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EQUIPPING PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS
AT PARKRIDGE CHURCH IN CORAL SPRINGS,
FLORIDA, TO PRACTICE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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To Laura, the love of my life and gift from the Lord.

To Lucy, Eric, Max, Victoria, and Billy, the legacy of God's blessings.

And to Parkridge Church, faithful encouragers of the work of God.

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PREFACE

This course of study for me has stretched me and caused me to think deeply, with a long-term kingdom view. The seminars completed and the professors' investment of knowledge have encouraged a greater sense of purpose and direction in the leadership of the Lord's body, the church. Those studies and people have helped to prepare me for the challenges of the ministry project contained in these pages.

The completion of this project is possible only because of the leadership and encouragement of the Lord, my wife, Laura, and our family, and the faithful support of the members of Parkridge Church. The challenge and care I have received from the Southern Seminary faculty and staff have been outstanding. I would like to especially thank Dr. Robert Cheong, my faculty supervisor, for his wisdom and encouragement throughout the project; he has gone above and beyond to give guidance and direction that has led to a faithfully finished project.

I am a lover of the church because Jesus gave his life for her. The church was and is the Lord's idea. The church is worthy of our best effort because the church is God's tool to change the world, "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). It is incumbent upon us to design and direct the church just as the Lord intended and to be faithful in it until Christ returns.

Eddie Bevill

Coral Springs, Florida

May 2018

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, Florida, to carry out church discipline.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess the knowledge of restorative and redemptive church discipline among the pastors and ministry leaders. This goal was measured by administering the Basics of Church Discipline Inventory (BCDI) to a group of fifteen people, including pastors and ministry leaders.¹ The inventory contains questions concerning the pastors' and ministry leaders' understanding of the basic biblical principles and process for restorative and redemptive church discipline. It also asked questions concerning unbiblical approaches to church discipline including legalism, judgment, and harsh treatment of those receiving church discipline. This goal was considered successfully met when at least fifteen key leaders completed the BCDI and the inventory was analyzed to understand more fully the current knowledge of restorative and redemptive church discipline among pastors and ministry leaders. The BCDI was meant to serve as a pre-survey to the implementation of this project.

The second goal of this project was to develop a six session curriculum on restorative and redemptive church discipline with collaboration from other pastors and available resources on the topic. This curriculum covers the foundational biblical elements of church discipline so that church health and biblical church growth can be understood.

¹See appendix 1. Approximately 30 people make up the "leaders" of the church.

This goal was measured by a select team of five pastors and ministry leaders of Parkridge Church who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.² This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion meet or exceed the sufficient level.

The third goal of this project was to increase the knowledge of the pastors and ministry leaders over the course of six sessions. This goal was measured by re-administering the BCDI to measure the leaders' level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to practice restorative and redemptive church discipline.³ This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. This was, in turn, the beginning of an effective process being launched and implemented over the next several months with the end result of restoration and redemption for those in need.

Context

This ministry project took place in the context of ongoing ministry at Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, Florida. From the founding of this church there has never been a thorough and clear process for biblical church discipline that brings restoration and redemption to those struggling with issues of sin. While personal approaches have been utilized through the years, there was a need for a biblically informed process which would be led by the pastors and ministry leaders of the church.

Three areas of concern have highlighted the need for this ministry project. The first concern related to inactive church membership. Inactive church members are those persons who have gone through the membership process, which includes agreement with articles of faith as well as the signing of a four-part membership covenant. Some members,

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 1.

over time, had become uninvolved and no longer attend. When an absent member was identified, there was no clear way to proceed in a re-engagement process in the membership and ministry of the church.

The second area of concern related to those who have entered into sin which is evident by the observance of a wrong attitude. Examples include a lack of self-control, anger, gossip, or pride, as well as any actions that seek to disrupt the harmony of the church family. This area of concern has been observed through broken relationships both inside and outside of the church. Often, an abrupt change of attitude causes the offensive issues to become even more noticeable to the church family. The response of the offending church member has been one of two ways: they stay and create disunity and discomfort in the church, or they leave the church and discontinue their willingness to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

The third area of concern related to persons who have been engaged in issues of immorality. These sinful challenges have manifested themselves among single or married persons. Some examples are marital infidelity, marital disharmony due to any number of moral issues, pre-marital immorality, and/or general immorality of varying kinds. Immoral situations are most easily observed by the church as a whole; bad news tends to travel faster than good news. While there is an awareness of the sinfulness, though not usually with full detail, there is no discernible way for the church to deal with it because no biblical plan was in place.

Pastors and members have sought to approach these situations with a goal to bring restoration and redemption whenever possible. Most of these approaches have been on a personal level with no clear and detailed process that involves repentance, forgiveness, and re-connection to the work of Christ through the church. Occasionally, more concerted efforts have involved pastors and ministry leaders with the hope of full restoration but even when this has taken place it has been with no clear plan. In summary, the process toward redemptive restoration has been unplanned and on a case-by-case

basis. The desire to function as a biblical church has been present but the process for biblical church discipline has been absent.

Factors that have stymied a biblical plan of church discipline include lack of forethought, lack of doing the hard work of bringing pastors and ministry leaders together to solve the challenge, lack of study of the Word of God on this critical topic, and lack of understanding the need and significance for church discipline as it relates to church unity and kingdom building. The ministry project has reached into this context to bring help, hope, and spiritual growth for the offender as well as the entire church family at Parkridge Church.

True Christ followers want to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord, but with no process for evaluation and restoration, any hope in that regard becomes exceedingly difficult to accomplish. This is the place where Parkridge Church has been and which opens the door wide for the formation of this ministry project. The openness to this ministry project from the pastors and ministry leaders has added to the context an attitude of humility and teachability. Recent discussions of the project content have generated helpful conversation and encouragement to proceed in this very direction. There has been full agreement of the need for such a process that will yield clear steps that seek to bring biblical restoration and redemption through the doors of the church and ultimately to the community as a whole. The context is one of need, due to the sinfulness of people, and enthusiasm, due to the heart of a church that wants to glorify the Lord Jesus.

Rationale

The context highlights the need for this project. The members of Parkridge Church are growing in their relationship with the Lord. They seek to understand God and His Word in such a way as to live lives characterized by obedient, Christ-filled, and Spirit-filled growth. However, because of the pervasive presence of sin there was a need for a clear process for church discipline. The pastors and ministry leaders expressed a

desire to discover the biblical approach that would bring honor and glory to the Lord, while at the same time helping spiritually grow Parkridge Church.

While holiness is desired, brokenness and rebellion among God's people calls for a process of restoration and redemption that works. A response and plan to address each of the concerns was set forth in this project. As well, the general lack of leadership needed to meet the challenge of sin was challenged so that movement toward a grace-filled solution was accomplished.

The first concern of inactive church members was given a new priority so that the growth and health of the church became intentional. Passivity toward the unengaged in the church does not offer any restorative help. Only through an intentional process of prayer, teaching, and relational interaction can inactive members become active and growing in their faith again.

The second concern, which relates to wrong and unbiblical attitudes, required a serious and consistent willingness to confront members who are exhibiting these attitudes. Love and patience are key ingredients to an effective system of change. A network of help and hope was fostered through ministry leaders, pastors, and small group connections to increase accountability. As the people interact in increasing ways in biblical fellowship, God graciously develops a culture of humility within the church, all for his glory. The small group leaders at Parkridge Church were eager to help people grow in their faithful following of Jesus but did not have a clear or discernible process to follow. This project intended to equip and resource them with the tools they need to lead people to the truth and toward a lifestyle of holiness.

The third concern of immorality required the highest level of disciplinary action from the church because of the public nature of the ramifications. An unwillingness to address this particularly heinous manifestation of sin causes disunity and extreme dysfunction in the church. The pastors and key ministry leaders lead in these areas of concern, but all of the church must grow in their willingness to approach these challenges

instead of turning away. Passivity, while prevalent in the culture, is one of the greatest enemies of the restorative and redemptive processes needed in Parkridge Church. It is incumbent upon the pastors and ministry leaders to resist hesitation, inactivity, and passivity in regard to the waywardness of church members.

A biblical, intentional, and well documented process for restorative and redemptive church discipline has been needed at Parkridge Church. Inactivity in these challenging areas allows the spread of sin and the loss of an understanding of its painful consequences. This project has effected change in the lives of the people of Parkridge Church as pastors and ministry leaders faithfully lead God's people. There is a void, or hole of sorts, in the theological and spiritual foundation of the church because of the deficiency of an adequate plan to intentionally move people toward holiness and growth. While the Lord is always the best means of accountability, He usually uses people to accomplish His purposes in the context of the local church. Parkridge Church benefited greatly from this project so it is an important undertaking of eternal consequence.

Definitions and Delimitations

Technical terms are used throughout this project, and they are defined in this section to aid the reader's understanding of the subject.

Church discipline. Church discipline is the process of accountability within the membership of a local church where members are corrected and given the opportunity for redemption and restoration. While often viewed as a negative only, it is actually a positive and purifying process that aids the church in holiness.⁴

Redemption. Redemption is the process whereby sin is atoned through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. In this project, the words *redemption* or *redemptive* are used to point to the redemptive work of Jesus in the life of the offending person

⁴Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 168-72.

(sinner). God also does his redemptive work in the lives of the offended and anyone else involved in the situation. In this context, redemption is tied to the work of Jesus in drawing all involved to the Lord with a repentant and humble attitude.⁵

Restoration. Restoration is the process that leads the offender (sinner) to become aware of their sin, confess their sin, and then repent of their sin. The process continues with forgiveness that culminates in reconciliation with God and affirms the individual's right standing with the church.⁶

The first delimitation was that this project was implemented among adult members of the church only. The second delimitation was that this project was implemented among the three pastors as well as the ministry leaders of the church. The ministry leaders are defined as the non-pastoral ministry staff (two men), the deacons (seven men), the leadership team (seven men), and the adult small group leaders (up to fifteen people).

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included the use of instrumentation: a Basics of Church Discipline Inventory (BCDI), an evaluation rubric, and a pre- and post-curriculum survey.⁷ Three goals were accomplished in this project as a means of fulfilling the overall purpose and with the clear desire to see the church become healthier in the years to come. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of restorative and redemptive church discipline among the pastors and ministry leaders by administering the BCDI. The total number of the group was fifteen persons. The BCDI included questions

⁵Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 894-95.

⁶Robert K. Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 165.

⁷All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

regarding their understanding of biblical church discipline, redemptive and restorative processes, prayer and church discipline, and unbiblical approaches to church discipline. It included an open-ended question that allowed the participants to provide their views regarding church discipline. The BCDI was analyzed and the results were shared with all of the participants. This goal was successfully met when fifteen key leaders completed the BCDI and the results were analyzed providing a clearer picture of the leaders' understanding of church discipline.

The second goal was to develop a six-week curriculum on restorative and redemptive church discipline with collaboration from other pastors as well as available resources on the topic. The curriculum covered the foundational elements of church discipline so that church health and biblical church growth could be understood. The curriculum included lecture, outside reading, testimonies, question and answer, and mock case studies. The curriculum included the study of all relevant biblical passages related to church discipline, a brief introduction of church discipline in the history of Christianity, and an understanding of the necessary elements needed in a thorough process of biblical church discipline. This goal was measured by a select team of pastors and ministry leaders of Parkridge Church who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁸ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. When less than 90 percent of the rubric had scored at sufficient or above, the feedback was used to modify the curriculum, after which the material was submitted again to the team of five for evaluation. This process continued until at least 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric were scored at sufficient or above, at which time the second goal was considered successfully met.

⁸See appendix 2.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the pastors and ministry leaders over the course of six weeks of teaching the curriculum. This goal was measured by re-administering the BCDI to determine the pastor's and ministry leader's level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to practice church discipline.⁹

The BCDI was given to determine the participants' biblical knowledge regarding church discipline as well their willingness to be involved in administering church discipline. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.¹⁰ This, in turn, led to an effective process being launched and implemented over several months with the end result of restoration and redemption for those in need.

This teaching and research approach took opportunity at every interaction to reinforce the need for a clear church discipline plan at Parkridge Church. The BCDI and curriculum worked together to instruct and lead the participants to fully engage in the process of developing a plan for church discipline that is restorative, redemptive, and hope-filled in the midst of brokenness and sin. While there has been great unity at Parkridge Church, church discipline insures continued unity and growing enthusiasm toward a church that is living out biblical holiness and joy in the journey of life.

⁹See appendix 1.

¹⁰Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 185-91.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE PRACTICE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A biblical ministry of church discipline is a key to spiritual maturity in the body of Christ at Parkridge Church. Passages have been selected for the purpose of clarifying the biblical direction of church discipline so that clarity of that crucial ministry may be received.

A Detailed Process for Church Discipline: Matthew 18:12-20

Matthew 18:12-20 presents the Lord's directed process for church discipline. It is clear that the Lord is deeply concerned and devoted to his people, the church. He does not want even one of the flock to stray or become disconnected from the whole, but in the face of unrepentant sinfulness, corrective action must be taken. The church is to hold the sinful party accountable for the sake of unity and God's glory.

The Love and the Discipline of the Father

Matthew 18:12-20 gives an overarching view of the presence of the Lord. He is present when a "little one" is wandering and he is present when the sinner is unrepentant. Leon Morris writes of the joy of finding the lost one exceeding the joy of security regarding the ninety-nine.¹ The love and discipline of God the Father is a picture of his complete character, which exhibits loving renewal and restoration even in the midst of extreme brokenness and wandering away from the fold. The content of this detailed account is not harsh, it is redemptive and glorifying.

¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1992), 465-66.

The verses regarding the lost sheep immediately precede the verses of the unrepentant sinner so that the character and the motivation of the Lord can be seen. Craig Keener points out there must be a pursuit of the one who is wayward, which moves toward forgiveness and restoration so any stumbling blocks to holiness are to be specifically addressed.² The nature of the Lord is both gracious and glorious at the same time. He is righteous and redemptive at the same time. He is just and loving at the same time. These verses paint an accurate picture of Jesus. Therefore, the church is to live that same balance of love and discipline when moving through the journey of sanctification.

For further understanding of the presence of the Lord, Keener writes about an ancient Jewish saying regarding the promise of God's presence in the assembly and a general idea of his omnipresence that gives the picture of love.³ The picture is that of the church going after the sinner. The motivation is the love of God, the love for the sinner, and the hope for God's glory in a restorative process. The glory of God cannot be side stepped in this discipline journey. Getting to the glory of God in and through the ministry of a church requires a detailed process for dealing with anything or anyone who takes away from that glory. These verses address the nature of sinfulness and the church's response. They give a step-by-step approach to dealing with the sin that is present, and they do so by directing people to God's Word, and God's love and discipline.

The shepherd is full of joy when he rescues the one lost sheep; rescue is the heart of God the Father. The many "sheep" are also set on a course of spiritual growth because they see the care given by the shepherd.⁴ This ministry is a two-sided coin that balances not only the love and discipline of God but also the restoration and growth of

²Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 286-87.

³Ibid., 290.

⁴Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 194.

the church members. The church members are involved in the active restoration of the wayward member when it is necessary.

