice, not of an occasional offense.⁷⁵

The fact that “unruly” (ἀτάκτως) has the sense of idleness is further substantiated by the following verses. Paul states that the Thessalonians should follow his example of working night and day so as not to be a burden to them (1 Thess. 3:7-9). He then states that “if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either” (1 Thess. 3:10). Paul later attacks those who do no work, calling them “busybodies” (1 Thess. 3:11). The obvious implication is that he is addressing idle, lazy people.

The Apostle Paul instructs the Thessalonians to “keep away” (στέλλεσθαι) (2 Thess. 3:6) from and to “not associate” (μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι) (2 Thess. 3:14) with such people.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that a disciplinable offense may include, but is not

⁷³Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 485. See also Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 942. Bauer cites the term as meaning “to keep one’s distance, keep away, stand aloof.”

⁷⁴Gene Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 341.

⁷⁵Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 253.

necessarily limited to, idleness. The elders of the individual church may have to define more specific perimeters based on the authority vested in the church according to Matthew 18:18.

Disciplinable Offenses in 2 Timothy 3:1-5

In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, the Apostle Paul is writing to Timothy. He warns him that terrible times will come in the last days.⁷⁶ This passage details certain types of people whom Paul says to “avoid” (ἀποτρέπου). The term “avoid” (ἀποτρέπου) is used only here in the New Testament. Bauer says the term means to “purposely avoid associating w. [sic] someone.”⁷⁷ However, Rogers and Rogers use more emphatic language, saying, “The vb. [sic] is a strong one, implying that Timothy is to avoid them w. [sic] horror.”⁷⁸ The following three verses provide a list of eighteen types of people to avoid.

Verse 2 states to avoid people who are lovers of self (ἄνθρωποι φίλαυτοι), lovers of money (φιλάργυροι), boastful (ἀλαζόνες),⁷⁹ arrogant (ὑπερήφανοι),⁸⁰ revilers (βλάσφημοι),⁸¹ disobedient to parents (γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς), ungrateful (ἀχάριστοι),⁸² and the unholy (ἀνόσιοι).⁸³

⁷⁶Lea and Griffin, *1,2 Timothy*, NAC, 223, speak of the term “the last days” as referring to the time of Christ’s completion of redemption until his return. Naturally, this would include Timothy’s day as well as current times.

⁷⁷Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 124.

⁷⁸Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 504.

⁷⁹Ibid. This term means a boaster or bragger.

⁸⁰Ibid. This term means haughty, arrogant, or one who shows himself above his fellow.

⁸¹Ibid. This term means abusive speech or slanderer.

⁸²Ibid. This term means not thankful or not grateful.

⁸³Ibid. This term may also mean wicked.

Verse 3 warns to avoid the unloving (ἄστοργοι), irreconcilable (ἄσπονδοι)⁸⁴, malicious gossips (διάβολοι)⁸⁵, without self-control (ἄκρατεῖς), brutal (ἀνήμεροι)⁸⁶, and haters of good (ἀφιλάγαθοι).

Verse 4 warns to avoid the treacherous (προδόται)⁸⁷, reckless (προπετεῖς)⁸⁸, conceited (τετυφωμένοι)⁸⁹, and lovers of pleasure (φιλήδονοι).

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that disciplinable offenses may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the above-mentioned litany of sins. The elders of the individual church may have to define more specific perimeters based on the authority vested in the church according to Matthew 18:18.

Defining Church Discipline in the Court of Law

It may prove beneficial to briefly discuss safeguards churches can take to avoid lawsuits regarding the biblical practice of church discipline.⁹⁰ The three main legal theories used against churches in lawsuits are: (1) invasion of privacy; (2) outrage (intentional infliction of

⁸⁴Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 145, states that it refers to “one who is unwilling to negotiate a solution to a problem involving a second party.”

⁸⁵ Rogers and Rogers, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, 504, say, “Those who promote quarrels in hope that they may gain from them.”

⁸⁶Ibid. This term means not tamed, uncivilized fear, or savage.

⁸⁷Ibid. Rogers and Rogers state, “This term was used of one who is a traitor to his oath or one who abandons another in danger.”

⁸⁸ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 873. This term means rash, reckless, or thoughtless.

⁸⁹ Ibid. This term means to be puffed up.

⁹⁰Jay A. Quine is the pastor of Van Alstyne Bible Church, Van Alstyne, Texas. He is a former Municipal Court Judge and a former Deputy Prosecutor in Colfax, Washington. Quine has written an excellent two-part article on Court involvement regarding church discipline. See Jay A. Quine, “Court Involvement in Church Discipline,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (Ja-Mr 1992), 60-73; Jay A. Quine, “Court Involvement in Church Discipline,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (Ap-Je 1992), 223-236.

emotional distress); and, (3) defamation.⁹¹ Quine states that every case he read that was allowed to go to through a jury trial was decided *against* the disciplining church.⁹² Therefore, several steps should be taken to protect the church in this area. Laney suggests the following:

- Spell out completely your beliefs in the church constitution or bylaws.
- Acquaint those seeking membership with the church constitution.
- Specify in the constitution that members of the church have entered into a covenant to minister to one another's spiritual needs, and since this relationship is entered by mutual consent with the church leaders and congregation, it also ends only by mutual consent.
- Refrain from disclosing information disclosed to the church leader in confidence.
- Respect the privacy of the one being disciplined.
- Refrain from publicizing the action outside the church family.
- Pursue an out-of-court settlement or alternative means of settlement if a lawsuit is filed.⁹³

Wayne House, a former professor of law adds the following practical guidelines:

- Prepare church documents to defend a legal challenge.
- Prepare church members for church discipline by having them sign a statement detailing the church's position (indicating their understanding of the moral, governmental, and doctrinal positions of the church, that they agree with these positions, and that they will submit to the spiritual authority of the church and its leadership).
- Follow the church's standard consistently on all members to avoid the potential argument of the lack of enforcement on other church members.
- Be up-front and honest with potential plaintiffs.
- Consult an attorney.⁹⁴

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the proper procedures for church

⁹¹Jay A. Quine, "Court Involvement in Church Discipline," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (Ja-Mr 1992), 67.

⁹²See Jay A. Quine, "Court Involvement in Church Discipline," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (Ap-Je 1992), 236, fn. 41.

⁹³Carl J. Laney, "Church Discipline Without a Lawsuit," *Christianity Today* 28, no. 16 (W9 1984): 76.

⁹⁴Wayne House, "Church Discipline and the Courts," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2000), 70-72. At the time his article was written, House was the Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies and Apologetics at Faith Seminary, Tacoma, Washington, and Adjunct Professor of Law at Trinity International University.

discipline. This investigation involved defining proper procedures for church discipline according to Matthew 18:15-20. Further, it involved defining disciplinable offenses according to the Apostle Paul in Holy Scripture. Finally, involved briefly defining church discipline with regards to the Court of law. It is now time for the church to recover the biblical practice of church discipline.

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