

What Every Christian Needs to Know About Church Discipline

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Titus 3:9-11

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Good morning, good evening, whoever you are, wherever you are. Thank you so much for joining me for Redeemer Life. I love teaching through books of the Bible because the only choice I get is which book to go through, and even that comes through prayer and counsel, but after that, the book takes us where the book takes us. And today, we are in one crazy passage I'm excited to get into, so grab your Bibles and open it at Titus 3, page 1101 in the Bibles that we give away here at the church. I recently did a survey to find out about regathering and how the pandemic has impacted our church, and I found something alarming out that I want to tell you about. What I found out was that over 30% of the people at Redeemer, at least who filled out the survey, had some kind of job change that wasn't positive. That's 30%, almost one out of every three. So first, if that's you and you need help, please do not hesitate to let us know. We can help you. We are here to help you. We want to help you. Please email us info@redeemeraz.org, and second, I couldn't say that if the people of Redeemer hadn't continued to give and give generously during this time. We've been able to help many people whose lives and livelihoods have been impacted by the pandemic, and that is specifically because of you. So, I thank you from the bottom of my heart on behalf of the elders, thank you so much for taking care of the ministries here during this crazy time.

Now, Titus 3, drop down to verse 8, and if you're able, wherever you are, please stand for the reading of God's word. Titus 3, starting in verse 8, God's word says, "The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things so that those who believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people, but avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful. He is self-condemned." I told you this is a crazy passage today, but you're going to learn a lot about God's word, and so before we jump in, join me in prayer. Father, please, the subject that we're going to talk about today is the subject that is uncomfortable for many. It is something that many, even more than that don't even know about. For some this subject brings up bad memories, for others it's a part of their life that they want to forget, and for others it is a sweet remembrance of your work in their lives. Whatever it is, Father, we need you to be the teacher. We need you to guide us into truce. Please send your spirit to do that. And God, I pray the same thing for Pastor Tim who's going to be teaching at Fountain of Life Christian Fellowship in Mesa. Father bless his teaching that's going to go out at 10:30 Arizona time on Sunday. Use your

truth through him and through the ministries of Fountain of Life to bless the people that will be on that live stream. God, use your truth in powerful ways at Fountain of Life just like I'm praying that you would do the same thing here. Do this please, I pray for the glory of your name. Amen.

Almost 2000 years ago, Jesus told a story that we need to hear, and I mean, we really need to hear today. He said, Matthew 13:24, quote, "The kingdom of heaven will be compared to a man who sowed seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed seeds among the wheat and went away. So, when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared also, and the servants of the master's house came to him and said, Master, did you not sew good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds? He said to them, an enemy has done this. So the servant said to him, then do you want us to go gather them? But he said, no, lest in gathering the weeds, you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. And at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but later gather the wheat into my barn." So until Jesus sets up his kingdom and reigns on earth for a thousand years, the church is the expression of the kingdom of heaven today on earth.

Jesus' point here is that there will be true believers, the wheat, and there will be people who look like Christians, act like Christians, but really aren't, these are the weeds. Above the ground they look exactly the same, but upon inspection, the wheat has the grain, they have the kernel, the weeds have no fruit. Also, beneath the ground the wheat has a normal root system while the weeds wrap their roots around the wheat. That's why the farmer said, "Do don't gather the weeds because it'll uproot the wheat too." In other words, the weeds, these people have no spiritual life within themselves. Any life they seem to have is because they're parasites on true believers imitating the true because they're false.

In Jesus' description of the kingdom here, he's explaining that this reality, true and false Christians in the same church will be the reality until he returns. It is a very difficult reality in every local church because nothing physical happens when someone gets saved. It's not like, I don't know, we grow a new mole on the pinky finger on our left hand, and to find out if somebody's a Christian you just look at the mole, they have the mole. Okay, they're good, they're saved. That doesn't happen. So what is it that exposes the truth? What sifts the false believers from the true ones is what we saw last week. A ministry based on what God wants will bring the truth about people's relationship with God to the surface. So, a ministry that constantly stresses the gospel, that insists on it to use the word in Titus 3:8, that will help false Christians see that they're false, and we've seen that here at Redeemer. We've seen that on our live streams, people believing that they're Christians then hearing the Bible preached and going, wait a minute, that doesn't describe me. I thought I was a Christian, but I'm really not.

