

Message Discussion Guide REDEMPITIVE COMMUNITY (Part 1)

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 17, 2009

Matthew 18:15-20

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Encourage learners to share a time when they were disciplined as a child for a behavior that was or would have been harmful. Ask the following questions:

- How did this discipline protect you?
- How did this discipline make you a better person?
- Are you thankful for this discipline?

Allow learners to share briefly, and then explain that today we'll talk about discipline in the church.

Option 2

Encourage learners to describe a time in their life when having a partner for something helped them fulfill a commitment or goal. Examples may include exercising, eating well, memorizing Scripture, etc.

Ask: How did having a partner help you to be committed? Allow learners to share briefly. Then explain that today we will talk about how the church helps us become more like Christ through discipline.

Review the Message . . .

Why Not Church Discipline?

- "Church discipline is legalistic."
 - Church discipline is loving...
- "What about Matthew 7:1?"
 - Keep going to Matthew 7:5...
- "People will leave."
 - This is God's church to grow, not ours...
- "We don't know how to practice church discipline."
 - Then let's learn how to practice church discipline...

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Discussion...

Enlist a learner to read Hebrews 12:5-11.

- Explain that the Jewish religious leaders were known for trying to make practical application of the Law by designing man-made regulations and laws that led to strict legalism.
- Based on this passage and this understanding of legalism, what is the difference between the discipline designed by God and the discipline of men (legalism)?
- Read Matthew 7:1-5. Is Jesus referring to eternal judgment or a confrontation based on the Word of God?
- What is the purpose of Jesus' warning not to judge in this passage?
- How does Jesus tell His listeners to help their spiritual brothers deal with sin? Is this judging a judging of evaluation or of condemnation? What's the difference?
- Invite two learners to read Acts 2:46-47 and Acts 5:14. Explain that Acts 5:14 comes right after a couple was struck dead for lying to the apostles and God about a donation. In each of these instances, how did the church grow?

Application...

- Why does the idea of church discipline make us uncomfortable?
- Why do we in the American church seem to believe that we don't have the responsibility of helping to keep brothers and sisters in Christ from habitually sinning? How do we disregard community responsibility under the guise of not having the "right" to judge?
- How do we often confuse the concept of discipline with that of punishment? What is the difference?
- Why are we often more concerned with the numerical growth of the church over the spiritual maturity of the community of believers?
- Because God provided directions for church discipline, how are we being disobedient when we do not practice it?

What is Church Discipline?

- Two Facets of Church Discipline...
 - Formative Church Discipline:
 - Continual training believers receive from the Word in the body of Christ as their lives are transformed into Christlikeness.
 - Restorative Church Discipline:
 - Corrective care taken by the body of Christ in matters of unrepentant sin in a brother or sister's life.
- One Foundation for Church Discipline...
 - The grace of God.

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Discussion...

- What is the root word of discipline? (*disciple*) How does this idea inform our understanding of and purpose for biblical discipline?
- Enlist a learner to read Matthew 28:19-20. How does teaching fit into making disciples? How can this ongoing process of teaching transform believers into being like Christ?
- Enlist a learner to read Matthew 18:15-20. How does the kind of discipline differ from the ongoing process of learning and training?

Application...

- What is the purpose of both kinds of discipline? How is God's grace evident through church discipline?
- How does church discipline further the church in completing the Great Commission?
- How do we do disservice to our brothers and sisters in Christ when we fail to proceed with restorative church discipline?
- Whose name is at stake when the church fails to institute restorative church discipline? How do we advance the world's accusation of hypocrisy against the church and open the door for the mocking of God by not practicing restorative church discipline?

Approaching Church Discipline...

- We need childlike _____ humility _____.
- We need a deep concern for _____ holiness _____.
- We need a passion for the _____ hurting _____.
- We need forgiving _____ hearts _____.

Discussion...

- Explain that surrounding the verses on the application of church discipline, Jesus describes how His followers much approach discipline.
- Enlist a learner to read Matthew 18:1-4. With what kind of an attitude is a believer to carry out and receive discipline?
- Read Matthew 18:5-9. What does this passage indicate about the seriousness of sin, particularly in causing another to sin?
- Invite a learner to read Matthew 18:10-14. How does Jesus describe His passion for wanderers?
- How does a desire to see restoration brought to those who are hurting illustrate a desire for the growth of God's kingdom?
- Read Matthew 18:21-35. Whose example should believers follow when forgiving another? Does this make church discipline easier or harder?

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Application...

- How does a hatred of sin develop a desire to live and help others to be holy? How does this concern for holiness illustrate an attitude that is not legalistic?
- How does a desire to forgive illustrate a desire to love others and glorify God?
- Why does pride often prevent us from carrying out discipline and from receiving discipline in a loving manner?
- How can our apathy toward dealing with our own sin and the sin of others demonstrate our lack of desire for righteousness?
- How could church discipline easily become a way to develop spiritual barriers and spiritual hierarchy within the church?
- Why does our desire to forgive others illustrate Christ's forgiveness to the world?