

# Church Discipline Part 2

by Jeff Noblit

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of church discipline in maintaining the purity of the church and the power of the gospel.*

**Duration:** 49:14

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:42, Acts 5:1-14

**Topics:** "Church Discipline", "Sanctification"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Acts chapter 5 in understanding what it means to be a true church. He highlights the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who sold a piece of property but lied about the amount they gave to the church. The speaker explains that this story teaches us about the sanctification process and the need for discipline within the church. He also emphasizes that church discipline leads to the multiplication of the church, as seen in verse 14, where multitudes of believers were added to their number. The speaker concludes by urging churches to strive for obedience in church discipline and purity, as it affects the power of the gospel.

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## Transcript

I want you to go to the first chapter of the book of Acts this morning. We'll look at verse 8, but I will not preach on it. A lot of churches today use Acts chapter 1 verse 8 as something of a theme verse that would characterize their ministry and I think that's a good thing because wonderful truth is there.

Acts 1 verse 8 says, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, even to the remotest parts of the earth. Of course, that's the overall ministry of God's local church. And many churches say we're an Acts 1 verse 8 church and I think that's true of us and that ought to be true of every church that we're reaching in Jerusalem and then further out Judea, then further out Samaria, and then further out the uttermost parts of the earth.

Now look at Acts chapter 2 if you will and look at verse 42. Often churches will claim this verse as being a summation of their ministry. Acts 2 verse 42 he says, And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, that's the word of God, to fellowship, to breaking of bread, and to prayer.

That's good also. A wonderful summarizing statement of church life. Not exhaustive perhaps, but a wonderful statement.

But I want you to look at Acts chapter 5. I've heard people say we're an Acts 1 verse 8 church and I've heard people say that we're an Acts 2 verse 42 church, but I've never heard anyone say we want to be an Acts 5, 1 through 14 church. Never heard that. But there's a reason why God gave us Acts chapter 5. Because it's essential to being a true church.

Let's look at it together, Acts chapter 5 verses 1 through 14. But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property. By the way, just as a side note, the name Sapphira means beautiful.

This woman probably was attractive in many ways, very popular perhaps. Verse 2, And kept back some of the price for himself. With his wife's full knowledge and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You've not lied to men, but to God. And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came over all who heard of it. The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

There lapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in not knowing what had happened. And Peter responded to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price. And she said, Yes, that was the price.

Then Peter said to her, Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they shall carry you out as well. And immediately she, Sapphira, fell at his feet, breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Now let's pause there for just a moment.

The situation was that the church was in a needy situation, and voluntarily, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, individual families were bringing all they had, selling all they had and bringing it, and putting it in the common treasury, if you will, and then when anyone had a need, they would take out of there. It wasn't communism. It wasn't socialism.

It was a unique, short-term event that God did in the lives of the church to sustain, particularly those pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost, had become converted, had nothing to live off of or live on. And then this couple, Ananias and Sapphira, decided they would use this opportunity to promote themselves. So they agreed to be deceptive.

They agreed together, we will bring our offering in as if we're bringing everything like the others have, but we're going to keep back some of it, but we will parade as though we're being sacrificial and giving all. It wasn't the sin of the percentage. It was using the church to promote themselves with lying and hypocrisy.

That is the sin here. Now, I do not think Acts chapter 5 particularly wants us to meditate on one specific type of sin, but it does want us to understand that if a church is true, and if a church has God's power on it, that is a church that must strive to be pure before God. We'll never be perfect until we're glorified as the bride in heaven.

But we should be striving after purity. I've said, I'll say it again as I go through my notes, but if I had been pastoring this church, I would not have done this. I don't think I would have had the wisdom or the

courage, or maybe in past years at least I would not have.

I mean, we're talking about the greatest revival that's ever occurred on planet Earth. And by the way, you can pray for Pentecost again, but there will never be another Pentecost. There's only one.

