

### Series So Far: The Holiness of the Church

In this series of The Holiness of the Church, we have been discovering God's vision for a holy Church. Each study has built upon the last, revealing how God is calling, shaping and preparing His people to reflect His character and fulfil His purposes in the world.

**Week 24 – Called Out, Set Apart: The Holy Assembly:** God calls a holy people out of darkness and into His Kingdom.

**Week 25 – Christ Loves a Holy Bride:** Christ loves, cleanses and prepares His Bride.

**Week 26 – Built Together as God's Dwelling:** God builds believers together into His dwelling place

**Week 27 – One Body, Many Members, One Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit unites every member with a unique place and purpose within Christ's Body.

**Week 28 & 29 – Love: The Bond of Perfect Holiness:** Love is the visible expression of genuine holiness and the bond that unites God's holy people. God's holiness gives love its purity and God's love gives holiness its beauty.

**Week 30 & 31 – Holiness and Church Discipline:** God disciplines those He loves and His Church is called to lovingly restore those who wander from His ways.

Last week we considered how God's discipline flows from His love and is one of the ways He shapes us into the likeness of Christ. This week Pastor Samuel helps us understand how that same love is expressed within the Church. Biblical discipline is never about punishment, embarrassment or rejection. It is God's gracious means of restoring His people, protecting His Church and preserving His holiness.

### Holiness and Church Discipline (Part 2)

When people hear the phrase *church discipline*, many immediately think of judgement or exclusion. Pastor Samuel reminded us that Scripture presents something very different. God's purpose has always been to redeem, reconcile and restore His people. These three truths form the heart of every act of biblical discipline.

Throughout Scripture, God never corrects His children simply to expose their failures. He corrects them because He desires restored relationship. Just as a loving parent refuses to leave a child walking towards danger, our Heavenly Father lovingly intervenes when sin begins to draw us away from Him.

Pastor Samuel reminded us that the primary purpose of the Church is not simply friendship or fellowship, valuable though those things are. We gather first to know God, to grow in His Word and to help one another become more like Christ. Genuine Christian fellowship is built upon a shared commitment to knowing God and serving Him together.

Because God desires a holy people, sin cannot simply be ignored. Sin damages our relationship with God, harms our fellowship with others and, if left unaddressed, gradually shapes the culture of the Church. Pastor Samuel reminded us that "what we tolerate today can become tomorrow's tradition." Holiness rarely disappears suddenly; it fades gradually whenever God's standards are quietly lowered.

Jesus gave His Church a clear pattern for restoring believers who fall into sin (Matthew 18:15–20).

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

The first step is always private and personal. If a brother or sister sins, we lovingly speak with them ourselves. If they listen, the relationship has been restored. If they refuse, one or two mature believers become involved. Only if there is continued refusal does the wider leadership become involved.

This pattern reveals God's heart. Discipline is never intended to embarrass someone publicly. It begins quietly, personally and graciously, always seeking restoration before anything else. Pastor Samuel also reminded us that love covers a multitude of sins, but it never covers up sin. Genuine love does not ignore behaviour that damages someone's relationship with Christ. Instead, love has the courage to speak truth with humility because it desires the other person's good.

The Apostle Paul gives a similar warning in 1 Corinthians 5, explaining that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." When sin is continually ignored or excused, it eventually influences the whole community. Yet even Paul's instruction was never motivated by revenge or condemnation. His desire was always that people would ultimately be saved and restored to fellowship with Christ.

Pastor Samuel described the Church as a spiritual family rather than a courtroom. A courtroom seeks conviction; a family seeks restoration. The goal is never humiliation, but healing. Like a surgeon who cuts in order to remove disease and restore health, biblical discipline may be painful for a time, but its purpose is always healing rather than harm.

The message concluded by reminding us that Christians were never intended to live isolated lives. Throughout the New Testament believers are pictured as one Body, growing together, encouraging one another and helping each other remain faithful to Christ. Accountability is not a prison but a greenhouse where holiness grows. As we humbly receive correction and extend grace to others, the Church increasingly reflects both the holiness and the love of Jesus Christ.

### **Key Takeaways**

- God's purpose is always to redeem, reconcile and restore His people.
- Church discipline is an expression of love, not rejection.
- Holiness cannot flourish where sin is continually ignored.
- Jesus established a gracious process for restoring believers (Matthew 18:15–20).
- Love covers sin by bringing restoration, but it never hides or excuses sin.
- Accountability protects both individual believers and the whole Church.
- The Church is a family seeking restoration, not a courtroom seeking condemnation.
- Humility allows correction to produce spiritual growth.
- Holiness grows best within committed Christian community.

### Discussion Questions

1. Pastor Samuel spoke about the three purposes behind God's discipline: redemption, reconciliation and restoration. How does that challenge the way our culture often views correction or accountability?
2. Why is accountability difficult in today's culture? What fears or misunderstandings often prevent Christians from lovingly correcting or receiving correction?
3. The Church is described as a family rather than a courtroom. What characteristics would you expect to find in a healthy spiritual family?
4. Imagine every believer practised Matthew 18 faithfully. How do you think our churches would look different?

### This Week's Challenge

Read Matthew 18:15–20 throughout this week.

Ask God to cultivate a heart that is both humble enough to receive correction and loving enough to gently restore others. Pray that your words and actions would always reflect Christ's desire to redeem, reconcile and restore.

### Scripture Memory Challenge

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."

Matthew 18:15 (NIV)