

## **Shepherd Leader Training Session 4: Biblical Church Discipline**

### A Mark of the True Church

Belgic Confession, XXIX (1561)

*The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin, in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Hereby the true Church may certainly be known from which no man has a right to separate himself.*

The Scotch Confession of Faith, XVIII

*The notes therefore, of the true Kirk of God we believe, confesse, and avow to be, first, the true preaching of the Word of God, into the which God has revealed himselfe unto us, as the writings of the Prophets and Apostles do declare. Secondly, the right administration of the Sacraments of Christ Jesus, which may be annexed unto the word and promise of God, to seal and confirme the same in our hearts. Last, Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed, and vertew nourished.*

#### **Readings:**

- BCO, Part 1, Part II, 27-46 (skim)
- WCF 11, 14, 17, 18
- WLC #45
- Timothy Witmer, *Shepherd Leader* chapter 4, Part 2 Intro, chapter 5.
- Daniel Wray, *Biblical Church Discipline*
- Supplemental Readings:
  - Calvin's Institutes, Book IV, Chapter 12, Sections 1-13

#### **Part 1: A Review: Daniel Wray, Biblical Church Discipline (Small Group Discussions, see handout)**

#### **Part 2: The Confession of Discipline: WCF Chapter 30:**

*WCF 30.1: The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.*

1. The Assembly employs biblical language (Mt. 16) in discussing "keys" of the kingdom, and in defining them as related to church-censures.

*WCF 30.2: To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.*

What exactly does "church-censures" refer to and why may this be related to the "keys"?

Matt. 16:18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matt. 18:17 "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound

in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

John 20:19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ...22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Note that Christ's Messianic authority is to be exercised (mediated) through the building of the apostles and this is called "the church." This "church" is given the responsibility to "bind and loose" which at the very least must include the authority to determine terms of communion. And lest any would think this to be a mystical or invisible phenomena, the Lord qualifies it as something that take place on "earth. " This earthly authority is said to be recognized and sanctioned in heaven. No more clearer language could used to affirm the biblical propriety, even mandate, for ecclesiastical authority and church discipline. This passage, therefore, asserts that Christ and Christ alone is both the founder and administrator of the church organized under an authorized government. His earthly government is to be mediated through the *form* built by the apostles. (See Eph.2:

*It is in this context that he gave the church the responsibility to pronounce his forgiveness and his judgments. Of course, the ratification in heaven of what the church does on earth is contingent upon the church acting in obedience to Christ and his principles without hypocrisy or favouritism. As Matthew Poole puts it, this text is "to assure stubborn and impenitent sinners that he would ratify what he church did, according to the rule he had given them to act by. It is therefore a terrible text to those who are justly and duly cut off from the communion of the church... The church is not by this text made infallible, nor is the holy God by it engaged to defend their errors. The only fact to be established at this point, however, is simply that the Lord Jesus Christ does indeed intend his church to govern its members even to the extent of disciplinary measures, when these become necessary. Let us not think that this is simply an optional power to act, for all of the Lord's instructions are given in the imperative. The church does not have the right to ignore persistent sinful behaviour among its members. The Lord has not left that option open to us.*

Daniel Wray, *Biblical Church Government*

#### The Divine appointment of Church Discipline from Scripture:

##### 1. Direct institution of Church discipline and ecclesiastical censures by Christ Himself:

Matt.16:18ff

Heidelberg Catechism # 83:

What is the office of the Keys?

*The preaching of th eholy gospel and Church discipline; by which two things the kingdo of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.*

Matt.18:15-18

Heidelberg Catechism # 85:

How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Church discipline?

*In this way; that, according to the command of Christ, if an under the Christian name show themselves unsound either in doctrine or life, and oafter repeated brotherly admonition refuse to turn from their errors or evil ways, they are complained of to the Church or to its proper officers, and if they neglect to hear them also, are by them excluded from the holy Sacraments and the Christian communion and by God himself from the kingdom of Christ; and if they promise and show real amendment, they are again received as members of Christ and his Church.*

John 20:21-23

##### 2. Apostolic practice as foundation: (Eph.2:20)

1 Cor.4:18-21; 5:1-13

2 Cor. 2:1-10; 7:8-12; 10:2-8; 13:2-10

1 Tim..1:19-20

##### 3. Directions given in Scripture for the manner of its exercise:

1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim.2:24-26  
Jude 23  
Tit. 3:10; 2 Thess.6:14ff