Donald Hagner makes clear that in the New Testament church the idea of isolation from the community of faith was radical. There was no concept of going down the street and joining another church because churches were few and far between. This passage seems strange to many and illustrates one of the reasons church discipline has fallen out of use in many churches. Accountability is always a mark of the true church. The greatest mark of authentic Christian community is Christ's presence, and that presence still moves through the process of church discipline even though many would set it aside for convenience.⁵

Craig Blomberg points out that God takes the initiative in church discipline, that reclaiming people should lead to joyous celebration, and that the faithfulness of the majority may never excuse the church from ignoring those who are distant from God.⁶ Again, the heart and character of God is for restoration, but faithful followers must move through the disciplined and detailed process of dealing with sinfulness in order to bring glory to the Lord. When that happens, there is every reason to rejoice in the home coming of "one of these little ones" (Matt 18:14).

In commenting on the second part of the passage, Blomberg describes the elements of removing a church member through the discipline process. He gives a balanced picture of participation and pursuit. There should be no participation in the church for the one who has been removed, but there should be active pursuit from the church toward that

⁵Donald Alfred Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33 (Dallas: Word, 1995), 534.

⁶Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 277.

same person.⁷ The goal of church discipline never changes and always seeks to bring about restoration through repentance so that the Lord will receive glory in the church.

The detail of the discipline is of utmost importance. The order and clearly given steps have purpose and reason behind them. The church will do well to follow those steps as given under the Lord's leadership. Michael Green explains, "Church regulations affect immortal members of the body of Christ. They can do great good or harm. It is a responsibility that requires the greatest love, tact, and thoughtfulness."⁸

Matthew 18: 15-20 gives a series of if/then steps to follow. The simple clarity of this passage shows that the Lord has removed most questions from the equation so that the church can be obedient. It is clear that the church is involved from day one, either as individual members or as the entire body of believers. Carson highlights how the church is commissioned to bring the sinner to his senses while being in prayerful agreement with one another. Agreement by believers in prayer brings great results.⁹

The authenticity of this process comes about by the presence of the Lord through it all. Donald Hagner comments on the presence of the Lord idea from Matthew 28:20:

This presence of Jesus should not be understood as a metaphor (as in the case of Paul's statement in 1 Cor 5:4) but is the literal presence of the resurrected Christ, in keeping with the promise to be articulated in 28:20. The community founded by Jesus (16:18) is assured that he will be present in that community until the close of the age.¹⁰

The Word of God in Matthew 18:12-20 gives an unquestionable process of detail that leads the church to greater faithfulness and spiritual growth. This ministry of church discipline in no way announces harshness but rather shows the Lord's compassion for his children. It shows the seriousness of sin in its separating effect while simultaneously

⁷Blomberg, *Matthew*, 279.

⁸Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 196.

⁹Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 468-70.

¹⁰Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 533.

exposing the need for authentic community under the Lord's care and presence. Believers are prone to struggle because of the sin nature, but the Lord provides encouragement through his presence in every broken situation.¹¹

The Expectation of the Church in Church Discipline: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

First Corinthians 5:1-11 shows that church discipline is an expectation in the church. To tolerate sinfulness with no plan for correction and restoration is to effectively condone the sinful practice. Paul addresses a specific issue of sin, and the church, both then and now, is commissioned to approach the offender with a heart of mourning that leads to the Lord's deliverance and glory.

The Sorrow and Judgment of the Father

First Corinthians 5 deals a blow to any allowance for pride and impurity in the church. The apostle Paul gives clear instruction that all such sinful activity must be addressed in such a way that the glory of God and the good of the church can be seen. Craig Keener outlines the fact that these particular sins are worthy of full banishment from the community of faith. The tone of Paul's writing indicates that he showed grace by only making an example of the most serious offense.¹²

The sorrow and judgment of the Lord is seen through the words given to those who were "arrogant" and not willing to "mourn" in the face of this terrible sin. David Prior writes about the sexual obsession that was present in Corinth. This seaport town was filled with all kinds of opportunity for moral debauchery.¹³ The Greek term used in

¹¹Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 197.

¹²Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50-51.

¹³David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1985), 70.

the text is *porneia*, which is the general word for immorality, but in this context it means incest. Craig Blomberg also points out that the church's reaction was as bad as or worse than the affair itself.¹⁴

Some of the reasoning behind this approach of excommunication from the church goes to the view of the holiness of the faith community (church). These two issues of arrogance and immorality are a mark of defiance toward a holy God and his church.

Alan Johnson refers to this as the pride of Christian freedom through the man's affair.¹⁵

That this ungodliness had to receive clear correction is noted by Blomberg:

Many will continue to view the whole notion of church discipline, and certainly excommunication, as repulsive and unloving. Yet such people fail to grasp God's utter repugnance to sin and his infinitely perfect standards for holiness. Further, we must avoid a cheap grace that refuses to force professing believers to face up to the destructive consequences of grossly immoral behavior. They are not only damaging themselves by allowing sin to go unchecked but also destroying the church.¹⁶

Paul gives a two-pronged approach to this issue of immorality. He writes of a giving over of the man to Satan for the destruction of his flesh and he also writes of the leavening process for the church. In the first, as Robert Nash suggests, he is most probably using the terms *flesh* and *spirit* to describe the church. The flesh represents opposition to the spirit that is needed in the church. In the second, the removal of the old leaven ties to the Passover in the following way. Nash explains,

The Passover practice of removing all the old leaven from houses in preparation for observing the seven-day feast of unleavened bread (Exod 12:15) seems to lie behind Paul's call to "cleanse out the old leaven" in 5:7. Just as the ancient ritual signaled an annual fresh beginning rooted in Israel's deliverance from slavery to begin their life as God's covenant community, the church must purge itself of those remnants of

¹⁴Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 104.

¹⁵Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 88.

¹⁶Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 110.

the old life that stand in the way of becoming what God has called them to be: an unleavened new people.¹⁷

The passage in 5:12-13 brings understanding to the church's jurisdiction as being those inside the church, not those outside the church. Blomberg also emphasizes that the excommunication is to be exercised by the whole church so that there is total involvement for unity and holiness.¹⁸ Heavy handed oversight of one or a few leaders is not seen in the passage. Unity and conformity with the attitude of the Lord is the rule being followed in this situation. Unity in the church that finds its common ground in Jesus through a life of purity is the key to a church that brings glory to God. These verses highlight that truth.

The verses in 5:3-5 show the reason that discipline is good for the individual Christian. At its core, church discipline is about salvation. Prior articulates,

The failure in today's church to exercise proper church discipline often stems from a misplaced—and perhaps cowardly—conviction that such matters are the province of the leadership, rather than of the gathered congregation. Paul here addresses his words of stinging rebuke (*Ought you not rather to mourn?*) to the whole church, not to its leadership. . . . Where then, the behavior of an individual Christian has affected the corporate life of a local church (either through the prominence of that individual or widespread knowledge of such behavior in the congregation as a whole), there discipline needs to be exercised and explained when the church as a whole is gathered. There will, of course, be far more occasions when such public action is not necessary or appropriate, and any relevant discipline can be carried through privately.¹⁹

First Corinthians 5:1-13 is critical reading for the contemporary church. It is a direct and clear address for any church to understand the significance of avoiding or dealing lightly with unrepentant sin. Keener points out that a refusal of the church to act on the sinful offender showed their arrogance toward and doubt in Paul that he would

¹⁷Scott Nash, *1 Corinthians*, Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 151.

¹⁸Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 107.

¹⁹Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, 73-74.

exercise discipline. He exercised church discipline on the authority of Jesus.²⁰ The current church is called upon, through this passage, to act on these issues of sin as well.

The pain or sorrow of church discipline is the natural response for those who desire God's glory more than anything else. Anything that brings shame to the name or work of Christ is painful and sorrowful. However, the pain and sorrow of not dealing with it far outweighs the pain and sorrow of dealing with it. Church leaders are called on to lead the church toward holiness and purity, which necessarily means there will be difficult confrontations and interventions for God's glory. Though, the end result will be a beautiful picture of the Lord's glory in the lives of his children and his church.

The text in 5:2 announces the arrogance of the church toward the known sinfulness of the man in their midst, to which Prior comments,

The history of the church shows that strong temptation in sexual matters is one of Satan's most frequent tactics in attempting to quench spiritual vitality. Here in chapter 5 Paul is writing very specifically about a particularly brazen form of immorality. We must beware of applying his teaching uncritically to every way in which Christians might 'go over the top' in the area of sexual morality. . . . What chiefly concerns him at present is the total lack of concern amongst the Christians at Corinth about the implications of what is happening. Indeed he seems, if anything, less bothered about the immorality itself than about the blasé, arrogant attitude being displayed towards it: "And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn?"²¹

The sorrow of God is not only toward the immorality that is present, but it is also directed toward the arrogance, or lack of holy zeal, about known sin in the church. Current church culture is cluttered with the ramifications of this very way of living. How many churches have discovered immorality in the ranks and have simply not addressed it or have spent time and energy justifying their lack of judgment under the false banner of grace. First Corinthians 5:13 makes clear that the church is to "judge" within its membership, lest there be known sin that is allowed to grow and bring growing shame to the cause of Christ. Nash reminds the reader of the spiritual significance of the change

²⁰Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 48.

²¹Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, 71.

Jesus brings. This excommunication, expulsion from the community of faith, is a clear line of demarcation regarding a person's previous life. He also draws the connection of their arrogant attitude as it relates to tolerance of all sorts of sinful behavior.²²

When a sinful situation is known in the church there is a pervasive movement away from the Lord, but when that same situation is dealt with in a biblical way with the goal of restoration and renewal, there is accentuation toward the glory of God. The church is built up more toward Jesus because he is doing the work of building. Blomberg notices Paul's use of the idea of flesh and spirit. Some have seen this as only corresponding to the physical realm, but the early church read this as pertaining to the old nature versus the new nature in Christ, or the individual oriented toward sin versus oriented toward God.²³ Mutual accountability within the church aids greatly in the new nature that is oriented toward God as well as a church that is passionate about authenticity in their walk with God.

Finally, a corrupting contagion spreads if sin is allowed to continue unchecked within the church. Alan Johnson addresses this issue:

Since Christ has died, the feast is to be kept by expelling the leaven—the incestuous man—from the fellowship. The popular wisdom saying is true, “a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough” (cf. Gal 5:9). . . . Paul is concerned that the church, the “new batch,” which is positionally without yeast (“evil,” “corruption”), should be so in actuality. The church is holy and must be pursuing holiness. The evil person's misdeeds and the boasting about the affair are to stop immediately, because otherwise the whole church could be quickly corrupted (cf. Acts 5:1-11).²⁴

This passage in Corinthians is apropos to the contemporary church. The tendency to look the other way and sweep it all under the rug in regard to sinfulness is a cancer on the church. As modern pastors and church leaders embrace the biblical identity to which they are called, there will be renewal and a growing holy reverence for all to see in the church, and by way of influence, in the world.

²²Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 152.

²³Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 105.

²⁴Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 91.

The Love of God in Church Discipline: Hebrews 12:1-11

Hebrews 12:1-11 is a treatise of God's love as expressed through his disciplining oversight toward his children. In this discipline there is love, correction, endurance, and ultimately holiness to be gained. Just as earthly fathers express care and love toward their children through discipline, the Lord does the same but with perfection. His discipline is a testimony of his patient care and concern for humanity's eternal residence. While this passage does not explicitly mention church discipline, it displays the canvas of the Lord's love upon which church discipline is painted in full color.

The Compassion and Consistency of the Father

Understanding God's character and purpose in discipline helps define the marks of biblical church discipline. Hebrews 12:1-11 is filled with the motivation of love and understanding from the Lord but with no hesitation to correct and instruct through difficulties and the challenges that life brings. George Guthrie gives a compelling snapshot of the passage with a view of the Lord's purpose:

The theme of endurance works as the thread binding 12:1-17 together. In each use of figurative or illustrative material—a race, parental discipline, the foolish Esau—difficult experiences and the struggle of Christian perseverance form the backdrop. The image of the race and that of loving, parental discipline also reveal God as a great redeemer of pain and, therefore, as the God of hope for believers who find themselves in painful circumstances.²⁵

With the idea of endurance or consistency is an example in the life of Christ but this passage also calls the Christ follower to endure and run the race. Hebrews 12 follows immediately after a passage about some of those who have already endured and make up the cloud of witnesses who provide encouragement. F. F. Bruce, in his work on

²⁵George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 396.

Hebrews, cites this fact and calls the reader to be encouraged to do likewise through practicing or running with endurance. This process must continue until the Lord returns.²⁶

Hebrews 12:1-3 gives the picture of an athlete running with endurance. The emphasis is that the Christian life is of the same endurance with the example and empowerment of Jesus. Here one begins to see the characteristics of Jesus that would be the example and empowerment for the individual follower. Again, all of this athletic imagery lays the biblical groundwork for a full view of the discipline that loves and corrects at once. Raymond Brown gives a list of the qualities of Jesus, including compassionate man, victorious pioneer, only perfecter, devoted servant, effective priest, enthroned Lord, and patient sufferer.²⁷ The writer of Hebrews creates an effective illustration with running, endurance, and athletic achievement.

The passage moves from the endurance motif beautifully toward the discipline motif as the runner must prepare adequately for the race. This discipline is motivated by the Lord and pulled from within the runner because of his view of the end or finish line which is to come. Some things happen on purpose and other things seemingly happen with no purpose, but all is in the sovereign purpose of the Lord. Understanding of the sovereign purpose brings a clarifying view of the heart of the Father and his wonderful plan for his children. This view is preparatory in the establishment of a biblical church discipline for the family of God.

The discipline model is best seen in the parent-child relationship. Loving parents discipline their children. Hebrews 12:5 and following gives an illustration of the truth that children are disciplined by their loving parents. The analogy drawn is that of the Lord (God the Father) disciplining his children as well. Donald Hagner writes that there

²⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 334.

²⁷Raymond Brown, *Christ above All: The Message of Hebrews* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982), 228-30.

is a positive kind of discipline for obedience and it shows the Lord's love. There is a universal understanding of sons being disciplined by fathers. This disciplined life leads to an understanding of the future eschaton so that people should be more receptive to the Lord's discipline than to their earthly fathers.²⁸

Guthrie continues with the idea of discipline as the validating mark of a right relationship with God.²⁹ The ability to receive the discipline of a loving father who consistently and clearly points his children to the truth is a marker that all can see. The difference between earthly fathers and God the Father is huge in that earthly fathers are far from perfection but the Lord is perfect. The Hebrews passage calls him the "perfecter of faith." In fact, William Lane comments that the absence of discipline would be an indication of a father's rejection toward his child. The acceptance of discipline from God moves the child of God to cease to be resentful and rebellious.³⁰

The shaping and molding begins in the life of the disciplined child and the disciplined athlete. Bruce writes,

The athlete must discipline himself; he must divest himself of all superfluous weight, not only of heavy objects carried about the body but of excess bodily weight. There are many things which may be perfectly all right in their own way, but which hinder a competitor in the race of faith; they are "weights" which must be laid aside. It may well be that what is a hindrance to one entrant in this spiritual contest is not a hindrance to another; each must learn for himself what in his case is a weight or impediment. But there are other things which are not perfectly all right in their own way but are essentially wrong; there is "sin which so readily ensnares us." Our author is not referring so much to some specific sin, but to sin itself, as something which will inevitably encumber the runner's feet and trip him up before he has taken more than a step or two.³¹

²⁸Donald Alfred Hagner, *Hebrews*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 216.