Now, I'd like to have the power and the move of God and the soul saved that Pentecost had, but God was initiating the church age, if you will. He was birthing His church, and He gave it unbelievable and special anointings and powers during those days. Thousands and tens of thousands are being saved, and right in the middle of that incredible evangelistic outreach, God stopped everything to deal with two sinners in the church.

That is a powerful message, a powerful truth that we must remember. As I'll say in my notes later, we have to understand something. I want you to listen very carefully about what I'm going to say.

The purity of the church affects the power of the gospel. What we have today in evangelicalism is churches and movements, and I thank God for these. And they're saying evangelize, evangelize, evangelize, evangelize, evangelize, program after program after program after program to get people to share the gospel.

Great good in all of those. I praise God for all of those. But I'm telling you, we need less emphasis on evangelism for a season, and more emphasis on purity in the church.

Because what happens is if God's power's not working, in order to get results with your evangelism, you have to dumb down and tone down the truths of the gospel, so that carnal, unregenerate men will respond, so you can keep your numbers going to say your evangelism's working. Because God's not doing it, because God will not bless an impure church. So we begin to make it happen in our strength, and we call it Christianity, and the end result is great denominations, like the Southern Baptist Convention, have ten million members, who don't even come to church every week.

Ten million! Ten million! You know why they don't come to church? They've never been changed. They've never been broken. They've never come to repentance.

They've never come to true faith. It's not real. Now thank God for the good things that do happen in the great denominations.

Thank God for their many faithful preachers, and many faithful laymen, and good work going on. But we can't ignore the glaring deficiencies that are all around us. And it could be said, and I've read this before and I think it's accurate, that God the Spirit was in effect pastoring the church of Acts.

He just sort of took over. And He shows us something here. That we must be a church always with humility and compassion, but striving to be biblically obedient to the prescriptions of the Word of God, to strive after purity in the local church.

We'll never arrive, but we don't have to be blatantly disobedient in this area either. Well, we've already talked about the reason for church discipline. This is a very brief review.

And we talked about the first reason, A, under that was the principle of ownership. The principle of ownership, it's not ours, it's His. We have no right to run His church our way.

It simply doesn't matter to me what the common culture, or the modern culture, or the baby boomers, or whoever else would like the church to be. It doesn't matter. It's not theirs, it's not ours, it's His.

We must function in the church His way for His glory. Secondly, we talked about the principle of stewardship. The Bible commands elders, the shepherds of the local congregation, to shepherd the flock of God according to the will of God.

That's, you know, it's just, it's a terrifying thing. Because I'm a sinner, and I struggle, and I have to repent every day. And I'm very imperfect.

Yet God's ordained that very imperfect men, but hopefully very genuine men, lead and oversee and shepherd the flock of God, but according to His will for the flock of God, not according to our estimations, understandings, presumptions, viewpoints, or ideas. We have a thoroughly sufficient manual for the church. We need to learn it and honor it the best we know how to.

Quickly, under our stewardship, I gave you twelve purposes of church discipline. To glorify God of obedience to His instruction, to sanctify the Lord's Supper, to purify the spirit and the message of the church, to deny Satan any advantage in the church, to prove that the leaders love and care, to deter others from sin, to destroy fleshly lusts in the believer, to cut emotional ties with unrepentant professing Christians, to protect scripture from perversion and error, to shame a brother to repentance, eleven, to restore repentant believers, and number twelve, to expose and remove the unregenerate from God's church. From scripture, twelve purposes of our stewardship in practicing biblical church discipline.

Now, secondly, we've already talked about the range of church discipline. And very quickly, we simply said, Matthew 18 gives us good guidelines that private sin should be privately rebuked. Every effort should be made.

The Bible says it's a blessing to cover a sin. Now, covering a sin doesn't mean that you don't call it sin. Covering a sin doesn't mean that you don't deal with it.

It means that you keep it private if at all possible. The Bible says if your brother sins, go to him in private. Now, every once in a while, there's a sin that's so scandalous, you can't sweep it back under the rug.