4. Directions given in Scripture for the manner of its reception:

Hebrews 13:17ff  
Romans 13:1-4  
1 Peter 5:5

2. Why are church censures necessary?

WCF 30.3: *Church censures are necessary, for*

- *the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren,*
- *for deterring of others from the like offenses,*
- *for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump,*
- *for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel,*
- *and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.*

Three General Goals of Discipline:

1. Glory of God (and honor of religion)

1 Cor.6:20  
Eph. 3:20-21

2. Purity of Church

1 Cor. 5:6-8

3. Reclamation of the wayward:

Mt. 18:15-20 (note context: *one of the these of these* and the goal of winning the brother.)  
1 Cor. 5:5  
2 Tim.2:24-26

Discussion: (by T. David Gordon)

1. If # 3 were the *only* goal of discipline, then we would never discipline those who appeared to be "lost causes." Yet the glory of God and the purity of the church are also at stake. The 1 Cor.5 text indicates that discipline is both "so that his spirit may be saved..." and for the sake of the church warning that a "little leaven would poison the entire church."
2. It is thus *never* true that discipline will "do no good." That a given individual may not immediately respond favorably does not mean that "no good" is done. It merely means that God the Holy Spirit uses His own ordinances as He wishes *when* He wishes.

2. Are church-officers infallible in their exercise of church-discipline?

See chapter 31:3: "All synods or councils, since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both."

3. Church-censures are in three grades or degrees. What are those three grades?

WCF 30.4: *For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the church are to proceed by*

1. *admonition;*
2. *suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season;*
3. *and by excommunication from the church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.*

#### 4. The Inherent Difficulties of Discipline: (categories and quotes from T. David Gordon)

1. Personal: "It is hard for sinners to discipline sinners. We tend to either be too strict (Mt.7) or too lax (1 Cor. 5)
2. Exegetical:  
2 *Peter 3:15-16*: "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand."  
2 Considerations:  
What issues the Bible addresses: (BCO 29-1)  
What the Bible teaches?
3. Cultural:
  1. *Individualism*: People do not perceive themselves as either responsible for other or accountable to others.
  2. *Voluntarism*: People believe that church membership is voluntary. (political voluntarism has been mistaken for moral voluntarism.)
  3. *Rise of litigation* and litigiousness, including litigation against churches:
  4. *Sentimentalism*: Few people are capable of the kind of dispassionate judgment which discipline requires; they tend to sympathize with a party or against a party. Can't allow personal feelings and personal issues cloud the objective work of discipline. This is not to say that we are unfeeling and uncaring in how we deal with others.

### Part 3: The Rules of Discipline

#### Biblical Issues:

**Prov. 18: 17**, *the one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross examines.*

- Always assume the position of neutrality until all the facts are in.

**1 Peter 5:1ff**, *I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight...*

- It is our duty to watch over Christ's flock for their spiritual well being.
- We do not need to apologize for doing what we are commanded to do.

**Heb. 13; 17**, *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing.*

- It is the duty of God's people to not resist but to accommodate the attempts of elders to watch over them.

**Galatians 6:1** *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

- A Charge to Humbly seek Restoration

**Micah. 6:8** *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

- A Good Summary of our duty is to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly.

#### A General summary of church Discipline:

#### **BCO 27.1ff**

*Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare. The term has two senses: the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control which the Church maintains over its members, its officers and its courts; the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial process.*

#### Discipline as Discipleship:

Note: "censures" are the third dimension)

1. The positive Dimension: "teaching to observe all that Jesus commanded"  
Matt. 28:18-20, 1 Tim.4:6-16  
(Instruction, Catechism, Corporate Worship, Godly example, Sacraments, Other?)
2. The prevenient dimension: "watching over souls to prevent their going astray. (This dimension is implicit whenever the officers are referred to as "shepherds.")  
Heb. 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4  
(Regular Visitations, Prayers)
3. The remedial dimension: "correcting or pronouncing judgment on the wayward."  
1 Cor. 5, 2 Tim. 2:24-26, 1 Tim. 1:19-20  
(Church Censures)

Stages vs. Steps of Discipline:

T. David Gordon: "I refer to "stages" rather than "steps." At the positive level, we do not instruct merely once ("a step"), but many times. We do not pray merely once, but regularly, repeatedly. Even when the "remedial" aspects begin, I believe that there are "stages," not "steps," because I believe that the effort to win a brother "alone" should not be hastily or perfunctorily done. It is not a "step" one passes quickly by, but a stage which may require many visits, as long as there is any reasonable possibility that progress is being made."

