

VII OFFENSES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

A. WHEN DOES DISCIPLINE BECOME NECESSARY IN A LOCAL CHURCH?

1. Discipline is necessary when a member of a local assembly is living in such a carnal way that the testimony of the church is damaged by his conduct and the Lord's work is hindered (I Cor. 5:13; 14:33,34,40; Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10; II Thess. 3:6-15).

2. Discipline is also necessary when a member of a local assembly is walking contrary to the articles of faith and practice which its members have agreed upon to uphold. Most sound churches would stipulate the following conduct as grounds for discipline:

a. Those propagating false teaching should be disciplined (Titus 1:10-16; I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17,18).

b. Those sowing discord and causing factions within the body should be disciplined (Rom. 16:17,18; Titus 3:8-11).

c. Those guilty of immoral conduct should be disciplined (I Cor. 5).

d. Those dishonoring the pastor and refusing to follow his leadership (I Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:7,17).

e. Those guilty of disorderly conduct should be disciplined (II Thess. 3:6-15).

f. Those who have wronged another member and will not make restitution (Matt. 18).

B. WHY IS DISCIPLINE NECESSARY IN A LOCAL CHURCH?

1. Discipline of sinning members is necessary to maintain a measure of purity within the body that is pleasing to the Lord (I Cor. 5:6-8). For Israel to keep the Lord's feast of unleavened bread after the passover, which typifies our fellowship with Him, they had to put away all leaven which

is a type of sin. A pure church is a church the Lord is pleased with.

2. Discipline of sinning members is necessary in order for a local church to maintain a testimony before the unsaved world and be an effective witness for the Lord (I Cor. 3:1-4; 15:34). A pure church is a powerful church. A carnal church is a powerless church.

3. Discipline of sinning members is also necessary to correct their conduct and restore them to the place they ought to be (Gal. 6:1). Unattended problems don't go away; they usually get worse!

4. Discipline of sinning members is necessary to prevent others in the body of Christ from being influenced and also corrupted by them (I Cor. 5:6,7; Acts 5:11).

C. HOW SHOULD DISCIPLINE BE CARRIED OUT IN A LOCAL CHURCH?

1. Discipline should be carried out in a spirit of meekness with the purpose of pleasing the Lord concerning sin and restoring the sinning member to the place of blessing from which he has fallen (Gal. 6:1).

2. Discipline if administered properly and in the right spirit will result in a three-fold process:

a. First discipline will cause the sinning member to be ashamed (II Thess. 3:14). b. Secondly discipline will lead the offender to repentance (II Cor. 7:9-11).

c. Then when the offender comes to repentance he is to be forgiven and restored to fellowship (II Cor. 2:6-11).

3. How discipline is to be carried out is laid down in Matt. 18.

a. First it should involve an individual admonition (Matt. 18:15). His sin should be pointed out to him

and an attempt made to correct whatever the situation involves.

b. Secondly if the first attempt fails a corporate admonition and attempt should be made taking one or two witnesses along to attest to the offender's attitude and actions (Matt. 18:16).

c. Thirdly if the corporate admonition fails the matter should be reported to the church (Matt. 18:17).

D. WHAT SHOULD CHURCH DISCIPLINE INVOLVE TO PLEASE THE LORD AND YIELD THE PROPER RESULTS?

1. The church should remove the sinning member's name from its membership (I Cor. 5:13).
2. Secondly the other members are not to have any fellowship with the unrepentant offender (II Thess. 3:6,14; I Cor. 5:2,7,9-13).
3. Thirdly the church should not count the offender as an enemy but continue to pray for him and seek his restoration (II Thess. 3:15).
4. Finally upon repentance the church is to forgive the offender and restore him to fellowship (II Cor. 2:7-11).