²⁹Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 401.

³⁰William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47 (Dallas: Word, 1991), 422, 424.

³¹Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 335-36.

Bruce also makes a striking comparison and contrast to trueborn sons versus illegitimate children and that the latter may be left to go at life all alone while the former would receive the discipline and instruction of the father.³² This illustration is somewhat bothersome as the Lord has no illegitimate children, meaning those who are unbelievers, but the implication is well received in that the Lord is purposeful, compassionate, and consistent in the discipline he gives. His glory is produced in the disciplined follower who runs with endurance and learns to anticipate and course correct for obstacles.

Church discipline works in exactly the same way and is a tool in the hand of God to bring about his truth and glory through his people. This process occurs as a work of sovereignty under the Lord's direction. His consistency is seen clearly through his sovereignty in discipline. Brown comments on the passage in 12:5-6:

Some Christians may well be in danger of ignoring or dismissing the fact that God's sovereign hand is at work as much through life's adversities as in its joys and pleasures. He may well be saying something extremely important to us through our troubles that we could not or would not easily receive if everything went well for us at all times. He may be calling us to renewed confidence in his providential care, to a fresh willingness to commit our entire life to him whatever the outcome of our immediate difficulties, to a desire for God's will and not our own wishes, to a readiness to go through any experience if only it will make us more Christlike in the end. People with spiritual values of this kind will certainly not want to regard lightly the discipline of the Lord.³³

This discipline is understood as a word derived from the root with a meaning of something like "education for eternity," according to Donald Hagner. He also points out the idea of suffering through discipline as a mark of true sonship with the status of inheritance being confirmed.³⁴

Lane ties up all the possible loose ends with an understanding of the big picture in Hebrews 12. The reality of suffering for the Christ follower is real, but just as real is the reality of discipline. One form of discipline, as outlined here, is suffering, through

³²Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 343.

³³Brown, *Christ above All*, 232.

³⁴Hagner, *Hebrews*, 218.

which much growth can occur. Another form of discipline is more confrontational from the Lord and his church. Lane's comments point to the first, but do justice in understanding the second discipline:

The writer wanted his audience to draw from his exposition of the biblical text the implication that those now are prepared to submit to disciplinary sufferings participate in the triumph of the cross of Christ. That is the connection between 12:2-3 and 4-11. . . . The clarification of the significance of sufferings in the maturing of a relationship with God provides the basis for the sustained appeal for endurance in pursuing the goal marked out for the community.³⁵

The Correction from God in Church Discipline: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, the apostle Paul addresses the specific issue of idleness among certain church members. Theologians disagree on the specific nature of the idleness, but it was of such importance that Paul included it in his epistle and gave corrective measures to be followed. This passage is not as detailed as others, but the understanding is clear that real action must be taken lest the attitude of idleness negatively affect the church and her testimony in the world. A course of correction is given by the apostle to the church with the clear caveat that love, not harshness, should be the way in which the offender is handled.

The Kindness and Thoroughness of the Father

Michael Martin begins his commentary on this passage with insightful understanding of the direction from Paul for the idle (*ataktoi*) versus the church as a whole:

As important as it is to identify the cause and nature of the problem behavior addressed in vv. 6-15, we should not ignore the fact that our passage both begins (v. 6) and ends (vv. 14-15) with exhortations, not to the idle but to the rest of the church. The admonition addressed directly to those Christians who were living improperly (v. 12) is, in fact, rather brief. The bulk of the passage contains Paul's advice to the church about how to deal with disruptive persons who were not following the

³⁵Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 429.

apostolic examples or instructions. Thus the passage deals as much (if not more) with the exercise of church discipline as it does with the specific problem of the *ataktoi*.³⁶

To begin a consideration of the idle is needed. The idle is any “brother,” or fellow Christ follower, whose life does not example a right work ethic for Christians. Paul calls on the church to avoid close association with those persons because, as Howard Marshall points out, their inactivity has become a problem or nuisance for the church, a waste of time in fact.³⁷ The basis for Paul’s corrective call is to silence the distractions that these idlers are creating but suggests to do so with a heart of kindness as is brought out by the way in which they are to be regarded (v. 15).

The command of Paul toward how the church should deal with these who are idle has a divine origin, as pointed out by G. K. Beale, and disciplinary measures are to be taken toward the disorderly. Paul is perhaps responding to a more fully formed kind of disruptive behavior that has not been stopped as a result of his first letter to the Thessalonians.³⁸ So again, this is a directive to the church as to what needs to be accomplished, which implies the need for unity and a right testimony in the larger community in which the church was placed. David Williams and Ward Gasque underscore that being idle means to walk out of step with the work of Christ through the church.³⁹

The idleness of these to whom Paul is referring is a real problem for the reputation of the church in its greater community and added to a growing discrimination from the world toward the church that was present then and also now. Williams and Gasque add the following to the understanding:

³⁶D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, New American Commentary, vol. 33 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 271.

³⁷I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 224-25.

³⁸G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 249.

³⁹David John Williams and W. Ward Gasque, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 144.

The implication in the letters is that these disruptive persons were perfectly capable of supporting themselves but refused to accept that responsibility, busying themselves instead by meddling in other persons' affairs, compounding the problems they were creating. An implication of the rule laid down in this verse, which lay beyond Paul's interest, is that the ability to earn one's living is an important factor in human well-being. We should understand, then, how demoralizing unemployment is for those unable to work. . . . Perhaps he learned this from the same report that brought news of their mistaken ideas about the Parousia (see 2:1-12), or perhaps he is referring to the original report brought by Timothy. Nothing in the text indicates that they had just learned about it now or that they had heard of it only once.⁴⁰

This issue of idleness could have been simple laziness or slothfulness, but it could also have been faulty theology in regard to their understanding of the second coming of Christ and the consummation of the age. Were they, as is often cited, too heavenly minded to be of any earthly good? This point cannot be proven from the text, but it is a curious consideration as Paul would certainly not want any misguided theology to be presumed as true from the watching world outside the church. Clarity, faithfulness, and lives that point to Jesus were always Paul's faithful direction in regard to the testimony of the church.

This concern from Paul is of a two-fold nature. Victor Furnish details in his work on Thessalonians that Paul would have been concerned about how these idlers were viewed from the outside watching world, but also would have concerns about the disruption they would cause within the church body. Furnish is here highlighting the priority and purpose of relationship and how that relates to the testimony of the gospel.⁴¹

G. K. Beale considers Paul's response to the idea of a faulty theological view in regard to the eschaton:

Paul's response is a balanced "already and not yet" ethic. While it is true that the end-times have broken in with Christ's first coming, regenerated Christians still possess fallen bodies and live in a fallen cosmos as they await the final new creation and redemption of their bodies. Therefore, Paul's point in 3:10 is that the prescribed work ethic for living in a fallen world is still part of the created order for all humans to follow; those not following it are "disorderly." This conclusion fits well with the

⁴⁰Williams and Gasque, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 146-47.

⁴¹Victor Paul Furnish, *1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 178.

Jewish background noted earlier (*Testament of Naphtali*) that places notions of lawlessness, disorder, dislocatedness and evil in the context of going awry from God's ethical order built into the creation itself.⁴²

Second Thessalonians 3:6-15 brings out the kindness, yet thoroughness, of the Lord through Paul. The Thessalonian church evidently needed clear and concise direction in order to deal with the seemingly growing problem of idleness. This idleness, by the context of the passage and word usage, was creating conflict from the disruptive activities of those who were idle. They were not just idle, they were busy bodies spreading disunity and disharmony while bringing misunderstanding to the gospel in the community.⁴³ Therefore, Paul's instructions were necessary.

The discipline that Paul taught here was for the well-being of the offender(s) and was not simply a way to punish them. Williams uses the words "educational" and "rehabilitation" to describe what Paul is saying.⁴⁴ So, here again, is the kind but thorough ministry to which Paul is committed. Marshall writes of the understanding of the official church action coming but only after informal attempts had been used with the hope of persuasion back to the fold and unity of the gospel through the church.⁴⁵ Williams also underscores the idea of Christian lifestyle with the acknowledgment of the present participle in verse 13 as pointing to what should be habitual to Christians, namely, no weariness in the doing of good.⁴⁶

Second Thessalonians 3:6-15 is not so subtle, as some would presume, in regard to church discipline. It comes with the assumption that disruption in the body of Christ and misinformation about the gospel in the community must be stopped. The

⁴²Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, 256-57.

⁴³Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 277.

⁴⁴Williams and Gasque, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 149.

⁴⁵Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 227.

⁴⁶Williams and Gasque, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 148.

testimony of God's grace and glory is at odds with an idle lifestyle, no matter the reason for idleness. While the attitude of the church toward the offender was to be of a gracious nature, that in no way allows for avoidance of needed correction. Martin gives a compelling summation:

But allowing a believer to persist in blatantly unchristian, exploitive, and disruptive behavior is not a kindness—neither to the church nor to the errant believer nor to the watching non-Christian public. . . . Thus for both the good of the person and the good of the church, if any member of the Thessalonian church persisted in abusing the church's kindness he must be disciplined.⁴⁷

God's Restoration in Church Discipline: Galatians 6:1

The overarching goals of church discipline can be seen in Galatians 6:1. Restoration and humility can be clearly underscored here. To restore is a given of any biblical church discipline endeavor, however, it is not just that restoration happens but rather how it happens as well. In Galatians 6:1, Paul calls upon the church to do what is necessary to bring back the offender, but to do so with a spirit of genuine gentleness, all the while being careful to self-evaluate and to watch for any sense of spiritual lethargy or superiority.

The Gentleness and Warning of the Father

The clear wording regarding the motivation of the one who leads the restoration is gentleness. At the same time, there is a clear warning about the restorer's attitude and his own temptations toward sinfulness. John Stott explains,

Notice how positive Paul's instruction is. If we detect somebody doing something wrong, we are not to stand by doing nothing on the pretext that it is none of our business and we have no wish to be involved. Nor are we to despise or condemn him in our hearts and, if he suffers for his misdemeanor, say "Serves him right" or "Let him stew in his own juice." Nor are we to report him to the minister or gossip

⁴⁷Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, 285.

about him to our friends in the congregation. No, we are to “restore” him, to “set him back on the right path” (JBP).⁴⁸

The text gives the instruction for restoration to the “spiritual.” So, who are the spiritual? James Dunn lists six different possibilities to consider:

All members; (2) Those who caught the offender; (3) A leadership group; (4) A group who claimed the title for themselves; (5) Those convinced by Paul’s arguments in the letter; (6) All challenged from Paul with the hope that some will respond. . . . A decision between these possibilities is not easy, but the immediate context and the implicit challenge implies some combination of (2), (5), and (6).⁴⁹

Sin in the church will happen; it is not hypothetical to surmise it to be so, as Walter Hansen states.⁵⁰ The challenge is how to effectively deal with the ramifications, or potential ramifications, of sin. In his commentary on Galatians, Timothy George identifies that Galatians 6:1 reveals the character of congregational discipline in the early church.⁵¹ However, this same attitude of humility and pursuit of the offender is necessary in today’s church as well. The gentleness of the pursuit and the warning for the pursuers is no less needful today than at any time in history.

Some words to consider in the verse are explained by Leon Morris: “anyone” refers to any believer; “is caught” refers to the idea of surprise and the commonality of sin; “spiritual” refers to Christians as being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.⁵² Clearly there is a correlation between spiritual maturity and ability to address known sin in the church. The inference is also clear that no one is “off the hook” as far as responsibility goes. All

⁴⁸John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, Bible Speaks Today (London: InterVarsity, 1968), 160.

⁴⁹James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 319–20.

⁵⁰G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 183.

⁵¹Timothy George, *Galatians*, New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: B & H, 1994), 409.

⁵²Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 177.

believers have the Spirit of God; therefore, all believers have the accountability and ability to address sin within the congregation of God.

The warning aspect of this verse is placed squarely upon the shoulders of those who wade into the waters of leading in church discipline. James Dunn writes,

Paul draws on the wisdom of sound pastoral experience: those who become involved with a person guilty of some (presumably) moral failure (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 5; x. 9; James i. 13-14) become vulnerable to the same failure precisely because of their genuine sympathy with that person in that failing. It is this very sense of human frailty which helps maintain the dependence on the Spirit which marks out “those who are spiritual.”⁵³

Anyone who has the Spirit of God is capable of helping a believer caught in sin to be restored. In fact, it is clear from an understanding of what a Christian is, that, as Hansen observes, all children of God have received the Spirit of God.⁵⁴ Therefore, all have a responsibility to gently but intentionally seek restoration for the one who is caught in sin. Willingness to follow the teaching in this text, in some ways, confirms the presence of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer while the unwillingness to obey reveals a question mark in regard to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Timothy George reminds that this restoration is to be done with sensitivity and consideration but with no hint of self-righteous superiority.⁵⁵

These “spiritual” people know that they are sinners saved by grace, which gives insight into their own weaknesses.⁵⁶ Again, the warning is understood from the words “be tempted.” These two words are given to remind the believer that no one is immune to sin, even the same sin. Morris insightfully shares,

Fallible sinners must never assume that they will not do something as bad as the sin they discern in other people. As much as they can they should avoid being in

⁵³Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 321.

⁵⁴Hansen, *Galatians*, 184.

⁵⁵George, *Galatians*, 411.

⁵⁶Hansen, *Galatians*, 186.

situations where they will be tempted. Being tempted may mean being tempted to do the same sin, but more probably to being tempted to see oneself as superior or the like.⁵⁷

The element of self-evaluation is a key to the attitude of gentleness when addressing a sinful situation. Acknowledgement of one's own propensity toward sinfulness helps that person remain humble and gentle. Stott writes that gentleness, in restoration, comes from a sense of one's own weakness and potential sinfulness.⁵⁸ The one who is humble is never completely aware of his humility for then pride could attach itself to the very notion of being humble. If one knows that they are humble it could be argued that they are not humble any longer. Pride is the obstacle that hinders all movement toward the Lord and creates blinders for the one who would otherwise lead in the restoration process. Criticism and judgment quickly appear in the attitude of the one who is proud.

The believer has a question to ask himself in regard to the offender, "Do I love him?" Hansen notes that if the offender is viewed with compassion, then the one who seeks to restore him will genuinely help him.⁵⁹ Going through the motions of restoration is not enough, a genuine compassion is needed that leads to gentleness, considers personal temptation and sinful tendencies, and ultimately looks for the glory of God as an end result. Stott explains,

I am neither to assert my fancied superiority over him and 'provoke him', nor resent his superiority over me and 'envy' him. I am to love him and to serve him. If he is heavy-laden, I am to bear his burdens. If he falls into sin, I am to restore him and that gently. It is such a practical Christian living, brotherly care and service that walking by the Spirit will lead us, and it is by such too that the law of Christ is fulfilled.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Morris, *Galatians*, 178.