And we're not into sweeping things under the rug. You can't sweep it back under the rug because it's already out running around. Everybody knows about it.

But that's not what we're talking about here. Private sin receives private rebuke. Sometimes things have to go further.

And that was the second sub-point. That is, public sin receives public rebuke. And we said that a sin can become public if it's been dealt with thoroughly privately.

The person brazenly, boisterously refuses to repent and humble themselves. Then it has to be made public. Or, as I said earlier, it already is public.

Another sin that has to be dealt with publicly, and the Bible is so strong on this, is a factious spirit. The Bible says to reject a factious man after first or second warning. That is a man or a woman who starts getting a group together and starts questioning and fault-finding and working against the established leadership of the church and, in effect, is drawing unto themselves their own following.

That is a grave wickedness. Brothers and sisters, listen to your pastor. If and when a church elder is out of line, you should go privately and humbly and persuade them with two or three witnesses, the Bible requires.

You should never form you a group. The damage of that is overwhelming. And the Bible condemns it all the way back to the Absaloms of the Old Testament through the diatrophies of the New Testament.

Those are public things that ought to be dealt with publicly. Now, we come to Roman numeral 3. This is new material. And we come to our text here, Acts chapter 5. And I call this the result of church discipline.

It's an amazing thing, isn't it? Ananias and Sapphira parade into the church wanting to use the church setting as a platform to exalt themselves. And brothers and sisters, when we try to use the church for ourselves, you be sure humbling is coming. God, in this case, exercised capital punishment.

He kills Ananias and he kills Sapphira during the worship service. They're disciplined by the hand of God. Now, what was the result of this? Beginning in verse 11, we see five results that I want to emphasize.

First of all, we note the purification of the church. Notice, if you will, in verse 11, the Bible text says, and great fear came upon the whole church. Great fear came upon the whole church.

The word fear means dread, or it even could be translated horror. We have a good cross-reference to this. First Timothy chapter 5 verse 20 tells us that if an elder continues to sin, he is to be rebuked in the presence of all that the rest might be fearful, same Greek word as Acts 5.11, fearful of sinning.

So an elder may need to be corrected for sin. And if it's not a public scandalous thing, it can be dealt with in private. But an elder who continues is to be taken before the church as an example.

That when he's rebuked and dealt with before the church, possibly even removed from his office if need be, that is a lesson to put fear into all of our hearts, not to go on in unrepentant of sin. But you know, there's not much fear of God today in the church. Matter of fact, we've lost a lot of church members through the years out of this fear.

They don't want to be in a church where they might be held accountable for their sin. They've told me that. Certainly not everyone.

We've had wonderful, good, godly people leave our church and God leading them other places. But a number have. It's right the opposite today.

The crowds run from a responsibility and accountability. They run to turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and sinfulness. I remember reading about this television star, Shannon Daugherty, I think is her name.

She just appeared in a pornographic magazine and she was being interviewed about how she felt about acting and portraying herself in such ways. Here's what she said in the TV Guide interview. Quote, I'm just a nice Southern Baptist Republican girl.

There's no fear of God. Years ago, a popular person in our church was found to be an open and scandalous sin. Shameless immorality.

And I remember so many people following that person. Where's the shame? Where was the blushing? The Old Testament prophet talks about when the people no longer blush. You know, we're the only creature God made that can blush.

And of all people, the church has forgotten how to blush. I want you to turn to Deuteronomy real quick. Let's go to Deuteronomy chapter 13, if you would.

Notice this purifying fear that God wanted in the nation of Israel. Deuteronomy 13, verse one says, if a prophet or dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder and the sign of the wonder comes true concerning which he spoke to you saying, let us go after other gods whom you've not known and let us serve them. You should not listen to the words of that prophet.

Now, let me stop here. Note what he's saying. If someone does a miracle, an actual factual miracle, they show power, but they tell you to violate Scripture.

That's what he's saying. Don't you believe everything that says, watch this, it's powerful. Check it out by Scripture.