1. Private stage: "go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone.'
2. Arbitration stage: "But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you" (note: who one takes must be carefully considered as one who is a christian witness and is in him/herself a mature and responsible Christian. Preferably an officer of the church.)
3. Ecclesiastical/formal stage: "If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." (Note: "church" in Mt. 18 refers to ruling/ judicial courts. See previous study on "church.")

**Part 4: Review: Timothy Witmer, *Shepherd Leader* chapter 4, Part 2 Intro, chapter 5. (see handout)**

**Part 5: Summary of BCO Issues and Requirements**

1. Relative to the Motives and Manner of acting as Judges:

**27.3** The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its proper usage discipline maintains:

- a. the glory of God,
- b. the purity of His Church,
- c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture.

Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honor of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

**27.4**The power which Christ has given the church is for building up and not for destruction. It is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy and not wrath. (comment: Christ has taken away all punishment-- all discipline is for correction therefore)

**32-12.** When the trial is about to begin, it shall be the duty of the moderator solemnly to announce from the chair that the court is about to pass to the consideration of the case, and to enjoin on the members to recollect and regard

their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ, and the solemn duty in which they are about to engage.

**32-3.** It is appropriate that with each citation the moderator or clerk call the attention of the parties to the Rules of Discipline (BCO 27 through 46) and assist the parties to obtain access to them... (comment: it is the duty of the elders to help the person know his/her ecclesiastical rights as a member of the church)

2. The Duty of courts:

**11-4.** For the orderly and efficient dispatch of ecclesiastical business, it is necessary that the sphere of action of each court should be distinctly defined. The Session exercises jurisdiction over a single church, the Presbytery over what is common to the ministers, Sessions, and churches within a prescribed district, and the General Assembly over such matters as concern the whole Church. The jurisdiction of these courts is limited by the express provisions of the Constitution.

**12-5.** The church Session is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the church, for which purpose it has power:

- a. To inquire into the knowledge, principles and Christian conduct of the church members under its care; to censure those found delinquent; to see that parents do not neglect to present their children for Baptism; to receive members into the communion of the church; to remove them for just cause; to grant letters of dismissal to other churches, which when given to parents, shall always include the names of their noncommuning baptized children;
- b. To examine, ordain, and install ruling elders and deacons on their election by the church, and to require these officers to devote themselves to their work; to examine the records of the proceedings of the deacons; to approve and adopt the budget;
- c. To approve actions of special importance affecting church property;
- d. To call congregational meetings when necessary; to establish and control Sunday schools and Bible classes with special reference to the children of the church; to establish and control all special groups in the church such as Men in the Church, Women in the Church and special Bible study groups; to promote World missions; to promote obedience to the Great Commission in its totality at home and abroad; to order collections for pious uses;
- e. To exercise in accordance with the Directory for Worship, authority over the time and place of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, over all other religious services, over the music in the services, and over the uses to which the church building and associated properties may be put; to take the oversight of the singing in the public worship of God; to assemble the people for worship when there is no minister; to determine the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the church and congregation;
- f. To observe and carry out the lawful injunctions of the higher courts; and to appoint representatives to the higher courts, who shall, on their return, make report of their diligence.

**31-2.** *It is the duty* of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation.

If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case. This prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that in a case before the Session, he may be any communing member of the same congregation with the accused.

**31-5.** An injured party shall not become a prosecutor of personal offenses without having tried the means of reconciliation and of reclaiming the offender, required by Christ.

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:15-16).

*A church court, however, may judicially investigate personal offenses as if general when the interest of religion seem to demand it.* So, also, those to whom private offenses are known cannot become prosecutors without having previously endeavored to remove the scandal by private means.

**32-2.** Process against an offender shall not be commenced unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or *unless the court finds it necessary, for the honor of religion, itself to take the step provided for in BCO 31-2.*

**31-7.** When the prosecution is instituted by the court, the previous steps required by our Lord in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. *There are many cases, however, in which it will promote the interests of religion to send a committee to converse in a private manner with the offender, and endeavor to bring him to a sense of his guilt, before instituting actual process.*

### 3. Cases without process

**38-1** When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without process.

**32-3,** When a charge is laid before the Session or Presbytery, it shall be reduced to writing, and nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court, *unless by consent of parties, ...If the accused confesses, the court may deal with him according to its discretion;* if he plead and take issue, the trial shall proceed.