Second, a ministry that prioritizes obedience, that encourages Christians to devote themselves to good works. In the words of Titus 3:8, that ministry helps false Christians see that they're false as well. Well, how does that happen? Because as marks of the true Christian, as the standards for the Christian lives are put before them, they don't see their heart, they don't see their motivations,

they don't see their actions in the Bible, and that those differences expose them as false, and in that moment, those people will have two responses. The difference either breaks them, and they give their lives to Jesus or that difference causes them to dig in. The more their lives are exposed, the more they realize they're not a Christian. They're their pride wells up. They want to reinterpret the Bible. Some will play games for years and years acting like Christians when they know they're not. Others, the priority of obedience turns up the heat on their lives and they snap.

Our text today is about people who snap. How should the church respond to people in the church, even members in the church who persist in unrepentant sin? How should the pastors respond when people in the church are gossiping, being busybodies, slandering others, causing factions, believing false doctrines, and even trying to teach false doctrines to other people in the church? What should be done? This brings us to the subject of church discipline. This is a fuzzy subject for most people in church because most churches don't practice church discipline. Some people have seen church discipline, but it was done unbiblically. They're not fans. It was done harshly or too quickly or for unbiblical reasons by leaders who should have been disciplined for what they did using church discipline that actually harmed people in an unbiblical way.

Others believe it's un-Christian to even do church discipline. People should just live and let live and stay out of people's business, and pastors just let people live however they want to live. This week is where the rubber meets the road with last week in prioritizing obedience. Listen, God wants a holy church. He wants a people who are separate from the world and devoted to him. Pastors aren't just to say, hey, here's what God wants. Pastors are here to enforce what God wants so that God gets what he wants which is a holy people devoted to him. Now, if that word enforce makes you uncomfortable, I'd encourage you to stick with me and see, what does the Bible say to pastors and elders and churches, a pouch church discipline, and see if the word enforce doesn't accurately summarize what the Bible says. So, the message today is what every Christian needs to know about church discipline.

Church discipline is the subject Paul decided to conclude the body of his letter with. The body started with the need for Titus to appoint qualified church leaders to straighten out and to strengthen the churches on the Island of Crete, that's chapter 1. In chapters 2 and 3, we saw the need for Christians to live godly lives, godly lives that are trained by God's grace, to live lives of good works, good works that are deeds that match what the Bible says. Those works are good in and of themselves, but those works are good because they show the unbelieving world the good difference that Jesus makes in people's lives. It's our lips and our lives that God uses to save people, not either or, but both and. All of this was needed because many false teachers had infiltrated the churches on the island and corrupted what these Christians believe, and corrupted how these Christians lived as Christians. So Paul left Titus there to expose the false teachers, to remove their influence from the church and so if godly leadership standards don't expose and remove them, if godly Christian living doesn't expose and remove the false teachers, and doesn't expose and remove their influence, then what? What marks the kind of person that should be exposed and should be removed? Look at Titus 3:9, "Avoid foolish controversies, genealogies,

dissensions, and quarrels about the law for they are unprofitable and worthless." In contrast to the solid biblical pastoral ministry we saw last week, Titus and the Christians on Crete were to maintain a solid ministry by avoiding four activities. These four activities likely explain the kind of environment that if you were on the Island of Crete would Titus at that time that you would experience if you were there, which by the way is not unlike the environment created on social media.

Those four activities are in contrast to everything Paul has been saying at least in chapter 3:3, at least in chapter 3:1, and probably all the way back to chapter 1:5. Everything that Paul has said in this book contrasts what he's telling Titus to do here, it contrasts what he told him to do in chapter 3:8. It's contrasts what he told him to do in 2:15 and 2:7, all the way through this book. It is the exact opposite of a solid biblical ministry, and yet these four things run rampant among Christians. Notice first, Christians are to avoid foolish controversies. These aren't investigations into truth that clarify things and contribute to Christians more obedient lives and having their thoughts more in line with the truth. These are investigations into matters that are pointless, that don't tend toward giving God any honor, understanding the truth better or encouraging people spiritually. They actually hinder all of that. The study, the inquiries often end without answers, without use, and without any good and godly results for anybody involved in them.

Second, Christians are to avoid genealogies. Now, that's not a ban on ancestry.com, and it's not a shot at the worth of genealogies in the Old Testament in the New Testament. The Jews were obsessive about their family trees. They placed a lot of stock on whether you were in or you were out based on your family line. Before the temple was destroyed in 70AD, I heard an account of one historian who said, 900 camels packed end to end couldn't carry all the genealogical records the Jewish people had at the time when Paul was writing the book of Titus. Often, position in the community, inheritance, land holding is depended on your family line. Rabbis would also fabricate these fictitious stories about biblical heroes and put in all kinds of stories into the white spaces in these genealogies, adding a bunch of speculation which then added to arguments about these kinds of things. Paul says, avoid all of that.