⁵⁸Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, 162.

⁵⁹Hansen, *Galatians*, 184.

⁶⁰Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, 163.

Conclusion

Additional passages of Scripture address the topic of church discipline, but this chapter is limited in scope to the five which have been examined. These verses were selected for their clarity and overview of church discipline. That most churches do not practice church discipline is reason enough for this project to go forward. I am fully convinced that church discipline is needed in the modern church as never before, and that its end should be redemption and restoration of the individual as well as the church.

In closing, there is benefit in reading George's concise words of encouragement:

It is a sign of the spiritual stupor that has befallen the body of Christ that church discipline is seldom if ever raised as a viable concern in evangelical churches today. Historically, the practice of discipline served a twofold function in the Free Church tradition: it aimed at restoring the lapsed brother or sister to full fellowship if possible, and it marked off clearly the boundaries between the church and its envioning culture. In both of these ways, discipline helped preserve the purity of the church's witness in the world. The loss of this historic distinctive has resulted in the crisis of spirituality that pervades so much of our church life today.⁶¹

I agree with George's comments and hope to bring about change in the field of ministry and in the body of Christ by understanding and applying the passages in this chapter. Encouragement, humility, and obedience under the power and presence of God's Spirit will move the church back to her historic roots of biblical fidelity. Those willing to follow the Lord in this endeavor are all that is required for him to begin the process of change. While church discipline is not usual or convenient, it is biblical and restorative. It is filled with God's holy presence. It is redeeming for those wandering away from the fold of God and it is encouraging and unifying for the church. Only eternity will tell the significance of this generation's willingness to return to a biblical church discipline.

⁶¹George, *Galatians*, 412.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE PRACTICE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Introduction

The nuts and bolts of church discipline are significant in the development of the process that leads to redemption and restoration. While the biblical and theological underpinning of church discipline is without question, how to actually accomplish the practice is another issue. Numerous books, parts of books, research papers, and articles have been written on the topic so this chapter in no way fully covers the subject, but it is a humble attempt to uncover some foundational aspects needed in the twenty-first century church.

A bias against church discipline seems to be the default response for most well-meaning Christians and churches. This response usually falls somewhere under the banner of a definition of love so that if anyone believes that church discipline loves in its purpose, they are seen as strange, out of touch, judgmental, or even heretical. Certainly many in the church and Christian community understand church discipline as redemptive, corrective, and loving. In agreement with those voices, this chapter seeks to explain more fully the reasoning behind and the path going forward for the church.

For the purposes of this entire project and paper, a biblical system of church discipline is a key to spiritual maturity in the body of Christ at Parkridge Church; therefore, adequate teaching and training is required. Robert Cheong writes about connecting the dots of church discipline as one wades into the deep end of ministry. The context of the need for discipline, the message and manner of discipline, and the motive and goal of the discipline must all align for the restorative process to have any chance of success. The

entire church is involved in the process when a member of the church refuses to repent.¹ The grace of God is experienced most genuinely through the community of faith, the church, and necessarily is fashioned for instruction and correction toward what is holy and righteous, which is translated as love. Restoration is God's plan and it entails a relationship with God, first and foremost.² This chapter covers practical issues related to church discipline, the brokenness of culture, the way of restoration, and the truth about repentance.

Practical Issues Related to Church Discipline

The big picture idea of church discipline is accountability. Jonathan Leeman writes of accountability inside the church as the natural understanding of the gospel message. The accountability atmosphere is both personal and corporate.³ When this natural atmosphere exists, there is acceptance and understanding regarding the need for church discipline. The attitude of loving and restorative church discipline is seen as the biblical encouragement that the Lord intended. The practical issues related to church discipline must take into account the barriers associated with the practice, the right view of reconciliation, and the unity and love that occur in church discipline.

Barriers

Numerous barriers exist that would otherwise thwart the efforts of church discipline. John White and Ken Blue list several barriers in one of the chapters of their book. A limited view that denies the necessity to receive training in godliness is one

¹Robert K. Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride: A Handbook for Church Discipline* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2012), 50.

²Ibid., 166.

³Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 67.

barrier.⁴ A focus on the individual over against the church is another barrier.⁵ This individualistic view can lead to the practice of criticism as well. Another barrier is the belief that right teaching or preaching will be enough to provide right living.⁶ Fear is a strong barrier to church discipline, whether fear of exposure or fear of confrontation.⁷ An unwillingness to change coupled with a calloused conscience can be a powerful barrier.⁸ Last, is the wrong belief that corrective church discipline will shrink the church. In reality, the church is, by and large, shrinking without church discipline.⁹

R. Albert Mohler, in *The Compromised Church*, gives a synopsis of the three steps from Matthew 18 to be taken in church discipline. First is personal confrontation of the one who has sinned. Second is to take witnesses to clarify the facts. Third, if the offender still has not repented, the matter should be brought before the church. If the guilty party will still not listen and repent, then the only thing left is separation from the church while the church is still trying to lead the person to Jesus and ultimately restoration.¹⁰ The present church climate almost never practices this process as Jesus intended. The barriers previously listed and the cultural tendency toward accommodation and tolerance goes completely against the biblical teaching on church discipline.

⁴John White and Ken Blue, *Healing the Wounded: The Costly Love of Church Discipline* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1985), 27.

⁵Ibid., 28-31.

⁶Ibid., 31.

⁷Ibid., 31-32.

⁸Ibid., 32-34.

⁹Ibid., 34.

¹⁰R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Church Discipline: The Missing Mark," in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 180-81.

J. L. Dagg wrote with twenty-first century understanding in the nineteenth century when he articulated the idea that discipline must stay connected to the church because the church must stay connected to Christ.¹¹ The accuracy and need of that idea cannot be overstated in the contemporary church. The practical outflow of church discipline is a greater understanding of Jesus and a sure footed path toward righteousness. The church's unwillingness to engage in church discipline announces acquiescence to the moral drift of culture rather than a heartfelt commitment to the truths found in the Lord.

The church today needs to care enough to confront. In his work on church discipline, Carl Laney points out that Jesus cared that much. The bride of Christ, the church, is designed to live in anticipation of the return of the groom, Jesus. Therefore, a life and testimony of purity is the standard of preparedness.¹² The Lord, upon his return, is looking for the faithful, and the faithful are so, in part, because of the nature and accountability of the church under his care.

The Lord accomplishes four major things when the church is obedient to join in the process of discipline. These areas of change include relational restoration, removal of wickedness, renewal, and the revelation of God's love and glory.¹³ Understanding the purposes behind the process of church discipline will significantly aid in its detailed execution. The life changes that are wrought in the experience of the Lord's discipline do not just naturally happen, but his plans are clear for the church and for his children, that discipline is beneficial and rightly accomplished in love.

¹¹J. L. Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1858), 274.

¹²J. Carl Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), 47.

¹³Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*, 58.

A Right View of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the heart of the gospel and so it is also the heart of church discipline. In genuine reconciliation, hostility is removed and peace takes its place. Life is war and the life of discipline provides a peaceful way to move forward. The church is the arm of the Lord reaching out to his children so that peace can be re-established.¹⁴ The nature of the church is to strive after the righteousness of the Lord Jesus but there is a sense in which that righteousness can never be fully attained. This community of the faithful is an imperfect fellowship of the reconciled that still need reconciliation.¹⁵ They are the already but not yet group who are trusting in the grace of a magnanimous and humble king. The tension of some steps forward and some stumbles backward is the reality of the struggle in which church discipline must find its way.

A fully formed understanding of church membership is necessary in order to recognize and merge the gracious process of church discipline. Leeman writes that church membership and discipline shape what is truly Christian. One without the other is an incomplete picture of what the Lord intends.¹⁶ In a culture that is resistant to commitment, it is understandable why so many are resistant to discipline as well. The backdrop of biblical church membership lays the groundwork for biblical church discipline. The idea of membership goes back to the aforementioned word, accountability.

Accountability is determined through authority. So, where is the place of rightful authority? It is in the church that follows the Lord and his word where authority can be found. The “power of the keys” is a difference of understanding between Catholics and Evangelicals. Evangelicals interpret this passage from Matthew 16 as the church, while

¹⁴White and Blue, *Healing the Wounded*, 46-47.

¹⁵Ibid., 56.

¹⁶Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 19.

Catholics interpret it as the pope, or church leadership.¹⁷ Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 gives strong and clear respect to the Evangelical perspective of the keys being held and administered by the church as they follow the master's plan. Calvin and Luther agreed on this point of theology that the keys of the kingdom were to be borne by the church as the gracious recovery of sinning saints.¹⁸

Unity and Love

Laney gives a great synopsis of the steps of discipline as spelled out in Scripture. First, there is a private conference between the offender and the one who is confronting. If that initial step does not yield a path toward restoration, then another step is to bring witnesses, which should reveal the severity to the offender, open the opportunity for repentance, inform a few in the church for accountability, and move the entire situation closer to restoration. If no redemptive response occurs, then next is the public announcement of letting the church know about it. The congregation is a body of last resort so that if the offender is still unwilling to repent, a public exclusion is sadly necessary. The refusal to listen (Matt 18:17) has the greater meaning of "to pay no attention" or "to ignore."¹⁹

The church of Jesus follows the Word of Jesus. To deny the clear teaching and instruction in Matthew and other parts of Scripture is disobedience. So, a practical challenge to church discipline is the unwillingness of the church to do those things which are hard to accomplish. Discipline is never joyful during the process, but it brings joy and ultimately the righteousness of the Lord as clearly stated in Hebrews 12:11.

¹⁷Mohler, "Church Discipline," 181.

¹⁸Ibid., 182.

¹⁹Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline*, 52-56.

Mohler spells out the drift that occurs for churches that allow sin and heresy to go unchecked. They do so at their own peril believing that their action will promote unity, but in reality it is a false unity. The need is for true unity birthed out of churches that are faithful to the mandate of the gospel of Jesus.²⁰ Unity around the biblical principles of church discipline is needed before the process of church discipline is enacted. This project seeks to bring about a biblical and unified approach at Parkridge Church so that the family of God can grow toward full maturity in the things of God. Thorough teaching and personal discovery of biblical truths among the leaders and members will ultimately yield obedience to the call of Christ in church discipline.

Redemptive and restorative gospel-saturated leadership in church discipline will bring about the true unity of the body of Christ at Parkridge Church as a testimony to the surrounding community. Questions about love, forgiveness, repentance, restoration, rebellion, justice, grace, and a host of other deep life questions will ultimately be answered through the faithful church of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, a culture of joyful repentance and restoration will be gleaned, and the celebration of God's mercy and love will be evident.²¹ It is a picture of changed lives serving together in the trench warfare of life with a common goal of victory of the enemy of the king. It will happen and does happen when the soldiers of the Lord (the church) unite to honor their eternal commander and chief.

Brokenness of the Culture

The challenge of church discipline comes with an understanding of the cultural brokenness in which the church finds itself. Rampant rebellion and spiritual drift is the norm while holiness and righteousness are seen by most as outdated and narrow viewpoints from a group of people who are out of touch with the times. The problem is that this

²⁰Mohler, "Church Discipline," 186.

²¹Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*, 176.

pervasive brokenness is rapidly reproducing with no stopping in sight and it does not produce satisfying lives, but only produces pain and dysfunction. This pain and dysfunction exist because sin always leads to destruction. Puritan Ralph Venning writes from about 400 years ago that sin is against man's well-being, against man's rest and ease, against man's comfort and joy, against man's health, against the beauty of man, against the loving connection between body and soul, against man's relative good in this world, and against the very being of man.²² With an understanding of the brokenness of culture, this section addresses the areas of pain, cultural Christianity, and an understanding of true worship.

Pain

This life brings pain. Jared Wilson comments on the brokenness of this life and how it comes to all people and how creation groans for redemption, which is birthed out of desperation and distress.²³ The pain of life is not only caused by one's personal sin, but sin is the reason for all brokenness whether of a personal nature or of the given state of humanity. One of the ways that people are carried through the pain of this world is by church discipline. The church was God's idea and he meant for his children to struggle together even in the midst of their sinfulness. The Lord is sovereign over all, but the faithful find hope in the church and in the Lord. Job is a striking example of suffering and sovereignty mixed for the glory of God. The Lord promises comfort in affliction, not removal from affliction.²⁴ Church discipline adds understanding to the sovereign oversight of a loving and righteous God, but never caters to the broken culture by allowing sin to go unchecked.

²²Ralph Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), 39-44.

²³Jared C. Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 43.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 45.

Therefore, a correct view of sinfulness helps set the stage for a right view of church discipline. A person's view of sin can come in different ways, such as a community understanding seen in worship and preaching, a personal theological position, and a personal reality. The three views tend toward behavior or heart attitude and identify a person's real view of sin.²⁵ In looking at the views individually, consider the following: when true worship happens, the results are service, obedience, and discipleship. In the Exodus 4, Moses gives a biblical example of genuine directional life change.²⁶ The personal theological position can be narrow and sterile, but correct theology, when applied, results in a life of holy purpose. The view of purpose and obedience stated above as a personal reality is the way it really is in a person's life, versus a simple statement of doctrine. When tied to a right theology, the personal reality is a picture of grace and mercy that yields obedience to the Lord. A personal reality rooted only in the appearance of righteousness simply adds more destruction to an already breaking culture.

The perspective vantage point of brokenness means that the church is in a unique position to do something significant to combat the natural sinful tendencies that ultimately lead to destruction. The community of faith is the single most important accountability structure, which has been given authority and placed in the middle of the broken culture by God himself. The Lord's substitutionary death was necessary for any person to be given hope in the midst of brokenness. Mark Dever and Michael Lawrence invite the readers of their book to recognize all of humanity's need for grace. The sacrifice of Jesus' life on the cross was by the will and initiation of the Lord because he knew there would be no other way for his broken creation to receive wholeness again.²⁷

²⁵Jim Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 60.

²⁶Alexis D. Abernethy, ed., *Worship That Changes Lives: Multidisciplinary and Congregational Perspectives on Spiritual Transformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 235.

²⁷Mark Dever and Michael Lawrence, *It Is Well: Expositions on Substitutionary Atonement*

Cultural Christianity

The onslaught of cultural Christianity has changed the church landscape in ways that work against any biblical direction of church discipline or accountability in general. The brokenness of culture and the pervasiveness of consumerism have come to roost in the church as a part of the “new” church culture that is attractional and often large in number. Wilson causes his readers to question the definition of success in church ministry. He points to health and spiritual growth as opposed to the cultural dynamics of size as the markers of what is best. The gospel is central in true Christianity and lives are changed for God’s glory.²⁸

To reiterate, the culture has a skewed definition of love; therefore, since the culture has so much influence on the church, there is a definite tilt toward acceptance and tolerance versus justice and righteousness. Venning calls his reader to consider that those who “jeer and scoff at holiness” will be judged accordingly and that without holiness they cannot be ultimately made right with their creator.²⁹ A loving God would want all to know of his righteousness and the measure of his judgment. So, it is an act of love to provide discipline and unloving to neglect it, even though the neglect can be defined as acceptance or love. The confusion of the culture blurs the vision of the Christian who says they want to follow the Bible or follow the Lord.