It says, verse three, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow the Lord your God and fear him and you shall keep his commandments, listen to his voice, serve him and cling to him. No matter how powerfully, drawing, alluring and persuasive the miracle worker may be, if he violates Scripture, tells you to violate clear Scripture, you to cling to the Lord, not to him.

But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death because he's counseled rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery to seduce you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk so you shall purge the evil from among you. Now he gets real close to home here, verse six. If your brother or your mother's son or your son or daughter or the wife you cherish or your friend who is as your own soul enticed you secretly saying, let's go and serve other gods whom neither you nor your fathers have known, other gods are the people who are around you, near you and far from you from one end of the earth to the other.

You shall not yield to him or listen to him and your eyes shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. Verse nine, you shall surely kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death and afterwards the hand of all the people.

So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of slavery. Now here's the verse, verse 11. Then all Israel will hear and be afraid and will never do such a wicked thing among you.

So it's God's principle in the Old Testament that discipline was administered and one of the purposes was to put a purifying fear in the body. In the New Testament, our text, Acts chapter five, verse 11, what's the point? It says in great fear came upon all of them. You see, friends, there are times when things have gone to such a state that they must be dealt with in God's church.

And our piety and our duty must overcome our affections and our compassions in these cases. Did not he say in the Old Testament, even if your son or your daughter or your friend who's just like one soul with you, if they and it means knowingly, openly, brazenly, habitually are trying to lead you away from God in

the old Israeli economy there to be stoned to death. That's not for the church today.

I've heard this silly unbiblical nonsense when you're doing biblical church discipline. He's without sin shall cast the first stone. You know how you respond to that? We're not talking about stoning.

We're talking about biblical discipline to the restoration of his soul and the purification of God's church for the glory of God. So it purifies. There's something about that.

You say, Pastor, it makes me nervous. I may be next. Good.

That's what God wants it to do. I don't know, three years or so ago, the elder set me down and gave me two pieces of paper and had things they wanted me to work on. So, Pastor, we think you ought to do better here and you ought to be careful here.

You ought to do better. It wasn't any real just here's a scripture you violated, but just attitudes and dispositions and approaches to things. And I kind of got my hackles up and then I got humbled and I read those things and I prayed over those things and I purpose to heed their admonition.

That was discipline. And I needed it. And now I walk around like, hope they don't pull any more of them papers out next meeting.

I might have one for them down the road, but elders need each other like that. They didn't go parading it through the church. It wasn't anything that was a sinful, public kind of thing.

But I needed that. And they need that. And we need that.

And that acknowledgement. You see, I'm going to tell you something. If some seducing seductress or some slick-tongued devil at the workplace is trying to get you to commit fornication or adultery, you need it in the back of your mind to know, I remember the last man that stood before the church for adultery.

I ain't talking to her. By the way, Proverbs chapter 7 says you don't even go near her door. You know where her door is too.

You don't go near her door. Because we love you enough that we're going to call you into accountability if you break your marriage vows. With compassion, absolutely.

With love and forgiveness, absolutely. But we want to know that you're not walking in that pattern any longer. If it becomes known enough and serious enough, it has to be dealt with publicly.

Great fear of purification comes into the church. You know, I remember after one season of church discipline years and years ago, it was hard too. I mean, a lot of people didn't understand.

I'm sure we could have done things better. You know, you always have these critics analyzing every little thing, but they've never done it themselves either. And I'm sure we could have done better.

And people were upset. People were leaving our church and calling me Jim Jones and just all kinds of things. But I remember a spirit of brokenness and love for Christ came into the body.

I remember two worship services we had that for two hours people just wept and confessed sin. A purity came to the body. And churches need that.

Well, secondly, a second result is the unification of the church. You're more unified when discipline is being practiced in the body. Look at verse 12 of Acts chapter 5. At the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were taking place among the people.

And they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. You could say Solomon's porch. It's just the outside area around the temple.

And that's what the whole congregation of the brand new church would gather together. And the Bible says they were all with one accord. That word, that phrase, one accord comes from two Greek words, homos, which means the same, one in the same.