Third, Christians are to avoid dissensions. If the first two were the causes of strife. The last two on the list were the strife itself. The word refers here to arguments. It means contention, controversy, dispute, wranglings, fighting. It's like verbal wrestling. It's discord, it's self-centered, rivalry and conflict. It's the separating of people even Christians based on the heated way that we speak to one another. Then fourth, Christians are to avoid quarrels about the law, fights about the Bible. I mean, nobody does that anymore. Now, this isn't condemning all fights about the Bible because Paul and even Jesus would've been sinners for doing so. The law here is the first five books of the Old Testament. We're not sure what kinds of quarrels were going on. We are just sure that there were fights going on about the Old Testament.

The word translated quarrels is used in other contexts for physical combat like MMA style. So what's going on? I think here's what's happening. Acts2:10 says, "Jews from Crete were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. When the spirit came, people miraculously heard the gospel

in their own language and the church was born." These new Christians come home to their Jewish friends and family. They come back to their synagogue and those people didn't share their new commitment to Jesus. This has been going on for 30 years by the time Paul shows up with Titus on the Island of Crete.

So, if I'm going to try to summarize those four things and put it all together, I think the best way to do so is to say that Christians, you and I are to point #1) ***Refuse to be Divisive***. Refuse it when it comes to what you believe. Refuse it when it comes to how Christians are supposed to live. Avoid it. Verse 9, that word means to turn yourself away from something so as to not participate in it. We should shun, steer clear of, turn our backs on activities that lead to strife and division with other Christians. We should do so as a way of life. Why? Because being divisive is, verse 9, unprofitable and worthless. It not only dishonors God, it not only gives people the wrong impression about Jesus, but it ultimately accomplishes nothing. It has no practical benefit at all for anybody involved. It doesn't make them more like Jesus. It doesn't make them understand the truth any better. It causes division. It's completely ineffective at changing people or helping them grow. It's useless and harmful. It doesn't inform the mind. It doesn't bless the heart.

Now, in saying that, I'm not saying ignore false teaching. No, be very divisive there. Some truths need to be fought about. Some false teachers need to be fought against. We must expose and divide from people who teach things that if believed will put people in hell. You see this constantly in Jesus interaction with the religious leaders. You see this on display in a number of Paul's letters. In those cases, there is a point, and the point is defending the truth of the gospel so that people will not embrace that error and go to hell. Some controversy is brave and courageous and must be engaged in. Look at Titus 1:10, "For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party." Verse 11, "They must be ignored," just forget about them. Is that what your Bible says? "They must be silenced since they're upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain, whatnot not to be taught." Drop down to verse 13, "This testimony is true, therefore rebuke them sharply." Why? So that they may be sound in the faith, so that they may believe and practice what we are told to believe in practice in the Bible.

This is a consistent message from Paul to the Christians that he oversaw to stay away from foolish arguments, to stay away from foolish controversies, to not be divisive, to refuse to be divisive with other Christians. 1 Timothy 2:16, quote, "Avoid irreverent babble. Why? Because it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk, this irreverent babble will spread like gang green." They poison people against the truth and they poison people against others with their talk. 2 Timothy 2:23, "Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies." Why? But he says, you know that they breed quarrels just like filthy water breeds bugs and germs and parasites. So divisive people breed quarrels. Quarrels, fighting follows them around. For some reason, they're leaving one quarrel and entering another all throughout their lives. 1 Timothy 6:4, arrogant, divisive people have, quote, "an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words which produce envy, dissensions, slander, evil suspicions and constant friction

among people." So now I'm going to meddle a little bit. Social media is the breeding ground for being divisive. Keyboard commandos, comment warriors will be divisive and punch people verbally all day long. They'll be divisive over things that don't impact a person's salvation. They do not honor God, the things that do not build people up spiritually, and then they're going to pat themselves on the back for being courageous for the truth. No, they're not. They're being divisive. Or they'll take shots at specific people without having the guts to call them privately or name their names. It is much easier to lob theological grenades into people's laps, and to post them on their Facebook wall than it is to be kind and considerate. It's much easier to sacrifice peace among believers in some foolish attempt to be right than it is to maintain the unity of the spirit like we're commanded to do in Ephesians 4:3, by working through our differences in the bond of peace and love and harmony. Before you post something, before you get into a Facebook comment war, before you act in ways that sacrifice the unity that the spirit achieves between Christians, ask yourself based on verse 9, "Will this be divisive? Will this be more helpful than hurtful? Will this help Christians live more obedient, committed lives? Will this honor God?" In the overall scheme of things, if Jesus was watching because he is, would he go like, "Well that's pointless. Why are you wasting your time on that?" "Will what I'm going to type lead to anything beneficial or worthwhile? Or is this just me venting? Am I post posting because I'm mad or frustrated or because I want to honor God and really help people? Will this post divide Christians?" Let's be people both in person and on social media who keep the peace with the Christians that we go to church with, the Christians that we interact with on a regular basis, the Christians that we are friends with on social media, and even God forbid, the Christians that we disagree with, let's keep the peace with them because they're our brothers and sisters, and beyond that, that's what God commands you and me as Christians to do.