### 4. Procedural Instructions for a Case with Process:

**32-3.** It is appropriate that with each citation the moderator or clerk call the attention of the parties to the Rules of Discipline (BCO 27 through 46) and assist the parties to obtain access to them. When a charge is laid before the Session or Presbytery, it shall be reduced to writing, and nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court, *unless by consent of parties, except:*

1. to appoint a prosecutor,
2. to order the indictment drawn and a copy, along with names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, and
3. to cite all parties and their witnesses to appear and be heard at another meeting which shall not be sooner than ten days after such citation.

At the second meeting of the court the charges shall be read to the accused, if present, and he shall be called upon to say whether he be guilty or not.

*If the accused confesses, the court may deal with him according to its discretion;* if he plead and take issue, the trial shall proceed.

**32-15.** When a court of first resort proceeds to the trial of a case, the following order shall be observed:

1. The moderator shall charge the court.
2. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard.
3. The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined.
4. The parties shall be heard: first, the prosecutor, and then the accused, and the prosecutor shall close.
5. The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinion in the case.
6. The vote shall be taken, the verdict announced and judgment entered on the records.

### 5. The manner of inflicting church censures:

**36-2.** Church censures and the modes of administering them should be suited to the nature of the offenses. For private offenses, censure should be administered in the presence of the court alone, or in private by one or more members of the court. In the case of public offenses, the degree of censure and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the court, acting in accordance with paragraphs below which deal with particular censures.

**36-3.** The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.

**36-5.** Indefinite suspension from office or the Sacraments should be administered after the manner prescribed

for definite suspension, but with added solemnity, that the indefinite suspension may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger. Indefinite suspension should also be administered under the blessing of God of leading him to repentance. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

**36-6.** Excommunication is to be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or to be inflicted in public as the court may decide. In administering this censure the moderator of the Session shall make a statement of the several steps which have been taken with respect to the offending brother, and of the decision to cut him off from the communion of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use and consequences of this censure. He shall then administer the censure in the words following:...

Comment: This summary of issues, Biblical and BCO, ought not to be relied upon exclusively when a case is being processed. The simple intention here was merely to point out several key issues-- not to provide an comprehensive schematic of how to do process cases of discipline.

### 3. The Initiation of Discipline

#### 1) The Duty to Investigate: BCO

**31-2.** It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character... If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process,

2) Case Without Process: BCO (see Case without Process "Template" and Example in Case of Adultery located in Executive Session Google File)

### 4. Review of Available Actions In Discipline:

#### 1) Removal From Roll as An Act of Discipline:

**38-4.** When a member of a particular church has willfully neglected the church for a period of one year, or has made it known that he has no intention of fulfilling the church vows, then the Session, continuing to exercise pastoral discipline (BCO 27-1a and 27-4) in the spirit of Galatians 6:1, shall remind the member, if possible both in person and in writing, of the declarations and promises by which he entered into a solemn covenant with God and His Church (BCO 57-5, nos. 3-5), and warn him that, if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll.

If after diligently pursuing such pastoral discipline, and after further inquiry and due delay, the Session is of the judgment that the member will not fulfill his membership obligations in this or any other branch of the Visible Church (cf. BCO 2-2), then the Session shall erase his name from the roll. This erasure is an act of pastoral discipline (BCO 27-1a) without process. The Session shall notify the person, if possible, whose name has been removed.

Notwithstanding the above, if a member thus warned makes a written request for process (i.e., BCO Chapters 31-33, 35-36), the Session shall grant such a request. Further, if the Session determines that any offense of such a member is of the nature that process is necessary, the Session may institute such process.



Two Confessional Contexts as related to Membership:

WCF 25.2 The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

BCO 57-5- Membership Vows

(All of) you being here present to make a public profession of faith, are to assent to the following declarations and promises, by which you enter into a solemn covenant with God and His Church.

1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in His sovereign mercy?
2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

*Scriptural Support of the Church as an essential element of the gospel: (among many)*

**The Fullness of Christ's presence as mediated through the body of Christ**

**Eph 1: 9** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. **22** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**2:9** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

**Mediatorial power Christ via participation in the ministry of the church (ministerial and declarative) (albeit infallible) on earth as it is in heaven.**

**John 20:21** Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." **22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

**Mediatorial Government/Authority of Christ via s submission to the church**

**Pet. 5:1** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

**Heb. 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

2) The Censure of Admonition:

**30-2.** Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning him of his guilt and danger, and exhorting him to be more circumspect and watchful in the future.

**36-3.** The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.

3) The Censure of indefinite suspension:

(perhaps most appropriate for those who have not “renounced” Christ but is in a season of willful neglect of the means of grace vis-à-vis participation in the visible church” –39- 3 :Indefinite suspension is administered to the impenitent offender until he exhibits signs of repentance, or until by his conduct, the necessity of the greatest censure be made manifest. “

**30-3.** Suspension from Sacraments is the temporary exclusion from those ordinances, and is indefinite as to its duration.