And thumos, maybe thumos, if you're a Greek scholar, you can correct me later. But it means a passion. It has the emphasis of breathing hard.

It's one going after a pursuit so much that they're short of breath. They're so passionately committed to it. So the point here, they weren't just in unity sitting on the sideline watching.

They were unified because they were all passionately pursuing God, service, holiness, righteousness. And when you've got one focal point, Christ, and you're pursuing to serve Him, honor Him, glorify Him, be holy like Him, model His service, then you don't focus on unity. Unity results from that focus.

Are you getting me? A great error in the church today is we're emphasizing unity. Unity is not the emphasis. Truth should be the emphasis.

And as we all focus on truth, we're united. You never have unity focusing on unity. You have unity focusing on the reference point, Christ.

They passionately. You know what happens when a church gets pure and then it gets passionate about serving Christ? All the silly nonsense that create church fights just gets thrown by the wayside. Just doesn't matter.

Just doesn't matter about all this stuff people get upset about. Because we've got higher and more important things on our heart and mind. And after all, when I'm passionately pursuing Christ, my spirit and my attitude, as the epistle teaches, is to consider my brother and sister as more important than myself.

That'd fix about every church fight, wouldn't it? A new unity. You know the word unity is only used four times in the New Testament? And I want to look at those four quickly. First of all, it's used in John 17, 23, where Jesus prayed that we would be perfected in unity.

And the point of that text there is, is not that we focus on unity, but we focus on purity. And when we focus on purity, then there is perfect unity. That's what he's saying here.

These things fit together. You see, perfection in individual holiness brings unity. Not that unity brings perfection.

Did you get that? Perfection in individual holiness, that church discipline helps us have, produces a community unity. Well, Ephesians 4, 3. In this epistle, Paul says that we're to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit. That means a unity created by and extending forth from the Spirit of God.

What again does that mean? Are you filled with the Spirit? Are you walking in a humble pattern of repentance about your sin and dependence upon God and affirmation and commitment to God's word? And as you as individuals are walking filled with the Spirit, the unity just happens. Focus on being Spirit filled, not having unity. How many times in your frustrating moments with your spouse or young people with your parents, have you caught yourself in saying, you know, if I just shut up and deny myself and the power of the Spirit, this whole argument would end.

Isn't it amazing how unity comes from being Spirit filled? Just walk in the Spirit. If you'll just analyze now, what's really valuable? What do I really treasure? What do I really hope in? My treasure is Christ. He's so precious to me.

I'm like the man who found a treasure hidden in a field. I'd sell everything I had to gain the field. That's what conversion does to you.

When you're Spirit filled, you walk in that reality. And since you treasure Him and you hope in Him, the thing you're fussing about ain't worth it. Nine times out of ten anyway.

There are some things you're supposed to fight for, by the way. But most of the things we argue and grumble and have problems with in our marriages, in our home, in our churches, if we just walk in the Spirit, unity would come. You know what most churches have? They don't have unity of the Spirit.

They have toleration of the flesh. There are sins in the church that's coming out of the old fallen flesh nature. And they call it unity by not dealing with that sin and letting them go on.

And old Joe Blow or Jane Blow, they just cave into them and cater to them or they'll make a mess in the church if they don't get their way. We've had a few messes through the years since I've been here because we wouldn't let somebody get their way. And they just blow up and do their own thing.

But we can't honor God and have a pure church for His glory by tolerating flesh people just because they'll cause trouble. Always, now listen to your pastor, always lovingly, always with humility, always with compassion, but we must hold each other accountable and exercise discipline when appropriate to do so. It builds a unity in the church.

Well, a third verse where unity is mentioned is Ephesians 4, 13, where he talks about attaining to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Now, again, what's the point here? When you are growing in your knowledge of Christ, and Christian knowledge is never cold intellectualism. Christian knowledge always goes from the intellect to the heart.