Well, what about those who've made being divisive a way of life? What should Christians, how should church leaders respond to that person? Look at verse 10, Titus 3, "As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned." So what we have is the prohibition in verse nine, don't be divisive, but what if somebody doesn't listen? What if somebody keeps persisting? What if somebody keeps going in that direction? How are we supposed to respond, and this brings us face to face with the subject of church discipline. So being such an important subject, let's just say that all Christians should point #2) ***Understand Church Discipline.*** Understand what the Bible says about church discipline. Church discipline as seen in Titus 3:10 is commanded for all churches. Titus 3:10 is not the only passage in the New Testament on church discipline. There are five main passages in the New Testament on this, and I want to take you through each and every one of them. I am concerned that you have an accurate picture of what the Bible teaches about church discipline. It may have a bad reputation, but as I've been teaching you the question you should be asking is not, do I like church discipline? Do I agree with it? We are not the standard. Our preferences, our desires, those are not the standard. The only question that matters is, does the Bible teach church discipline, and what does it have to say about it if it does?

So let's start with the main text on this subject, so turn to Matthew 18. If you're following along on the daily word you know that Jesus ministry starts out peaceful, and then at some point in the gospel the conflict starts. Just this week we are in John 5, that's where the conflict starts in John, and in Matthew 13, the conflict has come to an apex in chapter 14, so in chapter 13 is when Jesus shifts, and he starts focusing primarily on his disciples. In chapter 18 he's training his disciples and he's answering the question, what happens when a follower of Jesus is in ongoing repentant sin? Now, before I go on from that, I mean, you can say that all of us are in ongoing sin. I mean, who can honestly say that they had a day without any sin? Only false teachers say that kind of thing. This has to do with ongoing unrepentant sin.

So let's start with how should Christians respond when another Christian sins against them. Now, this isn't minor offenses that we should overlook out of love. Love covers a multitude of sins. This is more serious, and Jesus makes it very clear what we should do. Verse 15, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone," that right there would protect so much division in the church. If we just followed verse 15, tell it to your brother and you alone, "If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." There it is. That's step number one, church discipline. Now, what if that doesn't work? What if he doesn't listen? What if he persists in a sin? Verse 16, "If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, then every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." Well, what if he still doesn't listen? What if you've tried and tried and been patient, and multiple times you brought multiple people and every time you do, they see the same thing you see, he's not repentant, not owning, pushing it back on you, deflecting, what then? Verse 17, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." Wow, by now the church leaders have gotten involved, and the church is told. Why? So that more people, not just the two or three that you brought, four at the most, no, not anymore. Now, more people, now a whole congregation of people can reach out to this professing Christian and try to win him back to obedience. That might be done in a small group of people. That might be done to the whole church depending on how many people are affected, and who knows this person and how bad the sin is.

Listen, this is not for scorn, this is so people can call and write and visit and beg this person to come back to repent. Well, what if that doesn't work? What if multiple people reach out, time is given, patience is extended, and they still refuse? Verse 17, "And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." That does not mean treat them badly. Jesus loved non-Jews and he loved tax collectors. What this means is they're not to be considered Christians anymore. They're not to participate in church life, and listen, elders are not above this. 1 Timothy 5:19, quote, "Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for elders who persistent sin, as for elders who are unrepentant, rebuke them in the presence of all church gathered, rebuke them publicly." Why? "So that the rest may stand in fear," so that the rest of the elders and so that the rest of the church will fear the Lord and will fear the consequences of unrepentant sin. So for ongoing, unrepentant general sins, this is the process. Most cases of church discipline never get to step three, tell it to the church, or step four, don't consider them a Christian anymore. That's because typically steps one and two,

fix the whole thing. Now, that's general ongoing, unrepentant sin. What about false teacher? How should a church respond when a false teacher tries to worm his or her way into a church? Turn to Romans 16, if you got a Bible from an usher here, that is page 1052. Listen, "Christian, you are always supposed to have your eyes open for false teachers in your midst." Look at verse 17, "I appeal to you brothers to watch out to keep your eyes open for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you've been taught." Notice, it's the New Testament, it's what to believe and how to live. It is those things that are being contradicted, and through that contradiction, factions are forming obstacles to the truth. Obstacles to obedience are being built, so verse 17, avoid those people. Keep away from them. The word means shun them; it means have nothing to do with them. It's like, wait, that's harsh. It is harsh unless verse 18, for such persons do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive. Do you see that? People are in spiritual danger and need to be protected by ridding the church of false teachers.