In fact, the brokenness of the culture is of such extreme levels that there is a lack of awareness in regard to sin. The need for the death of Jesus on the cross is so misunderstood today because of this lack of awareness. The apostle Paul explains in Romans 3 the utter sinfulness that humanity experiences and then the ultimate sacrifice for sin that is applied to the very same by way of the cross. At the cross, the wrath of God

(Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 121.

²⁸Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness*, 14-15.

²⁹Venning, *The Sinfulness of Sin*, 282.

is held from humanity as a whole and a right relationship with God is made possible.³⁰ None of this equation makes sense if brokenness is not understood, but when understood in the biblical context, it becomes crystal clear.

The regular biblical analogy of the church is the bride of Christ, which gives an interesting picture when considering the brokenness of the culture. Some things to consider in the gospel “marriage” are, first, the huge differences between the bride and the groom. Next is the fact that the bride is not worthy of the groom’s love as she is broken and sinful. Finally, the union of Jesus with his bride is nonsense from the world’s view. Christ is the perfect husband, literally.³¹ The reality of the brokenness, even within the church, further defines the need for church discipline lest the bride believe she can continue in her unfaithfulness and not bring any damage to the “marriage.”

True Worship

Clayton Schmit makes an excellent case for the transformation that comes as the believer worships. This need for worship is borne out of the reality that living like Jesus is not difficult, it is impossible, because people have sin in their lives. The natural accomplishment of holy living is impossible.³² Church discipline is an extension of true worship as the church, individually and corporately, leans into the sinfulness of its members so that restoration can occur. Love is rightly defined when awareness of the danger of sin and brokenness is rightly understood. No one is called to live as an island, God encourages life in community with accountability. Community living is love and

³⁰Dever and Lawrence, *It Is Well*, 132.

³¹Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*, 28-29.

³²Clayton J. Schmit, “Worship as a Locus for Transformation,” in Abernethy, *Worship That Changes Lives*, 26.

that is the church. Any other definition falls short of the real fellowship that the Lord desires.

When the knowledge of the need for grace increases, the view of the cross grows larger. The church often has had a tendency to see a smaller cross than is true because of spiritual blindness and attempts at self-justification. The cross is where the truth about brokenness is learned and the need for grace is proclaimed.³³ The individual offender of God's righteousness cannot see the need for discipline if there is no awareness and understanding of the brokenness that sent Jesus to the cross. The cross really becomes the central focus of everything Christian. Jesus did not die only because he loved his creation; he died because of the condemnation of sin and the need for justification. When man recognizes and understands the utter lack of justification through personal means, there is a greater propensity to receive the gracious judgment of the truth of God, which includes church discipline.

There is a critical difference between informational learning and formational learning. Many churches overemphasize an informational approach but neglect to connect the dots of formational life change. The shift needed is one that moves from simply teaching to that of truly learning.³⁴ Church discipline is an important component in this renewed and biblical approach to, what is really, discipleship. Following the master in truth means vulnerability and trust of the body of Christ and a willingness to be held accountable in every area.

In the early church there was a clear understanding of the break needed from the world when becoming a follower of Jesus. Joining the family of God meant radical lifestyle changes that were wrought by the Spirit of God. These changes were then

³³Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation*, 106-7.

³⁴Ibid., 123.

regularly confirmed for continued participation in the church. This atmosphere was not legalism, but instead was formational toward maturity. Church discipline was common, specific, and legislated.³⁵ The world needed to see holy living and the church was following Jesus to insure they would see it.

The Way of Restoration

The goal in church discipline is two-fold. First, in all of it, the glory of God must be sought, and second, the offender must be fully restored to the church. Cheong lines out a structured approach to consider in this endeavor, which includes developing a plan for restoration, a family shepherding plan, outside counsel, steps toward a redemptive community, reconciliation privately first, a church shepherding plan, coordination with another local church, the role of the Lord's Supper, and finally, celebration of the one restored. This structured approach creates a culture of restoration.³⁶

Russell Moore writes that the church is the “workshop of Kingdom righteousness” and as such has the responsibility to reflect justice, peace, obedience, and spiritual fruit for the community at large.³⁷ The process of restoration brings about the example of how the Lord, through the church, deals with unrighteousness. In the last section, the understanding of brokenness in the culture points to accountability, while this section points toward a righting of the wrongs. Without restoration through the Spirit of the Lord, there is no hope to be found. Restoration occurs when the church exercises right timing, a right attitude, and a right view of eternity.

³⁵Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 180.

³⁶Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*, 172-76.

³⁷Russell Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 168.

Right Timing

Allison writes of the need to quickly restore the offender who has confessed and repented of their sin. Not restoring them is to create an atmosphere of harshness and double standards which gives greater opportunity for satanic destruction to occur.³⁸ The watching world must see the distinctive of the church on both sides of the discipline equation. First is the distinctive of quickly calling sin what it is and biblically attacking the “cancer” in the church but, just as significant, is the distinctive of restoration and receiving back the remorseful and forgiven offender. There is grace in the administration of discipline in all of its aspects.

The love of Jesus is unconditional, but it comes by way of his conditional sacrifice on the cross where he became the substitute for sinful people. Punishment and death are deserved due to sin, but repentance and restoration are made possible because of the cross.³⁹ When the unrepentant becomes repentant, great joy and celebration reconnect the once wayward child back into the family of God through the church. The celebration of such an event should, in its intensity, overshadow the previous steps of church discipline so that the cycle of accountability is complete and the glory of God is seen.

Regular practice of the disciplines, like prayer, fasting, etc., works to establish a beachhead of holiness by way of God’s grace. When those disciplines are absent and when brokenness creeps into the believer, the need for church discipline arrives. The Spirit of the Lord will use various approaches to maintain holiness because the Lord will receive glory.⁴⁰ The centrality of the cross and the will to maintain the Lord’s leadership in the local church produces holy disciples who are increasingly sensitive to anything that

³⁸Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 194.

³⁹Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love*, 105.

⁴⁰Regent College Theology Conference and John G. Stackhouse, *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 144.

is unholy. This growing sensitivity longs for holiness and righteousness to be restored so that when it is restored there is peace, purpose, and joy in the church for the glory of God. Nothing is quite as sweet as the observation of one who returns to the fold and proves the wisdom and grace of God through purifying restoration. This kind of discipline is for the purposes of salvation to the individual and the church as a whole.⁴¹

The Lord purposely intervenes to accomplish his plan of restoration, but he does so through the willing cooperation of the local church. While the Lord can do anything he so chooses, he chooses to work through people to accomplish his purposes. The church that openly longs for the favor of God, his righteousness, and his glory, will find that the Lord gives great wisdom and courage to move toward the restoration of sinners. Because all people are sinners, all church members need restoration at times. If the atmosphere of the church is to pursue righteousness and encourage repentance and restoration, then the Lord will honor that desire. He will honor it in the individual church member and he will honor it in the church family as well.

If the body of Christ is made up of believers, those born again by God's Spirit, then the disciplinary flow toward restoration will make complete sense. If, on the other hand, the church is not made up of those who are regenerated, then restoration after rebellion is not able to be understood and would be in opposition to the entire structure of that church.⁴²

Right Attitude

Restoration of rebellious members should be done with gentleness and humility so that the individual offender is called to repentance and the church is simultaneously

⁴¹James T. South, *Disciplinary Practices in Pauline Texts* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1992), 189.

⁴²Jeremy M. Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved: Church Discipline as a Means to Repentance and Perseverance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 148-50.

called to faithfulness and perseverance.⁴³ The hope for the church is a greater unity and a greater joy in the journey of faithfulness. The hope for the sinner is a complete return to the fold of sheep who are the church. All of this is for the glory of God and the advance of the gospel to a world that does not really know God.

Any type of so-called church discipline that does not seek to restore and bring hope in the power of God to change people is not biblical church discipline. Confrontation of sin alone is not sufficient to be categorized as church discipline unless the confrontation leads to a process of prayer, repentance, restoration, and the glory of God in the life of the church. The bride of Christ must be nurtured and encouraged along the path toward the “marriage” of Christ’s ultimate return.

An already but not yet kingdom eschatology gives a balanced understanding of the issue of sin because the Lord is not through with man yet. The view of the future full restoration in the presence of God has not yet arrived.⁴⁴ A person’s view of eschatology frames the picture of church discipline in such a way as to come to understand the need for it. Again, when the need for church discipline is clearly seen, the full view which results in restoration is simply a part of the big picture. The sin problem cannot be solved by man, however, the way the sin problem is approached can be led in a God honoring way.

A danger in the Western church, most specifically the North American church, is comfort and mediocrity over against the more difficult task of learning all that the Lord expects. The practical programming and organizing of the church, while efficient, does not easily allow for the movement of the Spirit in clear lines of discipleship, mentoring, and accountability.⁴⁵ Formation, not information, is the need in the church. Church

⁴³Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 55.

⁴⁴Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 77.

⁴⁵Regent College Theology Conference and Stackhouse, *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 127.

discipline is formational in its approach, in its process, and in its hope for a better future for the offender as well as the church.

Right View of Eternity

No church would want its members to be unprepared to meet Jesus at the future judgment. Therefore, the hope mentioned is that eschatological connection between church discipline and the return of Christ. The exercise of church discipline is a means to provoke the church toward full preparation for the culmination of the age.⁴⁶ The heart of the restorative goal of church discipline is to prepare the church to be restored with Christ for all of eternity. It is the perspective of perseverance in the things of God even in the midst of brokenness all around. The glory of God through the church results in a life of faithful following in the way of the Lord. Church discipline is one of the most needed ingredients of discipleship in the mix of the maturing Christ follower.

One way to understand what love really is can be summarized in the idea that love is affection for the beauty and perfection of God.⁴⁷ With that summary of love, the argument for restoration is compelling. To allow someone to remain in their unconfessed sin is not to help them love, in the truest sense, God. His beauty and perfection will not tolerate sinfulness; therefore, an intentional pursuit of holiness is warranted. That pursuit is not natural but rather supernatural. Church discipline is a tool in the belt of the Lord to mold and shape his children into the people they are created to be.

Advertisers and marketers would argue that the core of an organization should be the very thing that leaps out of the approach to marketing. If that is true, then what would advertisers and marketers bring to the forefront of the church in the twenty-first century? What is the identity of the church? Is it missional, seeker driven, purpose driven,

⁴⁶Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 200-201.

⁴⁷Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, 144.

people driven, etc.? The transformation of the church is shaped by what is truly believed.⁴⁸ Church discipline is one way that the core remains gospel focused. Church discipline that understands the restorative process and why it is so significant brings the gospel to center stage because restoration is not possible apart from the redemptive work of the cross and the loving direction of the Lord in the lives who make up his church.

A redemptive and restorative endeavor of church discipline allows love, justice, accountability, and mercy to be defined in the right way. This definition is not of this world but flows from the heart of God who willingly gave himself for sinners so that the full wrath of the Father could be assuaged. Jesus took the full wrath on the cross, and the church can lead those in sin to the same cross to find help, hope, forgiveness, and eternal life. The picture of restorative grace is needed in a world where harsh and cruel forces rule the day.

The Truth about Repentance

Calvin helps the reader of his *Institutes* to understand repentance as a turning away from sin and simultaneously a turning toward God. Sorrow and mourning are always associated with true repentance because of the knowledge of sin and the desire to be cleansed and set back on the right path.⁴⁹ Repentance is the spiritual equivalent of an about face.

Repentance is a turning, a sorrow, and an intentional move toward God. The idea of turning is an awareness of moving in the wrong direction and deciding to stop. This turning requires agreement with the Lord on the issue of sin. Consumerism and individualism have gone to church in the brokenness of the culture, which is yielding a

⁴⁸Regent College Theology Conference and Stackhouse, *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, 219.

⁴⁹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 396.

general resistance to biblical commitment.⁵⁰ The turning that repentance brings points the church back to the center: Jesus, not self. Jesus is a defense and a place of safety for those in danger or in trouble. Running toward Jesus is like finding shelter in the midst of a terrible storm.⁵¹ True repentance understands the issue of sorrow, the church as a family, and the joy of holiness.

Sorrow

The sorrow found in repentance comes with an awareness of sin and specifically the awareness of personal sinful waywardness. The ramifications of taking sin lightly are serious and will bring a callous attitude, or worse, a flippant attitude toward breaking the righteous call of God on one's life. Puritan preacher and writer Richard Baxter clearly saw the need for recognizable repentance in the process of church discipline. Though Baxter saw church discipline as "wearisome," he nonetheless, exercised it obediently so that the church might be a testimony of repentance leading to holiness.⁵²

Repentance as an intentional move toward God clarifies that the turning of repentance is from something, sin and self, and toward someone, Jesus. Repentance is recognized as necessary when Jesus is at the center. Faith is not simply positive feelings and attitudes, it is holding to the trustworthy God who is completely reliable.⁵³ Turning to Christ immediately moves a person away from sin. Grudem's definition of repentance

⁵⁰Donald S. Whitney and James Montgomery Boice, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ*, new ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 13-14.

⁵¹Jonathan Edwards, *Jonathan Edwards on Knowing Christ* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), 157.

⁵²Timothy K. Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion: A Study of the Puritan Concept of Becoming a Christian* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 132-33.

⁵³James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: A Comprehensive & Readable Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 410.

emphasizes the move toward God: “Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”⁵⁴

This turning from sin and toward God happens at the point of salvation, but also happens in the journey toward maturity after the time of one’s salvation. Church discipline is one of the strategically placed means to help achieve maturity or spiritual growth in the context of accountability. True faith and true growth are not possible apart from repentance. It is also not possible to accept Christ as “savior” but not as “lord.”⁵⁵

An individual who repents, places his trust in the Lord for life, direction, and purpose. A church with an atmosphere of repentance makes possible the redeeming work of Jesus. If the individual or community nature of the church is prideful and unrepentant, then the work of the Lord will not be fully accomplished. Through church discipline, Jesus will protect and build his church and when wickedness is present the Lord will remove its adherents so that those caught in its trap will gain right insight and right living.⁵⁶

Church as Family

The church is a family with meaningful relationships. Connection to a local church brings accountability and community. It also brings an announcement of the individual member that they are on the same side and a part of the same family and no longer outside the family.⁵⁷ So, when that same person no longer identifies, by word and deed, as a part of the family, action must be taken to bring them back into the family connection. It will not happen without repentance and joyful cooperation from the member and the entire family.

⁵⁴Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 713.

⁵⁵Ibid., 714.

⁵⁶Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*, 58.

⁵⁷Whitney and Boice, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church*, 50.

Calvin refers to the unrepentant church member as “fetid and putrid.” He writes of how they will bring disgrace to the name of Jesus.⁵⁸ While that kind of language is not typically used today, church discipline seeks to return the church to her first love by taking sin seriously as it is a serious attack upon the holiness of the bride of Christ. A return to meaningful discussion about the evil of sin is a rebuttal to a culture of personal satisfaction over against the community of the redeemed. The courage to confront is provided through the Spirit to the leaders of the church so that repentance, restoration, and redemption may take place. In all of the task of discipline, the Lord will receive his glory.