**36-5.** Indefinite suspension from office or the Sacraments should be administered after the manner prescribed for definite suspension, but with added solemnity, that the indefinite suspension may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger. Indefinite suspension should also be administered under the blessing of God of leading him to repentance. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

**Whereas, you, \_\_\_\_\_ (here describe the person as a teaching elder, ruling elder, deacon, or private member of the church) are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin of \_\_\_\_\_ (here insert the offense), we the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbytery (or Church Session) in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the exercise of your office), until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance.**

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.

#### 4. Excommunication:

**30-4.** Excommunication is the excision of an offender from the communion of the Church. This censure is to be inflicted only on account of gross crime or heresy and when the offender shows himself incorrigible and contumacious. The design of this censure is to operate on the offender as a means of reclaiming him, to deliver the church from the scandal of his offense, and to inspire all with fear by the example of his discipline.

#### 1 Cor 5

*1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. 2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.*

*3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. 4 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.*

*6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

*9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”*

#### Example: Case Without Process: Adultery

##### 1) Statement of Grounds for Case without Process:

**Wherease Galatians 6:1 exhorts us:** *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

**Whereas BCO 38.1 states:**

**38-1.** When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without process. In handling a confession of guilt, it is essential that the person intends to confess and permit the court to render judgment without process. Statements made by him in the presence of the court must not be taken as a basis of a judgment without process except by his consent. In the event a confession is intended, a full statement of the facts should be approved by the accused, and by the court, before the court proceeds to a judgment.

**And whereas** the confession of xyz was made by him in the presence of the court are taken as a basis for judgment without process by his consent.

**And whereas** a full statement of the facts has been approved by the accused, and by the court.

**And Whereas xyz has of his own free volition confessed his sin of xyz,**

##### 2) Statement of Judgment:

***It is therefore resolved that xyz be given the censure of admonition per BCO:***

**30-2.** Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning him of his guilt and danger, and exhorting him to be more circumspect and watchful in the future.

**36-3.** The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.

### 3) Process with Member (Example of the Sin of Adultery)

At the time of Meeting with member:

*Rec. to hear xyz's confession of sin and to proceed to the censure of admonishment by the court of Jesus Christ along with the laying on of hand in pray for God's grace to repent.*

#### Confession heard

#### Admonition Given:

*Whereas the scriptures teach*

- “You shall not commit adultery. Exodus 20:14, Dt. 5:18
- For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. Matt. 15:19
- “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matt. 5:27-28
- But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.” Acts 21:25
- Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rom. 13:13
- He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:17-20
- But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Eph. 5:3
- For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 1Th. 4:3

*Whereas the consensus of our church is that sex outside of marriage is a sin:*

Q. 138. The duties required in the seventh commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company...shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto.

Q. 139. The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, adultery, fornication, rape, incest, sodomy, and all unnatural lusts; all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections.

*Whereas you have confessed to committing the sin of sexual immorality/adultery (sex with an unmarried woman)*

*According to BCO 27 and 30-2 36-3,*

[36-3. The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.]

*Whereas, you, xyz (private member of the church) are guilty by your own confession of the sin of sexual immorality, we the Church Session of Christ Presbyterian Church, New Haven in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, hereby admonish you to cease from the sin of sexual immorality in that "sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints (Eph. 5:3), "for this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality (1Th. 4:3). We offer this admonishment to you in love and in hopes that you will be enabled by God's grace the power of repentance and the joy of continued fellowship in the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ,*

Laying on of hands and prayer for the grace of sanctification and continued assurance of God's love and grace unto justification.

**Pronouncement of Absolution and full restoration to Christ and the Church**

Study Guide of Terms:

**BCO 27:**

1. What does the proper use of discipline maintain?
2. How does church discipline relate to the kingship of Christ?
3. What are the different means of exercising church discipline?

**Chapter 28:**

1. How is the discipline of noncommuning members to be effected?

**Chapter 29:**

1. What constitutes an offense?
2. What do we mean by the following types of offenses:
  - a. personal
  - b. general
  - c. private
  - d. public

**Chapters 30, 36:**

1. What should you do if you think a church member or a church officer is guilty of an offense?
2. Who is the "church" in Matthew 18:17?

**Chapter 42:**

1. What is an appeal?

**Chapter 43:**

1. What is a complaint?