Now, Paul interacted with two guys that became false teachers, they're part of his team. They either became false teachers or were definitely ex Christians, and Paul says, 1 Timothy 1:20, that he's handed them over to Satan so that they may learn not to blaspheme. People who now reject Christ need their churches to do what Paul did to those two men, hand them over to Satan, and we're going to see why. False teaching, in other words is to be dealt with swiftly and severely, but also in love and humility. It is not unloving. It is not prideful to do that. It is done in obedience to the Lord, for the good of God's people and really for the good of the unrepentant person, and of the false teacher to make it clear to them, you are outside of the faith and you need to repent of your error and come back and come to Christ.

Now, what about more egregious sin? There's not false teaching. Now, what about ongoing sexual sin that's destroying the testimony of a church, for instance? Turn to 1 Corinthians 5, that's page 1056 in the Bibles we give away here. This church member being described here was in seriously grotesque sexual sin. The church did nothing about it because they were so tolerant and accepting, but Paul says, "No, you're not gracious." Verse 2, "You are arrogant, ought you not rather to mourn. Let him who has done this be removed from among you." Notice, no steps. Just like Roman 16, no steps. Get them out as fast as possible, instant removal. He goes on verse 5, "When you're assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." Here we see a first motivation, another motivation for church discipline which is separation from their sin so that their souls will be saved, so that they'll get back on track with the Lord, back on track with their commitment to him. He gives another motivation in verse 6 where he says, "Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" What he means there is that unconfessed, undisciplined sin that the whole congregation knows about, makes obedience optional. When it's not confronted, obedience becomes optional and causes other Christians to be flippant about the sin in their own lives. The leaven of unrepentant sin infects others, and then they begin to act like that's okay too. Then Paul concludes starting in verse 11, but notice he expands the kind of

people that one step church discipline applies to. Look at verse 11, "But now, I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone." Notice that, "I'm writing to you, not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, who calls himself a Christian. If he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater reviler," which means blasphemer, "drunkard or swindler not even to eat with such a one." Why? What have I to do with judging outsiders, judging non-Christians? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? And the answer is, yes, you are. God judges those outside. Now notice, purge the evil person from among you. Purify your congregation by removing them from it. Why? Because faithful pastors, faithful churches prioritize obedience, and protect Christians from threats to their priority of obedience in their lives.

Now, what about using the church for money instead of working, follow the same process as Matthew 18? Well, no, actually, turn to 2 Thessalonians 3, that's page 1093 in those blue Bibles. People in the church were using the kindness of Christians to not work. So Paul writes, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, "Now, we commend you brothers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," so I'm taking this up a notch, "that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us because we were not idle when we were with you." We worked in other words. Verse 10, "For even when we were with you, we would give you this command if anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat, for we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busy bodies. Now, such persons we commend and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly, and to earn their own living." Don't take from somebody else's living but earn your own wages.

That's how it is to be for Christians in the church. We are not to mooch off other people. We're not to use people so that we don't work. We're to work so that we can be a blessing to other people. Now, what's happening here is Paul as giving the teaching, here's the standard. Well, what if someone continues to use the church for money? What if somebody hears that and goes, "I'm going to keep doing what I want to do." Verse 14, If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him that he may be ashamed. Notice another motivation, shame. Shame that would lead to change. Finally, Paul makes sure that this is not done harshly. Verse 15, "Do not regard him as an enemy," because he's not an enemy. "Do not regard him as an enemy but warn him as a brother." So this brings us now to our last passage on church discipline which is Titus 3-page 1101. So we've looked at general, ongoing and unrepentant sin, and that has four steps, Matthew 18. We've looked at false teaching in Roman 16 as well as sexual sin and other things like idol worship, blasphemers, con man who get no warning, they get purged instantly, 1Corinthians 5:13. We've looked at Christians who mooch off the church. They're there to be shown God's standard for work, and if they refuse to change, they're not to be interacted with because they take advantage of Christians kindness, so again, this is all protecting the local body from people who would harm them spiritually or even monetarily.

