

# TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT “CHURCH DISCIPLINE”

Question	Ref.	Verse	Answer / Comments
Doesn't Jesus Call Christians <i>not</i> to be Judgmental?	Matt. 7:1-5	<sup>1</sup> “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup> For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup> “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.	In these verses Jesus is not saying that Christians should never judge, but that the Christian is not to judge hypocritically or self-righteously. This is clearly seen from the context. <sup>1</sup>  <i>Take note that the very comment that Jesus is making is a Judgment.</i>
Where are Christians called to exercise non-hypocritical judgments and discipline?	1 Cor. 5:12-13	<sup>12</sup> What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? <sup>13</sup> God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.	The church is to exercise spiritual discipline over the professing believers in the church, but it is not to attempt to judge the unsaved world. There are governing authorities to do that ( <i>Rom. 13:1-5</i> ), and the ultimate judgment of the world is to be left to God ( <i>Rev. 20:11-15</i> ) <sup>2</sup>
How does the church distinguish between professing and non-professing believers?	1 Cor. 11:27-29	<sup>27</sup> Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> <u>A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.</u> <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.	The Lord’s Supper is one way that may help in giving the church a basis for discerning between professing and non-professing believers since this sacrament is intended for believers in Jesus who can examine themselves. <sup>3</sup>
What steps should be taken for discipline in the church?	Matt. 18:15-17	1) <sup>15</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 2) <sup>16</sup> But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 3) <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (A tax collector worked for Rome and often demanded unreasonable payments, thus, gaining a bad reputation. They were considered traitors/outside by the Jews.) <sup>4</sup>	<i>Take a special note of the context...</i> In verses 10-14 Jesus uses the parable of the lost sheep to say that the Father in heaven is not willing that any of his little ones should be lost. Directly following these words Christ lays out how to handle a brother who sins against you. In other words, these steps for discipline are a way for bringing a brother back to the flock... they are redemptive!
In what manner should church discipline be handled?	Gal. 6:1	<sup>1</sup> Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.	When handling church discipline one must keep in mind that the discipline is focused on redemption. Because of this, discipline should be handled in a calm, kind, and tender attitude. ( <i>Love the sinner, hate the sin</i> )

## Summary

*A congregation must not tolerate ongoing sin. Sinful behavior must be confronted in accordance with the Scriptures, both law and gospel, through preaching and teaching and when necessary through church discipline. Discipline was given to confront the sinning believer in their sin and lead them to repentance and restoration. Discipline is redemptive.<sup>5</sup> It should and can be done in Love!*

<sup>1</sup> Concordia NIV Study Bible Footnote (Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 1459.

<sup>2</sup> Concordia, 1752.

<sup>3</sup> Explanation to Luther’s Small Catechism (Faith and Fellowship Press, 1992), 133.

<sup>4</sup> Concordia, 1458.

<sup>5</sup> The Pastoral Office Policies of The Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America (June, 1998), 31.