Wickedness is contagious, and the old saying is evidenced in many quarters that “misery loves company.” The opposite is true as well, that repentance can become contagious in the sense that people collectively hunger and thirst for righteousness. Church discipline brings preservation to the work of Christ in the church and serves as a deterrent for others who are entering into sin.⁵⁹ This goes to the atmospheric qualities of the church that is following after Jesus. The unrepentant person is obviously out of sync with the church that is characterized by an atmosphere of repentance and obedience to the Lord. A collective attitude toward correction and discipleship is borne, not out of legalism, but out of a joy in the journey of faith that is built on trust in Jesus.

Joy of Holiness

Baxter was a wonderful example of the best of pastoral leadership. He has been described as a man who had a passion for holiness and as a result his ecclesiology was different than many of his peers.⁶⁰ A passion for holiness is needed in churches today. Consumerism, individuality, humanism, convenience, comfort, and entertainment

⁵⁸Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 814.

⁵⁹Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 127.

⁶⁰Beougher, *Richard Baxter and Conversion*, 134.

have become the norm in many churches to the extent that some will even compliment a church for its similarity to the surrounding culture. Repentance looks altogether different from the compromising consumeristic version of the church. The Lord calls for a passion for holiness just as Baxter understood.

Christians are a peculiar people. They are holy, royal, and set apart. Edwards was a fierce defender of the holy nature of God's people. His sermons and life spoke to this truth. He preached of the filth of humanity, produced by sin, being removed because of Christ and that the soul of man is adorned in preparation for the return of the bridegroom.⁶¹ This language of holiness and repentance is old in its orientation, but is just as true today as in centuries past. It is the language of the church and the truth remains for all generations, no matter the cultural argument against it. Repentance is for those who are called of God to be the children of God. The authentic children of God desire to please their heavenly Father, generally speaking, and will repent when they understand their sin and disobedience to God.

The heart of the Father is for his children. He enables them to receive forgiveness from sin but waits for them to repent of the offensive sin that has entangled them. Church discipline and perseverance are inseparably tied so that the church will not be led into sin and therefore contaminated by a wayward member.⁶² The disciplined member is blessed by the discipline and the church body as a whole is blessed by the discipline. Repentance is humility with a teachable spirit under the Lord's direction. It produces sweetness where meanness would otherwise take up residence. It prevents and provides a cure for sinful humanity. Church discipline leading to repentance and restoration is possible because of the cross and the sacrifice of the Savior.

⁶¹Edwards, *Jonathan Edwards on Knowing Christ*, 208.

⁶²Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 127.

Conclusion

Repentance, restoration, brokenness, and the practical issues of church discipline are heavenly tools used by the Spirit of God for his glory. There is absolutely nothing that man can do for himself in regard to salvation, but there is everything that the Lord can do on man's behalf. Church discipline is a part of the molding and shaping of the master craftsman, it is like the potter molding the clay into a priceless work of art. Man, the lump of clay in the illustration, cannot work out any crafting on his own, but when placed in the hands of the potter, everything changes.

The church is made up of the most different people imaginable. They have different personalities, different family backgrounds, different life experiences, and they are different in their growth and understanding.⁶³ Those differences make the church difficult, but at the same time they make it wonderful. A church full of the exact same kinds of people would be boring and predictable, but the variety of expression in the body of Christ makes for excitement, creativity, and disagreements. Passion and opinions are almost always coming to the surface of ministry. The very things that would divide, and sometimes do, make for the greatest unity the world could ever know. This unity is bound up around a singular force, the person of Jesus Christ. He is the crucified savior who takes away the sin of his people. No one else can do that, and no one else has done that. To sit at the feet of Jesus is to be ready for discipline, growth, and glory. The glory of God is the only purpose for which the child of God lives.

⁶³Cheong, *God Redeeming His Bride*, 91.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to equip pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, Florida, to carry out church discipline. To achieve this objective, a course was developed and taught that offered a group of leaders both assessment and teaching focused on church discipline. The introductory session and six-session course began on Sunday, November 5, 2017, and continued for seven weeks. The project consisted of four phases of development. In phase 1 of initial preparation, the class materials were created. In phase 2, the pre-course survey was administered to determine a base of knowledge of the pastors and leaders. In phase 3, the church discipline curriculum was taught. In phase 4, the post-course survey was administered and a t-test was performed to determine the project's effectiveness. This chapter details the elements of the project.

Phase 1: Initial Preparation

Curriculum

The first phase of the project occurred during weeks 1 through 6. The course consisted of six one-hour sessions dealing with topics needful for a study and engagement of church discipline. The teaching material included discussion regarding love, discipline, sorrow, judgment, compassion, consistency, kindness, thoroughness, gentleness, warning, restoration, and spiritual growth. There was also a session related to practical issues, including cultural brokenness, restoration, and spiritual growth. The curriculum was designed as a template for discussion so that the approach was not dependent on a lecture or dissemination of information, but rather on the dynamic interaction among the group

members. This curriculum was basically a way to teach the first three chapters of this written project.

The biblical background was a key component needed to understand the purpose and principles of church discipline. The passages studied are discussed later in this chapter but they were all specifically chosen for the quality discussion possible by the textual content. Some are general in the view of discipline understood and some are more specific to a particular sin that was addressed. In each of the texts, two overarching ingredients move the reader toward an understanding of restoration and spiritual growth.

In the final session, the discussion revolved around practical issues both outside and inside the church. The cultural/societal issues that shape and form personal opinion and response were critical to consider in the larger discussion about church discipline. This final session took the opportunity to ultimately point to the need for restoration and spiritual growth, just like the first five sessions. The goals of restoration and spiritual growth were consistent throughout the project and served to keep the focus in the right direction for the pastors and ministry leaders.

Evaluation Tool

A church discipline curriculum evaluation tool was used to determine the quality of the curriculum.¹ Four pastors and one ministry leader completed the evaluation tool for the quality of the curriculum. This tool covered five distinct areas of evaluation of the curriculum. The first evaluation area was biblical faithfulness. This part of the evaluation was a question of biblical as well as theological faithfulness. The theological marker used was the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. The second evaluation area was clarity. In the area of clarity, the question related to understanding, purpose, and layout. The third evaluation area was teaching methodology. In the area of teaching methodology, the

¹See appendix 2.

question was about learning approaches like lecture, case studies, role-play, and homework. The fourth evaluation area was scope. This area dealt with balance in heart, head, and lifestyle issues as they relate to spiritual development. The fifth evaluation area was application. The application area was a question of the practical nature of the curriculum.

Phase 2: Pre-Course Survey

During the first session, in week 7 of the course development, a pre-course survey, the Basics of Church Discipline Inventory (BCDI), was administered to the participants.² This group was made up of pastors and ministry leaders for a total of fifteen persons. The survey asked questions concerning an understanding of the basic biblical principles and process for restorative and redemptive church discipline.

The BCDI included twenty questions. The questions sought input on a variety of topics related to church discipline, including the Bible's view, the church's role and responsibility, the importance of the Holy Spirit, man's response to culture, the biblical goals, man's ability to help others, and the theological and practical issues of sin.

The BCDI was completed and examined for any noticeable trends. Based on survey questions, it was noticeable that some were not in agreement with the Bible's understanding of church discipline. This revelation was especially true when it came to personal responsibility that Christians have for their fellow Christians. While the BCDI did not cause any change in the curriculum detail, it did create a clear path for discussion related to the church's role in the discipline process. The initial scores were high in agreement on the need for discipline but not as high in the areas connected to the practical application of discipline. There was a desire to seek righteousness, as long as the church (institution not people) made it happen. This wrong view informed the discussion for all six sessions of the course materials.

²See appendix 1.

Phase 3: Course Implementation

After the development of the phases of the project, the course was ready to be implemented. The course was implemented during weeks 7-13. Session 1 was an opportunity to pray, take the BCDI, and discuss some general ideas of church discipline along with a discussion of church history in regard to discipline. Each of the six sessions thereafter was comprised of five key areas: (1) opening prayer, (2) Scripture, (3) principles to consider, (4) reading discussion, and (5) closing prayer.³ The reading assignments were from *That His Spirit May Be Saved* by Jeremy M. Kimble, *Church Discipline* by Jonathan Leeman, and *God Redeeming His Bride* by Robert K. Cheong.

Session 1: Matthew 18:12-20

The first session's lesson began with a discussion of Matthew 18:12-20. Here, Jesus speaks about the search and rescue mission for the one lost sheep and then the way to deal with the sinful actions of a brother. The Scripture shows the importance of searching for even one lost sheep. The verses about sin and restoration give a clear path for reconciliation after loving confrontation of the sinner.

Love, discipline, restoration, and spiritual growth were the foundational principles discussed in relation to the Scripture. The discussion questions for love were to tell the Scripture's definition of love and to list some unbiblical definitions of love. The discussion around discipline were the same as love, to consider both biblical and unbiblical definitions of discipline. With restoration, the discussion pointed toward how Scripture recommends it and some wrong views of it. Finally, in the area of spiritual growth, the discussion was about how the Scripture helped foster spiritual growth and some of the barriers to spiritual growth.

The reading discussion consisted of sections from Kimble's as well as Leeman's book. The readings each week were not specifically tied to the Scripture being studied,

³See appendix 3.

but were an attempt to expose the class to quality information that had general connection to the entire curriculum and discussion of church discipline. The reading homework for session 2 was from the same two books as session 1.

Session 2: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

The second session's lesson began with a reading of 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. This Scripture deals with a case of extreme sexual immorality. The indication is that this sin is agreed upon as wrong even among those who are pagan. Strong direction and correction is given to the church at Corinth as to how they should deal with the one who is in sin. The ultimate direction given is for the offender to be removed from the church. The understanding is that commonly known unrighteousness must be corrected as soon as possible. This example of discipline gives a clear picture of the seriousness of unrepentant sin in the church and how the church must respond.

Sorrow, judgment, restoration, and spiritual growth were discussed in relation to the passage of Scripture. The questions related to sorrow were about the Scripture's definition and some unbiblical definitions as well. The discussion regarding judgment, again, focused on the definition found in the 1 Corinthians passage as well as any known unbiblical definitions. The discussion continued around the topic of restoration and how the Scripture recommends it and determining some wrong views of restoration. Last, the group looked at spiritual growth and how the passage helps with growth as well as the barriers that are present to spiritual growth.

The reading discussion consisted of sections from Kimble's as well as Leeman's book. The readings each week were not specifically tied to the Scripture being studied, but were an attempt to expose the class to quality information that had general connection to the entire curriculum and discussion of church discipline. The reading homework for session 3 was from the same two books as session 2.

Session 3: Hebrews 12:1-11

The third session began with a reading from Hebrews 12:1-11. This Scripture gives a general and overarching view of discipline. It does not deal specifically with the topic of church discipline, but it does give an understanding of the Lord's heart and teaching on the principle of discipline. When this passage in Hebrews is combined with the other, more specific, passages regarding church discipline, a fully formed understanding of discipline can be seen. Witness, heritage, encouragement, perseverance, and righteousness are some of the discussion areas from this Scripture. This session was a robust discussion of the big picture principles and reasons for church discipline.

Four specific principles were discussed after the reading of the passage: compassion, consistency, restoration, and spiritual growth. Because we used the same discussion starters each week, the group was accustomed to the direction by session 3. From this passage, the group looked at a definition for compassion and consistency as well as any unbiblical definitions to consider. In the areas of restoration and spiritual growth, the discussion involved recommendations and helps found in this Hebrews passage. The discussion also considered any wrong views or barriers to restoration and spiritual growth.

The reading discussion consisted of sections from Kimble's as well as Leeman's book. The readings each week were not specifically tied to the Scripture being studied, but were an attempt to expose the class to quality information that had general connection to the entire curriculum and discussion of church discipline. The reading homework for session 4 included a first reading from Robert Cheong's work.

Session 4: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

The session began with a reading of 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. This passage deals with a general warning about laziness, idleness, and a wrong work ethic. The Scripture goes to the importance of the Christian reputation in the community. A lifestyle that shows hard work, humility, and responsibility was the model, but in this specific example that

lifestyle was absent. The result was disassociation and warning to be given to the one who practices this lacking lifestyle. The person living in idleness was not to be thought as an enemy, but he was certainly to be seen as in need of a clear warning to get back on the right track of being a Christian example of the presence of the Lord.

Kindness, thoroughness, restoration, and spiritual growth were the main topics of discussion that connected to the 2 Thessalonians passage. Scriptural definitions of kindness and thoroughness found in the Scripture were considered as well as any unbiblical definitions that were generally known added to the discussion. With the topics of restoration and spiritual growth the discussion first sought to understand how the 2 Thessalonians passage recommended and helped with them. Next, the group considered wrong views and barriers that would thwart restoration and spiritual growth.

The reading discussion consisted of sections from Kimble's as well as Cheong's book. The readings each week were not specifically tied to the Scripture being studied, but were an attempt to expose the class to quality information that had general connection to the entire curriculum and discussion of church discipline. The reading homework for session 5 included readings from both Kimble and Cheong.

Session 5: Galatians 6:1

Session 5 began with a reading from Galatians 6:1. This verse helps the reader understand the responsibility of those who are aware of the offender. What should those in the church do for the person caught in his sin? While this is simply a single verse, the discussion around this verse was robust and challenging to the entire group. The text made clear that Christians have responsibility for other Christians, and restoration with gentleness is the key to a successful intervention that honors the Lord. In so doing, there is always the risk of temptation and pride toward the one attempting to help in the restorative process. A constant acknowledgement of the presence of temptation and watchful prayer works to keep all Christians on the path of righteousness.

The discussion topics included gentleness, warning, restoration, and spiritual growth. The guiding points and discussion starters remained the same in week 5, so we first looked at how Galatians 6:1 helps define gentleness and warning and then considered any unbiblical definitions of the same. Next the group discussed the principles of restoration and spiritual growth regarding the Scripture. How this verse recommended and helped with these was first searched and then we talked about any wrong views and barriers to restoration and spiritual growth known to group.

The reading discussion consisted of sections from Cheong's book only. The readings each week were not specifically tied to the Scripture being studied, but were an attempt to expose the class to quality information that had general connection to the entire curriculum and discussion of church discipline. The reading included a scan of the appendices in Cheong's book as well.

This final teaching session concluded with a discussion of next steps for Parkridge Church. Talk of guiding document updates as well as membership class updates helped the group consider the short and long-term ramifications of implementing church discipline into the spiritual and organizational framework of Parkridge Church.

Phase 4: The Post-Course Survey

On week 13 of the project, the post-course survey was administered.⁴ A t-test was performed to determine the effectiveness of the project course. During the final session of the project, the group was given the same survey they completed at the beginning of the project. Fifteen post-course surveys were completed. During weeks 13-15, the surveys were scored and t-test was performed. The results are as follows:

⁴See appendix 1.

Statement 1: “The Bible commands church discipline.” There was a statistically significant positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 2.35, p < .0001$).