Now, what about the divisive person? What about the man or woman, verse 10, who does not refuse to be divisive? Who does not refuse to be divisive in what they believe? They don't refuse to be divisive in how they live. What about those who, the text says stir up division, who cause factions, who triangulate Christians against each other and against leaders? This phrase, a person who stirs up division is one word in Greek, and it's the word we get the word heretic from. However, Paul's not talking about false teachers, people who deny the gospel which is what the English word means. That's a later meaning of the word. When Paul wrote this word, it just meant someone who promotes division for any reason whether doctrinal or practical. They have a problem with someone, or they have an opinion about what should be taught or how things should be, and instead of going to the people who can do something about it, they go to everyone else and gossip instead. They rally people to their cause, and if left unchecked, they create a group of people who see themselves as separate. This can happen in a small group, in a sub ministry. This can happen among friends, among family members. This can even happen among spouses. The problem is not necessarily with their theology, it's with their behavior and their attitudes. They are self-willed. Some even have feelings of superior. They'd never say that because they're so humble, but in their private moments, they're better. They know more, their opinions, their way is chosen above love and trust and unity. Their disturbances, they are disturbers of the peace. Interaction with them kills unity with other Christians. It doesn't keep unity intact. She's right, everyone else is wrong. He's got the corner on truth, everyone else is an idiot or at least, very least people are not doing the way that things should be.

I want to dive deeper into this because I've seen a lot of this in 18 plus years of ministry, and we need to be able to spot this so that we can avoid it. I've seen too many Christians derailed for a period of time or have their commitment to Jesus completely destroyed because they missed the divisive person. They missed the clues that should have told them, "I need to avoid them and have nothing to do with them." So I'm going to paint a profile of this person so that you can identify them, you can limit their influence on your life, and you can help other people do the same. Now, we've seen that description in the Bible. Now, more practically, more specifically to everyday life in a church, who is the divisive person? The divisive person isn't always, but he is often a former pastor or a failed pastor or he thinks he should be a pastor, but he's not qualified, and no elder team has been smart enough to recognize him as a pastor. Actually, the divisive think that they're more committed than all the other leaders in the church. They're rogue. They often function as a pastor doing pastoral kinds of things though no group of elders has recognized them as such. He or she has just enough Bible knowledge to be dangerous, but not enough to be mature because they're missing the basics of love and peace. Sometimes they'll believe things that no one in the history of the church has ever believed. Those are heretics, but they don't care because they've seen what no one else has ever seen. They're right, everyone else is wrong. I had a conversation about this a couple of years ago with a guy who wanted to tell me, "No, I'm the only one that's seen this, and I'm true, I'm right. There are only two people in the Trinity that the spirit is not a person. I'm the only person that has seen this." No, you're not. You're a heretic. They're the good guys, and others, usually the elders are the bad guys. They're

for you, but the pastors are against you. They want to help you; the pastors want to use you. They love you, the elders don't. They have the appearance of godliness, but their actions prove that they are some of the most immature people in the church as they strain out the net of their own opinions and preferences while swallowing the camel of being unloving, divisive, untrusting and untrustworthy. They may disagree with the church's doctrinal statement, but they won't find a church they can agree with. They just stay and disparage it whenever they get a chance. They don't give, they're parasites on the ministry and the church, and often they have a pet ministry that they think that should be what the church is all about. Because they're not, oh, they're just weak, they're soft, they're sellouts at that church. They're highly judgmental, often demanding that everybody meet their standards. They aren't team players. They have their own team. Maybe a team of one, maybe a team of them and their wife, maybe a team of this group of people. I talked with a pastor yesterday for three hours, his church is splitting because there's a guy in his leadership team who's got a group of people that he is secretly attached to himself, and now this church is on the verge of being destroyed. This little church plant being destroyed in New York City, a place that needs churches, all because of stuff like this.

They have a team of one, and they seek more people to join their team all the time, and the way that they do it is by pointing out flaws in other people or in leadership. They're gossips, slanders, suspicious busy bodies who are going from person to person, hey, tell me the real story about this or that. They don't submit to the leaders like they're commanded to. They don't respect the leaders like they're commanded to. They challenge, undermine, destabilize, undercut and damage the leaders instead. They have a track record of leaving churches, and it's always the same thing, I had a problem with the leadership. They'd start their own church, but no one would come because they're unqualified, they aren't shepherds, they aren't humble, they aren't servants, and so what they do is they steal sheep instead and detach them from the shepherds that are loving and caring for them, and try to attach them to themselves, and for some reason Christians are completely blind to this. We take divisive people seriously. We give them influence on our lives.

Never stopping and thinking, what is the effect of my interaction with that person? Oh, it's separating me from my church. Maybe I should separate myself from them. Maybe I should have verse 10, nothing to do with them. You're like, whoa, Pastor, you can get kind of passionate about this. Your darn right, I am because I love the people in this church. And if that kind of stuff happens in here, I go from the gentle shepherd to I'm now at war. Why? Because I'm charged as a shepherd to care for the flock, to protect them from wolves like divisive people. Now, why do you think the Bible would say about divisive people have nothing to do with them. Why would it say that? Now, you might be answering that question in your mind right now, but I'm going to tell you why it says that. It says it because divisive people are satanic. They're agents of Satan in the midst of God's church. Who caused the first division in history? Who achieved a coup and separated a third of the angels from God himself? Oh, that's right, Satan. Oh, who caused the first couple to separate themselves from God? Oh, that's right, Satan. He's called the adversary. He's called the slander. The name, Satan comes from a Hebrew word that

means to oppose, obstruct and accuse. So when people set themselves up against people in their church, when they slander, oppose, obstruct, and accuse their being satanic. They are satanic at their core, it's overwhelming pride which is called the condemnation of the devil. In 1 Timothy 3:6, pride condemns Satan, and it condemns satanic divisive people. Divisive people are tools of Satan that his minions use to hurt churches, to discourage well-meaning pastors, and to make people hate Christianity. This happens in churches, it happens in friendships, it happens in small groups and ministries, families, marriages, and it especially happens on social media. Refuse to be a satanic influence on social media or anywhere else where Christians get together by refusing to be divisive.

So what is a church supposed to do? How are the pastors supposed to respond biblically to divisive people? What does God command us to do? Look back at Titus 3:10. As for a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him. Notice, it's not one step like the really egregious sins or false teaching, and it's not four steps, like general sins. It's two steps, two warnings. Warn them, rebuke them, confront their behavior, point out their sin. Do it twice and that's it. Do it directly so the person knows exactly what the problem is. Do it with correction so the person knows exactly how to fix the problem, and do it gently, yet firmly and do it with the goal of restoring them. Church discipline is never harsh or punitive. It is always with the goal of restoration, and that is restoration to the Lord. That is restoration to the church, and that is restoration to the Christians that they've sinned against.

So two warnings, and then what happens after that? Have another meeting. Talk about it some more. Tell it to the church. No, verse 10, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him. This is ongoing, unrepentant divisiveness. God doesn't want church leaders to spend a lot of time on this. The sin is obvious, the solution, repentance is obvious and their response is obvious. They are unrepentant. If they dig in their heels, if they're compliant in the meeting, but on the way home with friends or family or again on social media, they continue to be divisive, this is a command, have nothing more to do with him. This is after warnings in love. This is after teaching with patience. This is after pleading with hope at the very last resort with tears, with the hope of restoration one day, have nothing more to do with him. This is a strong word that means dismiss him from the church. It means drive him out of the church, cut off his influence. Why? To protect the church. But also, why do we do this? In the hope that the seriousness of the act will wake him up, that he'll come to his senses, he'll realize, what in the world am I doing? I don't want to be this person. I don't want to do this. I repent. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Lord, forgive me. Church, forgive me, please, that's the hope. Why such a harsh response to the unrepentant, divisive person? Look at verse 11, "Because knowing that such a person is warped and sinful, he is self-condemned." His or her lack of repentance means there are three truths about this person that you can be absolutely sure of. First, they are warped which means that they're off spiritually. They're twisted when it comes to the truth. They've been corrupted either by their own ideas or by actual demonic influences. Regardless of how much Bible they know, regardless of how nice they are, they have become warped.

Second, they're sinful which just means that they've refused to repent. They're continuing their sin after rejecting godly counsel and confrontation which means, third, he is self-condemned. That is the state his refusal to repent has left him in. He might feel justified, he might feel victorious, he might feel vindicated, I showed them, but he has made his own bed. He could have avoided church discipline. He could have avoided being driven out of the church. All he needed to do was humble himself, own his sin, make it right, work with the pastors, but no, he brought the condemnation on himself. That's what that means. The standard is so clear. God wants peace, love, harmony among his people. He wants us to be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, doing nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, considering others more important than ourselves. Looking not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others in the church. Why? Because that's what Jesus did for us. Philippians 2, he wants no divisions among us. 1 Corinthians 1:10, he wants us to pursue what makes for peace and for mutual encouragement and growth. Romans 14:19, those who overturn all of that either through what they teach or how they act or both, those people are in sin because they are divisive. If they persist in this sin after being lovingly warned twice, they're to be removed from the church.

Now, before I close, there are four comments I need to make about church discipline. First, God commands church discipline. I hope you've seen that it's not optional. The issue is not, should we do church discipline? Should a church do church discipline? The issue is, will we do what God commands us to do in regard to church discipline? The issue is faithfulness and that's it. Second, I outlined the reasons for church discipline as taught in the Bible. I did that so that you can see it for yourself, that you can see what it is, and you can see what it's not. What are grounds for church discipline? What are not grounds for church discipline? Church discipline should only be done in strict adherence to the Bible. It should never be done because of the personal preferences of the pastor, the staff or the leadership. It should never be used as a power play. It should never bring a pastor joy to discipline someone out of their church. The final step of church discipline, revoking someone's membership, considering them to be an unbeliever because of how they've responded to God's word, and then driving them out of the church. All of that should never be entered in with anything other than remorse and seriousness and gravity. You saw it two times. It is no small thing to hand somebody over to Satan. 1 Corinthians 5, 1 Timothy 1:20, it is no small thing to do that for the destruction of their bodies so that their souls would be saved. This is sending them off unprotected so that the hounds of hell can go after them and punish their lives, so that it would drive them to repentance. The kind of pain that person has set them self-up for by refusing to repent is truly frightening, and no pastor should find any joy in that, which means really that though they're out of the church, they should not be out of your heart.

We keep calling them back to the Lord, back to their commitment to Christ, back to their baptisms, back to God's will for their lives, always in love, always in fear, always in humility, knowing Galatians 1 that, that would be me if it weren't for God's grace. Third, in case you're wondering, we do practice church discipline at Redeemer. It's part of the membership process. It's part of what you agree to when you become a member here, and sadly, if things don't change

this week, I will be doing step number three at all three of our services next week because there is a member who is currently in unrepentant sin. And I've been reaching out to that person. We have elders who have been reaching out to that person. We have tried multiple times over the past many months. We tried to grab this person and turned them back to the Lord but they, to this moment, refuse, and we don't have a choice. The only choice is, are we going to be obedient? Are we going to do what the Bible tells us to do or are we not? Well, let me back up and say this, I hope that next week I say nothing, and all of you are like, what, you said something on the video, but you didn't say anything, and I say, 'They repented. I don't need to say anything. God fixed it, that's my hope. Fourth, why would I even do that? Why would we do that as elders? Why would I give you their name so that you can reach out to them? Let me just give you God's motives for church discipline one more time. It's not to embarrass, it's not to be vindictive. It might feel that way, but feelings are not facts. It might feel embarrassing. It's not to instill fear of the pastors or any other unbiblical reason why people have seen church discipline done wrongly.

First, the obvious one, church discipline is to encourage the sinning Christian to repent and restore him or her to fellowship with God and fellowship with other Christians. James 5:19 and 20, quote, "If anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, someone restores him, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering has saved his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins." That's the goal. That's what we want. The second reason for church discipline is to enforce obedience, and to enforce the truth in a local church. That's what we saw in 1 Corinthians 5 and Roman 16. Third, church discipline according to 1 Timothy 5, is to cause Christians to fear unrepentant sin, and it as we saw in 1 Corinthians 5, it is to keep sin from impacting and influencing other people in the church. The fourth reason for church discipline according to 1 Corinthians 5 again, is to be a counter cultural community compared to the world. That people will be here, and they'll go, it's not like what I see on television. It's not like the people that I interact with at work or at school. It's different here. They should see that, and church discipline encourages that when we see like, whoa, obedience is a priority, holiness is important. That's the fifth and final reason for church discipline, is to honor the Lord by obeying the one who created church discipline in the first place.

Now, listen, I know I did that really fast, and I know that there is a lot of verses, but that's pretty much what every Christian needs to know about church discipline. If it was too fast, go back, watch this again. Pause it, look up the scriptures, read, reread over and over again, meditate. This is a huge part of what it means to be the kind of church that God wants churches to be which is why this is the kind of thing that every Christian needs to know. Let's pray.

Father, that is a heavy subject, church discipline. I just think two weeks ago we were talking about justification and adoption and glorification, and now two weeks later we're talking about church discipline. But God, you lead the church, you lead this church. You lead it through your word, and that's the next text, and that's what we preach, and it just so happens to be falling at a time in the life of this church when what is said in your word needs to be known because we're going to be making decisions that are going to reflect what your word says about church

discipline unless some serious things change. So God, I thank you for the way that you're leading our church. I thank you for the way that you let it, by me teaching this today. I pray that you would bless this truth. I know this is the kind of church crowd reduction sermon. It doesn't matter. What matters most is faithfulness to your word as the preacher, and faithfulness to your word as a pastor in your church. This church belongs to you. You are in charge. We simply do what you want us to do. Your word determines everything, and if your word tells us to do something, we're going to do it. So God, that's the goal. That's the hope, but underneath that hope, my prayer is that people watching right now, who might have been really convicted about being divisive, I pray that you would use this truth to arrest that right now. That they would confess it to you, that they would confess it to anyone that they've sinned against, and that they would make things