

The Lord's 4 Step Process For The Disobedient Redeemed – Matthew 18 – Summary & Study Guide

Summary

This teaching examines the **biblical framework for church discipline** as presented in **Matthew 18** and supplementary New Testament letters. The text outlines a **four-step confrontation process** designed to address **willful, persistent sin** within a community of believers, moving from private discussion to full assembly involvement. This procedure aims to **restore the individual to repentance** while protecting the collective body from the "cancerous" influence of unaddressed wrongdoing. The teaching emphasizes that **godly discipline is an act of love** and a confirmation of one's status as a child of God. Ultimately, the materials argue that **exclusion is a necessary final resort** to maintain the holiness of the church and encourage the offender to turn back to righteousness.

Study Guide

This study guide includes specific biblical references and source citations within the **Key Points** section to enhance your review of church discipline.

I. Definitions of Key Words

- **Discipline:** A corrective action rooted in **love** that confirms a believer's status as a child of God; it is intended to produce the "peaceful fruit of righteousness".
- **Repentance:** Not merely a short-term apology, but a **long-term change** in direction and a decision to stop practicing sin.
- **Disobedient Redeemed:** A term used for individuals who were **once faithful** to Christ but have turned back to willful disobedience.
- **Practicing Sin:** The act of **continuing** in willful, intentional sin without any intention of repenting despite confrontation.
- **Leaven:** A biblical metaphor for sin; just as a small amount of yeast spreads through dough, **unconfronted sin** eventually corrupts the entire assembly.
- **Exclusion:** The final phase of discipline where an unrepentant person is removed from the fellowship of the church to protect the body and prompt the individual to repent.

II. Expansion of Key Points

1. The Foundation of Discipline: Godly Love Biblical discipline is restorative rather than punitive, acting as the "cure" for the cancer of sin. The teaching states that **love that does not openly expose and oppose sin is not godly love**. Scripture reveals that God deals with believers as sons; therefore, the presence of discipline in a believer's life is **confirmation of God's love** and their "sonship" (**Hebrews 12:6-7**). If a person is never disciplined, the scripture suggests they are "illegitimate" rather than true children of God (**Hebrews 12:8**). Furthermore, while discipline is initially sorrowful, it is designed to eventually yield the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (**Hebrews 12:11**).

2. The Target of Discipline: Insiders, Not Outsiders The process described in **Matthew 18** is specifically for **those within the assembly** who have committed to walking in righteousness through water baptism. The sources emphasize that believers are not called to judge "outsiders"—those who have no knowledge of God—but are commanded to **judge those within the church** to maintain the holiness of the body (**1 Corinthians 5:12-13**).

3. The Criteria for Confrontation Discipline is not intended for "one-off" bad decisions or sins committed in ignorance, which should be handled through private confession. Instead, it is strictly reserved for those who are **practicing willful sin with no intention of repenting** despite being confronted (**1 John 1:6**). This applies to those who have decided to wander off the "narrow path" onto the "broad path" of destruction.

4. The Lord's Four-Step Process (Matthew 18)

- **Phase One (Private):** Address the sin on a **one-to-one** basis (**Matthew 18:15**). If the brother listens, he is "won over" and the matter remains private.
- **Phase Two (Witnesses):** If the individual refuses to listen, take **one or two witnesses** so that every fact may be confirmed and the urgency of the situation is increased (**Matthew 18:16**).
- **Phase Three (Assembly):** If they still refuse to listen, **tell it to the whole church** (**Matthew 18:17a**). The entire assembly then pleads with the individual to repent.
- **Phase Four (Exclusion):** If the individual remains unrepentant, they are to be **treated as a "pagan or tax collector,"** meaning they are excluded from the fellowship and life of the faithful (**Matthew 18:17b**). This may

involve "delivering such a one to Satan" to destroy the "fleshy mindset" so the spirit might be saved (**1 Corinthians 5:5**).

5. The Danger of Pride and Tolerance Pride is the primary obstacle to discipline, often appearing when believers think they are "more loving" than God by tolerating sin rather than following His prescribed process (**1 Corinthians 5:2**). The sources describe sin as **leaven** or a **cancer**; if it is tolerated, it will grow and corrupt the entire "body" of the assembly (**1 Corinthians 5:6**).

III. Study Questions

- According to the sources, why is discipline described as a "positive" thing rather than a negative one?
- What are the specific characteristics of the "sin" that warrants the four-step disciplinary process?
- What is the "cancerous" effect mentioned in the sources regarding the tolerance of sin in the assembly?
- How does the source explain the context of the verse "where two or three come together in my name"?
- What is the ultimate goal of "delivering such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"?

IV. Answer Key

- **Discipline is positive** because it reaffirms God's love, confirms our status as His children (sonship), and yields the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" after the training is complete.
- The sin must be **practicing, willful, and confirmed**, with the individual showing **no intention of repenting** despite being confronted.
- The **cancerous effect** means that unconforted sin will not stay isolated; it will grow and spread throughout the rest of the assembly, corrupting others.
- The context is **church discipline**. It refers to the Lord being present with the leadership and assembly specifically when they are performing the difficult task of confronting a brother or sister in sin.
- The goal is to remove the "fleshy mindset" of the wicked so that their **spirit may be saved** in the day of the Lord Jesus; it is a final effort to bring them to repentance through the pain of exclusion.

V. Biblical References within the Sources

- **Matthew 18:1-20:** The primary text for the four-step process of discipline and the heart of the Father for the "little ones".
- **Matthew 18:21-35:** Peter's question on forgiveness and the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.
- **Hebrews 12:4-11:** The necessity of enduring God's discipline as sons.
- **Revelation 3:19:** God reproofing and disciplining the church at Laodicea.
- **1 Corinthians 5:1-13:** Paul's instructions to remove a "wicked man" (incestuous brother) from the assembly to stop the "leaven".
- **1 Corinthians 15:33-34:** Warning that "bad company corrupts good morals".
- **Hebrews 6:4-8:** The danger of "falling away" and the difficulty of renewal to repentance.
- **1 John 1:6, 8:** The warning against claiming fellowship while walking in darkness.
- **1 John 2:15-19:** Warning against loving the world and the departure of "antichrists" from the assembly.
- **John 3:20-21:** Contrast between those who do evil (hating the light) and those who practice truth.
- **2 John 1:8-9:** Encouragement to abide in the teaching of Christ to receive a full reward.
- **1 Timothy 5:20-21:** The charge to rebuke those who continue in sin in the presence of all without bias.

VI. Exhortations

- **Maintain the Standard:** Do not allow pride to convince you that you have a "better way" than the Lord's four-step process; **intolerance toward sin** is the truly loving path because it fights for the person's life.
- **Value Your Inheritance:** Remember that this process is designed to ensure that both you and your brethren receive a **full reward** and inheritance in the coming kingdom.
- **Act Without Partiality:** As leaders and members, you are solemnly charged to maintain these principles **without bias or favoritism**, doing nothing out of partiality.

- **Be Diligent in the Word:** Continue to immerse yourself in the scriptures daily (such as the suggested reading of Colossians) to maintain a **holy mindset** rather than a fleshy one.

Restoration Through Accountability: The Four-Step Process for Church Discipline

A Loving, Tiered Approach to Encourage Repentance and Maintain Assembly Holiness

CONTEXT SUMMARY

Designed for faithful members practicing willful sin. Protects the assembly from the "cancer" of sin and fights for the individual's restoration to their kingdom inheritance.