Statement 2: “The Bible clearly teaches how the process for church discipline will bring restoration and redemption.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course responses ($t(14) = .68, p < .0001$).

Statement 3: “Church discipline is a rigid and judgmental way of dealing with sin.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = .54, p < .0001$).

Statement 4: “Church members will naturally enter into the process of church discipline.” There was no statistical change between the pre- and post-course survey responses ($t(14) = 0, p .0001$).

Statement 5: “Biblical church discipline for restoration and redemption is a part of most churches.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = .90, p < .0001$).

Statement 6: “Any Christian can learn how to appropriately lead a process of church discipline.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post-course survey responses ($t(14) = 2.17, p < .0001$).

Statement 7: “The Bible clearly teaches that judgment of fellow church members is appropriate.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 4.14, p < .0001$).

Statement 8: “Man is primarily a product of his environment and will not respond to a biblical environment of discipline.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 1.32, p < .0001$).

Statement 9: “The Holy Spirit is the most important person in church discipline.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 1.78, p < .0001$).

Statement 10: “Biblical church discipline causes disunity in the local church.”

There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 2.09, p < .0001$).

Statement 11: “Repentance is primarily asking forgiveness for one’s sins.”

There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = .29, p < .0001$).

Statement 12: “Prayer is a primary source needed in a biblical church

discipline process.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 1.00, p < .0001$).

Statement 13: “The Bible provides the necessary process for church

discipline.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 1.82, p < .0001$).

Statement 14: “I feel competent to help someone who is struggling with sin.”

There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 2.78, p < .0001$).

Statement 15: “I have a clear understanding on what the Bible teaches about

church discipline.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 4.75, p < .0001$).

Statement 16: “Theology is not important – just love Jesus.” There was a

statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 1.00, p < .0001$).

Statement 17: “Sin is the main cause of all problems.” There was a statistically

positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = .27, p < .0001$).

Statement 18: “Church discipline works best when it is carried out quickly and

quietly away from the church.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 4.22, p < .0001$).

Statement 19: “Only pastors and deacons should lead in a church discipline process.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 3.67, p < .0001$).

Statement 20: “Church discipline displays God’s grace more clearly.” There was a statistically positive change between the pre- and post- course survey responses ($t(14) = 3.15, p < .0001$).

After evaluating the results, the course taught to the pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church made a statistically significant difference resulting in an increase of knowledge and practice of spiritual maturity and an understanding of church discipline. The goal of the pre- and post-course survey was to show a significant difference in knowledge. This goal was met with the overall difference being as follows: ($t(14) = 4.91, p < .0001$).

Conclusion

This ministry project was accomplished over a fifteen-week time-frame. The course was conducted in order to equip pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church to carry out church discipline. The project contained three stated goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of restorative and redemptive church discipline among the pastors and ministry leaders. This goal was measured and considered successfully met by the completion and scoring of the Basics of Church Discipline Inventory (BCDI) pre-course surveys.⁵ The second goal of the project was to develop a six-session curriculum on restorative and redemptive church discipline with collaboration from other pastors and available resources on the topic. The goal was measured by the current four other pastors and one ministry leader at Parkridge Church indicated on evaluation rubrics marked 90

⁵See appendix 1.

percent or above.⁶ This goal was completed successfully. The third goal of the project was to increase the knowledge of the pastors and ministry leaders over the course of six sessions. This goal was measured by re-administering the Basics of Church Discipline Inventory (BCDI) to measure the leaders' level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to practice restorative and redemptive church discipline. This goal was successfully met when a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-course scores.

⁶See appendix 5.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROJECT'S EFFECTIVENESS

The local church is the center of all that the Lord intends to accomplish on earth before his return. Sin is the great problem which causes a broken world to exist unchecked by any true righteousness. The church is the one place, the one people, where a difference can be made. If the difference is made for righteousness over time, then the world will take notice, but more importantly, the Lord will receive glory. The opportunity to address the issue of sin begins by addressing it first from within. When the Lord's clear standards of holiness and faithfulness are followed, the world and church are made more into the purpose that the Lord intended. A purpose of righteousness.

Chapter 2 of this project showed the significant and clear way that church discipline is for the good of God's people, the church. When the church is living in righteousness and following the Lord, the world is given a beautiful picture of God's grace and the joy that is possible in this broken world. Church discipline matters because it keeps the church in check, and gives the world an opportunity to not only hear the truth, but to see the truth in action.

This project sought to equip pastors and elders at Parkridge Church in Coral Springs, Florida, to carry out church discipline. This final chapter offers evaluations of the project's purpose and goals. It also offers a critique of the project's methodology, observes strengths and weaknesses, and provides both theological and personal reflections that resulted from the project. As the implementation of this project takes shape, over time, I am certain that it will have wonderful effect on Parkridge Church as well as the surrounding world in which the church resides.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of the project was to equip pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church to carry out church discipline. The intent of the project sought to give input into three areas of concern. The first concern related to inactive church membership. While many would not view this as a church discipline issue, it truly is, as it goes against the agreed upon covenant relationship that all Parkridge Church members have with one another. Restorative church discipline provides a clear way to re-engage that member for ministry in the church.

The second area of concern related to those who have entered into sin, which is evident by the observance of a wrong attitude. A lack of self-control, anger, gossip, pride, and disruptive actions are all signs of this sinful attitude. The disunifying nature of this kind of sinful interaction causes great difficulty in the church. To stay and continue in the same way or to leave with no resolve is not a biblically-appropriate response from the offender. Church discipline opens the door for restoration, as well as spiritual growth for all involved.

The third area of concern related to persons involved in issues of immorality. Whether single or married, the impact of such actions can be devastating to the church and is certainly devastating to the persons involved. Marital infidelity, marital disharmony, pre-marital immorality, and/or general immorality of varying kinds are exceeding difficult issues to resolve. These issues will not resolve if no approach is taken toward restoration and repentance. Church discipline lays the foundation for fruitful ministry and personal holiness, even when these kinds of challenges present themselves.

The verse studied in session 5 was Galatians 6:1, and it gives a clear call to work toward the restoration of those in sin and simultaneously gives a warning for those administering the discipline. This verse, in its brevity and clarity, captures the best of church discipline. The goal of restoration without compromise to the holiness of God is paramount. The grind and grit of people's lives is not as simple as a doctoral project may

seem to indicate. Meaningful ministry is messy because people are broken and in desperate need of repair. The repair is provided through the church because the Lord chooses to work through the church, his people, for his glory.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

This project was measured by three goals. The first goal was to assess the knowledge of restorative and redemptive church discipline among the pastors and ministry leaders. The goal was measured by administering the Basics of Church Discipline Inventory (BCDI) to a group of fifteen people.¹ The BCDI contained questions concerning the pastors' and ministry leaders' understanding of the basic biblical principles and process for church discipline. It also asked questions concerning unbiblical approaches to church discipline, including legalism, judgment, and harsh treatment of those receiving discipline. The goal was considered successful because fifteen people completed the inventory and the inventory was scored.

The second goal of the project was to develop a six-session curriculum on church discipline with collaboration from other pastors and available resources on the topic. The curriculum was to cover the foundational biblical elements of church discipline so that health and biblical church growth could be understood. The goal was measured by a select team of five, made up of pastors and ministry leaders of Parkridge Church, who used a rubric to evaluate for biblical faithfulness, clarity, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.² The goal was considered successful in that a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal of the project was to increase the knowledge of the pastors and ministry leaders over the course of six sessions. This goal was measured by

¹See appendix 1.

²See appendix 5.

re-administering the BCDI to measure the leaders' level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to practice church discipline.³ This goal was considered successful because a t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-course survey scores.

Evaluation of the Project's Methodology

The methodology used for the project was sufficient. However, a critique should be given in two areas. First, a redo of the project would be beneficial to have more collaboration in the writing of the curriculum. The evaluation rubric showed a generally positive indication, but since the evaluation team only had a couple of days to evaluate, it would have been better to have given them a longer window, and it would have also been helpful to have had a group meeting for verbal and written input for improvement. A three-hour collaboration time would have added a much needed objective perspective. The reading assignments were certainly a way to compensate any deficiencies in the curriculum, but this group meeting would add more positive weight to the plan.

Second, a weekly addition of role-playing would have been a wonderful aspect for the teaching sessions. The required reading assignments included stories of real scenarios and there was much discussion of the particulars with added understanding for the cultural context of Parkridge Church, but role-playing forces the challenge of finding the right words and right direction for different problems. Part of the 20/20 hindsight was to consider revising the teaching to include a healthy dose of role-play and personal sharing of past challenges in the area of church discipline that the participants have experienced by way of observation. While no one in the group was ever the recipient of corrective church discipline, some had played a part in the correction process for others.

³See appendix 3.

These two critiques serve as a way to look toward further enhancement of the materials for future teaching. While the material was statistically effective in its purpose, there is no question that these two observations would have made for an even better experience for the pastors and ministry leaders who experienced the teaching and discussion during the weeks of training.

Strengths of the Project

The primary strength of the project was its ability to raise the knowledge level of the participants in two areas: awareness of the need for church discipline and understanding of the ingredients needed for biblical church discipline. The group was in agreement with the challenge that sin brings to the church. They were understanding of the difficulty that sin presents to the church. Even with this theoretical agreement, there was still a bit of a disconnect to where the contemporary church actually stands.

The general tenor of the need for church discipline was expressed in the first session when several of the group shared discomfort with the idea of removal of the offender from the church. The word “excommunication” was not well received. Upon further teaching and direction from the Scripture, ultimately the group came to understand the need for clarity and teaching for the whole church to move toward holiness. They recognized that corrective discipline is the act of a loving Father for his children.

The understanding of ingredients needed for church discipline refers to the interaction with members, leaders, pastors, and processes so that the offender is given every possible opportunity to repent and do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. In fact, toward the end of the six-session curriculum, there was even a unanimous voice of moving quickly toward a solution to help those living in sin and not being challenged with their current decisions. This attitude was refreshing because it had absolutely no hint of superiority or judgmentalism, on the contrary, it was a sweet understanding of the love and sacrifice of Jesus toward the church.

Weaknesses of the Project

The weaknesses of the project are seen in two specific areas. The first has already been shared, which is to have more role-play in the sessions. The second weakness regards the number of participants. While fifteen was good, a larger group would have offered more feedback and buy-in to the teaching.

The issue of role-play was my understanding that discussion alone will not bring about a clarity of approach or an understanding of the final hope in church discipline. Role-playing aids in the discovery process to help reveal biblical approaches and practical steps of confrontation. Actually saying the words that would be best in a real scenario helps form the mindset toward restoration without compromise on the issues of righteousness. The element of role-play was a huge miss in the overall teaching approach, which will be easily rectified in any subsequent teaching.

The size of the group of pastors and ministry leaders could have been doubled to thirty participants with a little more advanced notice and timing. While it is often better to start small and then build on an effective approach, church discipline is a church-wide necessity. Therefore, if a higher number had heard the truth about church discipline, the grassroots effort toward a restorative network of hope and help would have been given a better foundation on which to build. This is also a bit of hindsight because of the overwhelming positive response from the fifteen who did attend, but no doubt a second wave of students from among the key leaders at Parkridge Church should happen soon. The age-group ministry leaders and the adult small group leaders would be the perfect place to start as a plan unfolds toward a greater understanding among the entire membership.

Theological Reflections

Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, is the one word that sticks out the most in the consideration of theological reflections. The church is the bride, the family, the army. She is the sheep in need of a shepherd. The church is prone to wander and will naturally

consider self-preservation and immediate gratification over any issues of unity and spiritual growth. However, that natural, selfish, inclination changes radically through the presence of the Holy Spirit. It also changes radically when the people of God work toward unity under the sole banner of the gospel.

Loving families encourage each other to do what is right. Loving parents discipline their children so that one day they will become responsible, and positive contributors to society. Dysfunctional families have no concept of a loving kind of discipline, they thrive on one of two approaches: legalism or license. Unity in a family is borne out in the hard work of discipline and shared values. The age-old question of nature versus nurture can be understood to incorporate both key ingredients.

In the church, a fully formed understanding of unity at the foot of the cross brings clarity about issues of sin that would otherwise divide the family of God. Healthy churches do not shy away from the difficult challenge of unrighteousness among the members. Rather, they approach it with firm love that moves the congregation toward holiness and unity in the work of Christ. Biblical systems of thought, along with a fully functioning discipleship, inform the direction and depth of the congregation.

Pastors and ministry leaders have been given the responsibility to lead through the difficulties as well as the joys of ministry. A biblically informed church is able to receive the leadership that comes from the Lord through the God-ordained leaders and shepherds over her. Dealing with unconfessed, unrepentant sin will never be easy, but when the atmosphere of obedience is the normal experience in the church, an opportunity for something special and formative is allowed to happen.

This project has brought clarity around ecclesiology as it relates to a biblical view of church membership, church authority, soul care, and church discipline. Coral Springs, Florida, is situated in the most densely populated corridor in the state of Florida. It is in the greater Fort Lauderdale area about half-way between West Palm Beach and Miami. The images and cultural climate that one considers regarding South Florida is a

huge barrier to biblical ministry here. That is why a biblical church, seeking obedience and righteous living, is noticed by a love for Jesus and a love for people. Without this banner of Christian identification there is consumerism and materialism, even in church. With the overwhelming Christian identifiers present, the church is seen as the healthy family the Lord intended.

Personal Reflections

I am the founding pastor of Parkridge Church. For over 25 years I have counted it a blessing to be a pastor here. As I committed to work on an advanced degree, I sought confirmation from the good people of Parkridge Church. Not only did they confirm my direction, they committed to pray for and pay for this educational degree. I knew from the beginning that I needed to be stretched and that the church I love the most needed to be stretched as well. A growing conviction revealed a weak approach to known sin within the church. In my first seminar I was confronted with the clear biblical principles of church discipline and I knew, without question, that it would be the subject of my project.

I would rather study about, write, and implement almost any other issue of church ministry. The ministry of confrontation, while needful, is painful. Sorrow is present even when restoration is clearly the objective and final goal for the offender. Love for the church is a critical aspect of church discipline. However, there can be no lesser motivations than the love of Jesus and his Word, the Bible. A love for Jesus is the motivation needed to accomplish the beautiful and life-giving task of church discipline.

The teaching sessions revealed for me a people just as hungry and hopeful as I for the glory of God to shine brightly through Parkridge Church. Though we are a broken people, we are called to be a people after his heart. We are called to be a holy people, just like the Lord. We are called to do hard things for the unity of a gospel-centered church.

In the nearly four years of study, writing, and education at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I have come to greatly appreciate the stretching that the Lord is

doing with me. I have come to expect the Lord to do great things with the church I love the most, Parkridge Church. I have begun to experience a rekindling of the flame of God's holy direction that brought me to start Parkridge Church in the first place. I look forward to another chapter of the glory and grace of the Lord at Parkridge Church. It is my joy to continue in the church where the Lord placed me in 1992, and continue serving him. The holy joy of the church of the living God is a wonderful experience. I long to see that atmosphere fully formed at Parkridge Church. If the Lord tarries and if my health holds, I could continue to serve him in this place for a long time. I desire a continued long ministry here if the Lord wills it. Pastoring in a culture of biblical obedience means a renewed joy and health for Parkridge Church.

The greatest challenge for me is to be a model of personal holiness and to lead the pastoral team toward personal holiness. An increased intensity in discipleship and the pursuit of God will yield temptation and struggles like never before, but it will also bring spiritual fruit like never before. I cannot wait to see what the Lord has in store for us as a church staff and a church family. Happy, healthy, and holy comes with a recognition of the cross and a willingness to serve and grow. It means that the Lord will form us into the church he desires.

I will know that the principles of church discipline have taken hold at Parkridge Church when there is a spontaneous and willing approach toward those in sin with the hope of restoration. I will know church discipline is being embraced when members are willing to do what it takes to see their fellow members, caught in sin, grow into the people the Lord uses for the display of his glory. I will know there is an atmospheric change at Parkridge Church when those accepting the grace of God increase in number and the church begins to talk about the work of the Spirit in people's lives because it is an everyday occurrence.

Conclusion

God's Word is the highest authority in the church, and God's heart for people is the sweetest picture of his character. Church discipline that redeems and restores showcases God's glory and gives people hope to move on with the Lord, even in the midst of brokenness.

The purpose of this project was to equip pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church to carry out church discipline. The implementation of this project successfully fulfilled the objectives as discussed earlier in this chapter through the strengths, weaknesses, and methodology. As explained throughout the project, church discipline is exceedingly difficult, but it is also exceedingly biblical. The Lord honors the following of his truths. The direction toward righteousness and church discipline has begun. Forward progress is happening now. This project became the catalyst to get things moving in regard to church discipline. May the Lord be honored in the work and service of his people through Parkridge Church.

APPENDIX 1

THE BASICS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE INVENTORY

The following instrument is the Basics of Church Discipline Inventory. It was specifically designed to evaluate the participants' understanding of the basic biblical principles and process for restorative and redemptive church discipline

THE BASICS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

Last 4 digits of Social Security ____

The following inventory is designed to evaluate the participant's understanding of the basic biblical principles and process for restorative and redemptive church discipline. In this research and teaching project you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. By completion of this inventory, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following questions: Please mark your answer using the following scale: SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, DS=Disagree Somewhat, AS=Agree Somewhat, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree.

General Questions	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
The Bible commands churches to discipline.						
The Bible clearly teaches how the process for church discipline will bring restoration and redemption.						
Church discipline is a rigid and judgmental way of dealing with sin.						
Church members will naturally enter into the process of church discipline.						
Biblical church discipline for restoration and redemption is a part of most churches.						
Any Christian can learn how to appropriately lead a process of church discipline.						
The Bible teaches that judgment of fellow church members is appropriate.						
Man is primarily a product of his environment and will not respond to a biblical environment of discipline.						
The Holy Spirit is the most important person in church discipline.						
Biblical church discipline causes disunity in the local church.						
Repentance is primarily asking forgiveness for one's sins.						
Prayer is a primary source needed in a biblical church discipline process.						
The Bible provides the necessary process for church discipline.						
I feel competent to help someone who is struggling with sin.						
I have a clear understanding on what the Bible						

teaches about church discipline.						
Theology is not important—just love Jesus.						
Sin is the main cause of all problems.						
Church discipline works best when it is carried out quickly and quietly away from the church.						
Only pastors and deacons should lead in a church discipline process.						
Church discipline displays God's grace more clearly.						

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

This rubric was sent to five pastors or ministry leaders who have a good biblical knowledge of church discipline. They evaluated the curriculum to insure it was biblically faithful, clear, methodologically sound, covering the right scope, and fully applicable.

Name of Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Church Discipline Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.					
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound. It adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.					
Clarity					
The curriculum is clearly understood and agrees with the stated purpose.					
The curriculum is clear in its use of language and layout.					
Teaching Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role play and homework.					
Scope					
The curriculum focuses, with balance, on heart, head, and lifestyle issues in the context of right spiritual development.					
Application					
The curriculum provides for practical application.					

APPENDIX 3

RESULTS OF T-TEST FOR DEPENDENT SAMPLES

This t-test was the scoring result used to evaluate the level of knowledge, confidence, and motivation to practice restorative and redemptive church discipline.

Table A1. Church discipline t-test

Participant	Pre-Test	Post-Test
4648	99	115
1246	104	113
8862	95	88
2539	93	97
55	90	104
2528	102	111
1028	105	112
1121	95	96
19	110	118
7792	93	115
6587	87	112
1656	96	111
1301	98	112
1344	96	104
4837	106	113
Total Participants	15	15
Mean	97.93	108.07

Table A2. T-Test: Paired two sample for means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	97.93	108.07
Variance	40.78	72.21
Observations	15.00	15.00
Pearson Correlation	0.45	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
df	14.00	
t Stat	-4.91	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.76	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00	
t Critical two-tail	2.14	

APPENDIX 4
COURSE MATERIAL FOR SIX-WEEK COURSE

The following course material was the curriculum used to teach and discuss the topic of church discipline.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE CURRICULUM

Parkridge Church
November/December 2017

Week 1

I. Opening Prayer

II. Scripture (Matthew 18:12-20)

III. Principles to Consider

Use the Scripture to discuss the topics below. Consider any key words or phrases that point to the topics. Look for indicatives (what is God saying?) and imperatives (what is God commanding?) as you read and discuss. Write down all considerations for future use on this Scripture passage.

1. Love
 - a. How does this Scripture define love?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of love?
2. Discipline
 - a. How does this Scripture define discipline?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of discipline?
3. Restoration
 - a. How does this Scripture recommend restoration?
 - b. What are some wrong views of restoration?
4. Spiritual Growth
 - a. How does this Scripture help with spiritual growth?
 - b. What are some barriers to spiritual growth?

IV. Reading Discussion

1. Kimble 42-47
2. Leeman 9-85

V. Closing Prayer

Week 2

I. Opening Prayer

II. Scripture (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

III. Principles to Consider

Use the Scripture to discuss the topics below. Consider any key words or phrases that point to the topics. Look for indicatives (what is God saying?) and imperatives (what is God commanding?) as you read and discuss. Write down all considerations for future use on this Scripture passage.

1. Sorrow
 - a. How does this Scripture define sorrow?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of sorrow?
2. Judgment
 - a. How does this Scripture define judgment?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of judgment?
3. Restoration
 - a. How does this Scripture recommend restoration?
 - b. What are some wrong views of restoration?
4. Spiritual Growth
 - a. How does this Scripture help with spiritual growth?
 - b. What are some barriers to spiritual growth?

IV. Reading Discussion

1. Kimble 47-53
2. Leeman 89-122

V. Closing Prayer

Week 3

I. Opening Prayer

II. Scripture (Hebrews 12:1-11)

III. Principles to Consider

Use the Scripture to discuss the topics below. Consider any key words or phrases that point to the topics. Look for indicatives (what is God saying?) and imperatives (what is God commanding?) as you read and discuss. Write down all considerations for future use on this Scripture passage.

1. Compassion
 - a. How does this Scripture define compassion?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of compassion?
2. Consistency
 - a. How does this Scripture define consistency?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of consistency?
3. Restoration
 - a. How does this Scripture recommend restoration?
 - b. What are some wrong views of restoration?
4. Spiritual Growth
 - a. How does this Scripture help with spiritual growth?
 - b. What are some barriers to spiritual growth?

IV. Reading Discussion

1. Kimble 63-111
2. Leeman 125-140

V. Closing Prayer

Week 4

I. Opening Prayer

II. Scripture (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)

III. Principles to Consider

Use the Scripture to discuss the topics below. Consider any key words or phrases that point to the topics. Look for indicatives (what is God saying?) and imperatives (what is God commanding?) as you read and discuss. Write down all considerations for future use on this Scripture passage.

1. Kindness
 - a. How does this Scripture define kindness?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of kindness?
2. Thoroughness
 - a. How does this Scripture define thoroughness?
 - b. What are some unbiblical definitions of thoroughness?
3. Restoration
 - a. How does this Scripture recommend restoration?
 - b. What are some wrong views of restoration?
4. Spiritual Growth
 - a. How does this Scripture help with spiritual growth?
 - b. What are some barriers to spiritual growth?

IV. Reading Discussion

1. Kimble 56-58
2. Cheong 1-46

V. Closing Prayer

Week 5

I. Opening Prayer

II. Scripture (Galatians 6:1)

III. Principles to Consider

Use the Scripture to discuss the topics below. Consider any key words or phrases that point to the topics. Look for indicatives (what is God saying?) and imperatives (what is God commanding?) as you read and discuss. Write down all considerations for future use on this Scripture passage.

1. Gentleness

- a. How does this Scripture define gentleness?
- b. What are some unbiblical definitions of gentleness?

2. Warning

- a. How does this Scripture define warning?
- b. What are some unbiblical definitions of warning?

3. Restoration

- a. How does this Scripture recommend restoration?
- b. What are some wrong views of restoration?

4. Spiritual Growth

- a. How does this Scripture help with spiritual growth?
- b. What are some barriers to spiritual growth?

IV. Reading Discussion

- 1. Kimble 53-55
- 2. Cheong 49-74

V. Closing Prayer

Week 6

I. Opening Prayer

II. Scripture (Review All Previous)

III. Principles to Consider

Since church discipline affects both the offender and the church, discuss the following areas of application. With the goal of restoration and spiritual growth, how do the following connect to a process that accomplishes the purpose? Is the list complete or are there other factors to consider? What is the ultimate proof of a “success” in church discipline?

1. Practical Issues
 - i. Barriers
 - ii. Reconciliation
 - iii. Unity and Love
2. Cultural Brokenness
 - i. Pain
 - ii. Cultural Christianity
 - iii. True Worship
3. Restoration
 - i. Timing
 - ii. Attitude
 - iii. View of Eternity
4. Spiritual Growth
 - i. Sorrow
 - ii. Church Family
 - iii. Holiness

IV. Reading Discussion

Cheong 77-192 (scan the appendices as well)

V. Closing Prayer

APPENDIX 5
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC RESULTS

The following rubrics show the evaluation categories and comments of four pastors and one ministry leader from Parkridge Church.

Church Discipline Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.				X	The Scripture presented clearly pointed out the biblical need for church discipline.
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound. It adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.			X		Doctrinal Sound
Clarity					
The curriculum is clearly understood and agrees with the stated purpose.				X	The curriculum and reading material seems to be precedent literature on the subject.
The curriculum is clear in its use of language and layout.				X	Good use of outside reading material.
Teaching Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role-play and homework.				X	The case study provides a 'real world' example, good for discussion. Format was centered around adult learning.
Scope					
The curriculum focuses, with balance, on heart, head, and lifestyle issues in the context of right spiritual development.				X	The curriculum, as presented, takes a difficult subject and provides biblical insights for a complete lay readers.
Application					
The curriculum provides for practical application.			X		Although not easy the steps to church discipline was presented in a way that is loving, grace-filled, and not judgmental.

Eddie,

Congrats on the development of a very fine Curriculum. Tough subject and you dealt with the subject matter well. Biblically Sound and taught in a discussion format that made it enjoyable.

Church Discipline Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.				✓	Strong, first Building Block of each lesson.
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound. It adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.				✓	Solid doctrine. BFM is light on practice of discipline
Clarity					
The curriculum is clearly understood and agrees with the stated purpose.				✓	Yes Straight Forward
The curriculum is clear in its use of language and layout.				✓	Very Good. Careful explanation of words/concepts.
Teaching Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role-play and homework.			✓		Would have enjoyed more role-play.
Scope					
The curriculum focuses, with balance, on heart, head, and lifestyle issues in the context of right spiritual development.				✓	Yes. Consideration was given to full spectrum.
Application					
The curriculum provides for practical application.			✓		Would have been stronger if we already had a full-blown practice and pattern of discipline. i.e. "this is why we do X".

Church Discipline Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.				✓	The curriculum uses well selected parts of the Bible to drive us to love and lead well!
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound. It adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.				✓	
Clarity					
The curriculum is clearly understood and agrees with the stated purpose.				✓	The curriculum was helpful and user friendly for participants & leaders!
The curriculum is clear in its use of language and layout.				✓	
Teaching Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role-play and homework.				✓	
Scope					
The curriculum focuses, with balance, on heart, head, and lifestyle issues in the context of right spiritual development.				✓	This church discipline curriculum provides great resources that allow the participant to consider a new & holy way of living.
Application					
The curriculum provides for practical application.				✓	The breakdown of the questions as well as the writing for future considerations lead to great opportunity for application.

Church Discipline Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.				X	
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound. It adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.				X	
Clarity					
The curriculum is clearly understood and agrees with the stated purpose.			X		
The curriculum is clear in its use of language and layout.				X	
Teaching Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role-play and homework.			X		THE SCOPE OF THE COURSE IS BASED ON EXCHANGES FROM THE GROUP AFTER DOING HOMEWORK. IT DOESN'T LEAD TO OTHER APPROACHES.
Scope					
The curriculum focuses, with balance, on heart, head, and lifestyle issues in the context of right spiritual development.				X	
Application					
The curriculum provides for practical application.				X	

Church Discipline Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the curriculum is biblically sound. All Scripture is properly interpreted, explained, and applied.				✓	
The content of the curriculum is theologically sound. It adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.				✓	
Clarity					
The curriculum is clearly understood and agrees with the stated purpose.				✓	
The curriculum is clear in its use of language and layout.				✓	
Teaching Methodology					
The curriculum makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role-play and homework.			✓		
Scope					
The curriculum focuses, with balance, on heart, head, and lifestyle issues in the context of right spiritual development.				✓	
Application					
The curriculum provides for practical application.				✓	

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS AT PARKRIDGE CHURCH IN CORAL SPRINGS, FLORIDA, TO PRACTICE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Edward Clayton Bevill, Jr., D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
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The purpose of this project was to equip pastors and ministry leaders at Parkridge Church with a biblical understanding of church discipline so that it could be practiced in the church. Chapter 1 presents the purpose for the project along with the goals, ministry context, rationale, key definitions, limitations, delimitations, and research methodology. Chapter 2 presents the biblical and theological basis for church discipline with a study of five related passages. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and sociological support for teaching church discipline and establishes some ideas for implementing church discipline. Chapter 4 presents the details and teaching information in the implementation of the project. Chapter 5 presents an evaluation of the project covering the purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses, areas to improve or change, and some personal reflections.

VITA

Edward Clayton Bevill, Jr.

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., Samford University, 1988

M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992

MINISTERIAL

Youth Minister, Roebuck Plaza Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, 1986-1987

Youth Minister, Hunter Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, 1987-1988

Pastoral Intern, Sheridan Hills Baptist Church, Hollywood, Florida, 1988-1989

Youth and Music Minister, Central Baptist Church, Itasca, Texas, 1989-1991

Pastor, Burchill Baptist Church, Ft. Worth, Texas, 1991-1992

Pastor, Parkridge Church, Coral Springs, Florida, 1992-