And as you know Christ, you can't help but be humbled and more loving and more selfless and more yielding. So as you grow in the knowledge of Christ, unity is the byproduct. Again, you don't focus on unity, you focus on Christ.

And there's something about church discipline, faithfully practicing a church that helps all the individual members of the body focus on Christ. And that creates unity. Number four, Colossians 3, 14.

Paul says to the Colossians, love is the perfect bond of unity. True love, Romans 5, 5 tells us, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. So when the Holy Spirit of God is ruling our lives and shedding abroad this love, it's the perfect bond of unity.

Here's what that means. It means all Christian graces, humility, compassion, honor, unselfishness, service, patience. These are all jewels on the necklace of love.

Love is the girdle that holds all the garment together. So unity results from the love of Christ put in our hearts. Because if I love you, I'm going to defer you and I'm going to serve you and I don't want to argue with you.

And I don't want to have disunity with you. And again, there's something about church discipline that helps us have that kind of Christian love to walk in that produces unity in the body of Christ. And by the way, I've been here with you 26 years.

Never have we ever experienced a season like we have the last year, year and a half of unity in the body like we do now. It's just sweet. It's just precious.

And as one of the church elders, and I know you'd amen this, we're going to fight to keep it. And if somebody rises up and starts their little factious fault finding group, you're going to get a knock on your door. And we'll be there humbly and compassionately, but saying, brother, if there's a problem, we'll settle it biblically.

This stirring up and spreading a strife, that's a biblical sin, by the way. I didn't make that phrase up. Strife spreading is a biblical sin.

It's unacceptable. Whatever issue you have a problem with in our concern, the way you're handling it is a more serious sin than anything you think is going on. And we have to deal with that.

So let's commit our hearts and lives. And by the way, do you ever blow it when it comes to run in your mouth? I do. And I have to say, by the grace of God, I'm being sanctified here.

I don't do it as much as I used to. You know why? Are you listening to your pastor? Because I've experienced it being done to me. When you hear the things you hear about yourself that are ludicrous and unbelievable, but people are believing them, you know what God does? God says, yeah, you've talked at times about people you shouldn't be talking about them.

And I've had to humble myself and repent. So I need the understanding that the other elders and brothers in the church are going to hold me accountable if I start doing something out of line. Now, brothers and sisters, there are times when a Sunday school class teacher, maybe in our outreach, had to discuss a class member and how to minister to them.

There are times when church staff or elders have to discuss a situation. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about spreading the strife against God-ordained leadership and the establishment of the church.

That is a great disunifying thing that has to be dealt with as a sin itself. Well, see, a third result of discipline, according to Acts chapter 5, is the sanctification of the church. Look at verse 13, if you will.

The first part says, but none of the rest dared to associate with them. Well, who's the none of the rest? There were evidently hundreds, possibly thousands of people who were faithfully attending the house settings. We call those small groups here.

And the Solomon's portico meetings, that was when the whole congregation of the church would meet. They were just meeting. Maybe the guy they worked for had been converted.

They were going with him or their spouse or a friend, relative, whatever. But a lot of people who are not yet Christians were fellowshiping and hanging out and attending regularly, possibly giving money. But when this happened, those that weren't really serious fell off, went away.

Numbers went down for a season. Plateau and decline came to the church for a season. That's what we mean by sanctification.

Sanctification, same word for holiness. It means setting apart from the world, setting apart from the base or the mundane. God is holy because he transcends.

He's set apart. We are his holy ones as his Christians, as his children rather. And we are set apart.

And there's something about discipline in the church that causes those who are not serious about Christ not to want to just hang out with us all the time. You listen to me. You show me a church or a pastor and in the whole community, they say everybody loves him.

I'm going to tell you that's not a holy man of God. That's not a holy man of God. Everybody loves him.

Everybody loves that church. That's not true of the church God was pastoring in Acts chapter five. The Bible says God did things that made people want to run away from it, setting them apart.

Some years ago, a man moved into our area whose primary sole business was the liquor industry. And he was a Southern Baptist. And he visited here for three weeks.

I remember seeing him. And you just see this family. You say, boy, that's an upstanding.

We'd love to have that family. I didn't preach on alcohol. I didn't mention alcohol in my sermons or anything.

But after three weeks here, he went somewhere else and joined. Someone asked him about it. I understand he just said I knew that wasn't where I needed to be.

There's a purification and a sanctification being set apart. If we strive to be the church God calls us to be, we will be attracted to some and unattracted to others. And we need to let God take care of that thing.

And by the way, I would never dealt with that man in a harsh way or in a demeaning way. If if I'd ever gotten the chance to minister to him, I'd want to minister to him with humility and grace and love. But yet I would try to teach him the truth of these things.

A couple of quick verses on this point of sanctification. First Thessalonians 4, 3. First Thessalonians 4, 3 tells us, but this is the will of God, your sanctification. That is that you abstain from sexual immorality.

Now, in this culture, fornication was just rampant. In the pagan religions of this day, men would go to these pagan temples and to worship the pagan gods. You committed fornication with temple prostitutes.

So that was a very tempting thing. But it doesn't just mean sanctified from sexual immorality. It means all worldliness and sinfulness.

That's the will of God for us. And there's something about discipline in the church that helps us individually and corporately be set apart from the world. And then also, not only first Thessalonians 4, 3, but Hebrews 12, 14 says, Pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

There is a sanctification that starts during this earthly pilgrimage that is completed or we can never see Christ. And again, there's something about the biblical practice of discipline that helps the church be more set apart for him. Fourth, a fourth result in Acts chapter 5 of church discipline is the multiplication of the church.

If you would look at verse 14 there, the multiplication of the church. Now, he just told us that folks stopped hanging out with him, but now folks are coming into the church the right way. Verse 14 says, And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number.

A new surge of evangelism takes off. People are getting saved and gloriously slain and wonderfully saved. And it's been the pattern here.

I've been here 18 years as your senior pastor and we were actually had a discipline case the first week of my pastorate. So this has been something we've wrestled with for years and we have noted through the years that after a season of discipline usually is a season of growth. God begins to bless.

He purifies. He unifies. He sanctifies.

Then he multiplies. But brothers and sisters, listen to me. You don't get verse 14 if you're not going to apply verses 1 through 13.

So all the brothers and sisters in churches out there, I love you and I thank God for you. But don't expect God to bring the increase. If we can't humble ourselves to at least strive after obedience in church discipline and purity.

Because as I said earlier, the purity of the church affects the power of the gospel. God just draws people. We've seen an unusual drawing to our church of people in recent days.

Many from out of town and many from out of state. How do you explain that? You shouldn't be able to explain that. You can't explain verse 14.

God kills Ananias. God kills Sapphira. All the people who are not converted flee and get away from them.

And then God brings in a whole other bunch that he's saving and drawing to his church. Isn't that the way you want to grow where you can't explain it? Well, it was that whiz-bang music program they had out there. Woo, that's growing the church.

I'd rather die than build a church on the music program. It's that charismatic preacher. It's not my personality.

It's Christ that must build the church. He uses people, but it must be him. It must be him.

He multiplies his church. And there's something about discipline that brings that unification and that purity and that sanctification where God is blessed, if you will, or willing, if you will, to bring more into it. So here we have God in Acts chapter 5, as I said earlier, shutting down the greatest revival ever known to deal with discipline.

And you know what, folks? Listen to me. If you could get a church to walk in this truth, that is revival. That is revival.

What is revival? It's getting back right with God. It's becoming repenting of sin and yielding to God. Revival would be that thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of churches, including Southern Baptist churches, would get on their face and say, God, we've disobeyed the biblical instruction of discipline in our churches.

And we repent. We'd see more evangelism. You listen to me.

We'd see more real evangelism, more souls saved after that, than all the soul-winning and evangelistic courses Southern Baptists have done in the last hundred years, put together. If we just repent about not caring about purity in the church. I have no apologies for saying that.

We've wasted more time in Southern Baptist life trying to coerce, manipulate, and arm-twist, carnal, lost, unregenerate, or backslidden Baptists to do the work of the kingdom. What we need is a little purity and fear of God, and the kingdom's work could get done. Well, lastly, the fifth result is the admiration for the church.

A new admiration starts coming out of the community when the church says it is what it is, and it does what it's supposed to do. Notice it there, if you will, in verse 13. The last phrase says, however the people held them in high esteem.

Did you see that? We're not ready to join up with that bunch down there. God's killing people in the Sunday morning service, but we respect them. We respect them.

Brothers and sisters, you must come to the place I have come to as the preaching pastor. I do not care about being popular, but I would like to be respected for being consistent to what we say we believe. I'm not going to mention his name, but the great prominent role model television preacher of today was interviewed.

Someone told me four, someone told me three nationally known secular interviewers interviewed this man, and all three or four of them put him to the point of saying this to him. Why don't you preach against sin, and why don't you preach repentance? Now, why do you think these secularists, who don't even claim to be Christians, who do not go to church, look at this modern self-esteem preacher, psychologist, who calls himself a gospel preacher, and say to him, why don't you preach against sin and preach repentance? You know why? Because the world expects us to. They'll condemn us for it, ridicule us for it, talk about us, but in their heart of hearts, they want the church to be right.

And they want the church to stand for something and believe something and model something. As one newspaper editor said recently, just when we need the church the most, it's become just like us. They want us to have a higher standard.

You should not be divorced as a child of God and remarried the way the world is. That should be a rare thing in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of the statistics telling us that Southern Baptist churches have more divorces than the lost culture has.

You shut the doors on these things and say ashes to ashes, dust to dust. God's not going to bless that. And you'll never be perfect without striving for purity, striving for holiness.

Discipline is God's way to strive after that. And the world will start admiring that. Even if they don't join, at least say, well, they're what they say they are.

You know, I've been on these national radio programs lately. I got another one out of Mississippi this next week. And we're talking to these seminary leaders.

And you know what I love about it? Years ago, people used to pat us on the back because our numbers were good. I hate numbers idolatry. That's why we don't publish our attendance numbers anymore, because I don't want you to look at them.

I stopped publishing them after our numbers were up, by the way. But what we're hearing now is there's just a hunger for truth. All these things that we've been striving to practice are beginning to cause people to want to ask, how do you do that? Can you help our boys in our seminary, our boys in our Bible college? And that's the kind of attention you want.

Not attention because you know how to build numbers. You can put on a circus and build numbers. But because we're trying to build a church on God's truth.

The admiration of the world. You know what I'm convinced of? God does not want us to be any smarter in our church work. That's the big, there's a multi-million dollar, if not billion dollar industry called the church growth movement.

And they're teaching churches how to make it happen, man. How to get the crowds in. How to draw them in.

How to get your numbers up. How to grow this and that. All this stuff.

There's about a thimble full of Bible in it and about a gallon of worldliness in it. How you can be smarter. We've got to be smart, they say, and learn how to reach this kind of person and that guy.

All these smart things. God didn't want us smarter in our church work. He wants us more obedient to the work of the church.

That's where we need to be. Some have relativism as their idol. And relativism says, well, nothing's always right or wrong, so we can't deal with anything.

Some have the idol of sentimentalism that they worship. Sentimentalism says, well, because I love you, I just can't deal with it. I'll let you do what you're going to do.

By the way, friend, the Bible says the wages of sin is death. If you have a brother, sister, a son or daughter, a mate or whatever in sin, it's going to destroy them. It is not loving to leave them alone.

It's loving to go and practice discipline, which God says will be his means of bringing them back and getting them out of the sin that will destroy them. It's a deadly trap to be a sentimentalist in this area. I love you, and since I love you, I'll let you.

What we need are moral absolutes and Christian genuine love that says this. I care enough to correct you and to correct you in God's way. That's what we need to be.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15615.mp3>  
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