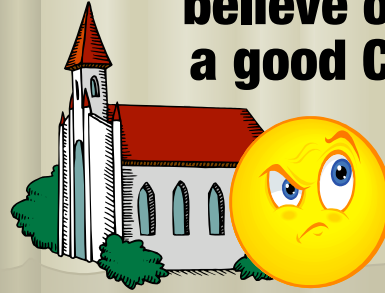


2 Corinthians 6:14-18

The spiritual boundaries of Christian community

Cultural observation #1

**“No one has the right to
tell me what I have to
believe or do to be
a good Christian!”**



Cultural observations #2

**One of the reasons
Christianity is so offensive
to our modern narcissistic mind
is that it calls for submission to authority**

**outside our
control.**

*“I do not mind
submitting to the rules
if they are
MY rules!”*



Cultural observation #3

**We want to be God but
find the role hard to fill
and strangely
unsatisfying.**

Romans 1

“²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not **honor Him as God, or give thanks**; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and **exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man** and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

**“We have been led to believe that
personal fulfillment is only possible
if we submit to no one but self
not realizing that our deepest
fulfillment is in submitting to
something outside of,
& greater than self.”**

**HUMANS ARE
DESIGNED TO
WORSHIP!**

Cultural observation #4



1 Corinthians 5

“⁹ I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;

¹⁰ I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; **for then you would have to go out of the world.**

¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with **any so-called brother** if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one.”

1. The most basic boundary of Christian community -

Confessing Jesus as Lord and Saviour expressed in water baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Beliefs and Behaviors within the church

Promoted

Differing ministry gifts

Differing cultural experiences

Permitted

Differing style preferences

Secondary doctrines & behaviors

Prohibited

Violation of Core beliefs

Violation of Core behaviors

In some cases too much is prohibited.

Promoted

Differing ministry gifts

Differing cultural experiences

Differing style preferences

Secondary doctrines & behaviors

Prohibited

Violation of Core beliefs

Violation of Core behaviors

In some cases too much is permitted.

Permitted

Differing ministry gifts

Differing cultural experiences

Differing style preferences

Secondary doctrines & behaviors

Violation of Core beliefs

Violation of Core behaviors

2. Some inappropriate boundary issues for the church?



✓ Spiritual gifts



✓ Sacraments



✓ Ethnic culture



✓ Political philosophy



✓ Spiritual authority

3. Some appropriate boundary issues for the church

- ✓ **2 Jn.9-11** Open denial of Christ or the Gospel - refusing water baptism.
- ✓ **1 Tim.1:19-20** Open disrespect for things holy - blasphemy.
- ✓ **1 Cor.5:1-13, 2 Thess.3:10-15** Open moral autonomy - sexual immorality.
- ✓ **Gal.1:8-9** Preaching another gospel - denying the grace of God in Christ.
- ✓ **Rom.16:17-18, Titus 3:9-11, 2 Thess.3:6,11,14-15** Open abuse of other Christians - material exploitation or divisiveness.

4. Biblical boundary issues share common characteristics.

- ✓ They are **OPEN** (public) displays.
- ✓ They are **HEART** (spiritual rebellion) issues.
- ✓ They are **SYSTEMIC** (affecting) the whole church.

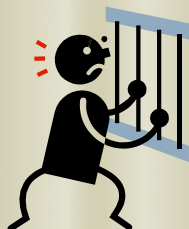
5. Church discipline does not exclude a person from salvation.

2 Thessalonians 3

“¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. ¹⁵ And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”

6. Common missteps in church discipline.

a. It is not to be **punishment**.



- ★ It is **correction** for abusive behavior.
- ★ It is **protection** of the church.
- ★ It is to **restore** the sinner.

6. Common missteps in church discipline.

b. It is not to be **legalistic**.



- ★ It is **acknowledging** a person's chosen identity.
- ★ It is **speaking truth in love**.

6. Common missteps in church discipline.

c. It is not for **every** offense.



- ★ It is for **major** sins.
- ★ It is for **unrepentant** sinners.

6. Common missteps in church discipline.

d. It is not to be **superficial**.



- ★ It is to address the **heart** of the sinner.
- ★ It is for spiritual **rebels** not outlaws.

How should the church confront those who need discipline?

Some general observations

1. Public exposure of sin is to be avoided if possible and then only as a last resort in bringing a person to repentance.
Note the way Joseph protected Mary in Matt. 1:19
2. Shame is God's tool before repentance and Satan's tool after repentance. 2 Cor. 2:6-11
3. Create an environment where it is safe to fully repent with the expectation of restoration.
4. Be eager to forgive and restore penitent Christians while pressing for full repentance. Lk.15

5. Be patient and humble realizing that we are all sinners and find holy living to be a challenge. Gal.6:1-3

6. In 1 Tim.5:1 Paul tells Timothy to not rebuke an older man harshly but treat him like your father. Later in verse 19-20 Paul tells Timothy to be careful not to quickly accuse an elder; but when the evidence is public knowledge that an elder is continuing in sin without repentance, he should be publicly rebuked.

Matthew 18:15-17

Step #1 Personal reproof in private

"¹⁵ And if your brother sins, **go and reprove him in private**; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."

Step #2 Include one or two more in bringing private reproof

"¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, **take one or two more with you**, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed."

Step #3 Expose the issue to the entire church

"¹⁷ And if he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church**;"

Step #4 Let the person be regarded as an unbeliever

"and if he refuses to listen even to the church, **let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer**."

2 Corinthians 2

Restoration builder #1 Depersonalize the offenses.

"⁵ But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree - in order not to say too much - to all of you."

Restoration builder #2 Discontinue the discipline.

"⁶ Sufficient for such a one is this **punishment** (reproof) which was inflicted by the majority;"

Restoration builder #3 Dramatize the love.

"⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him."

Restoration builder #4 Disarm the enemy.

"⁹ For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰ But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes."