

*“Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...” - 1 Cor 15:58*

# NORTHSIDE EXHORTER

*A Teaching Bulletin to Inform & Edify God's Family at Northside*

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## **“Church Discipline: Preventing Perversion”**

As promised, this is the first of a few articles addressing the subject of church discipline. When we spoke of this subject weeks ago, church discipline was defined as, “*the work of the body of Christ carried out by a local congregation for the purposes of saving the soul of its member & keeping the church of our Lord pure*”. Church discipline is a work of the church, for it is designed to save souls. However, I am pretty sure that some can attest or may have been a victim of when church discipline was abused or misused. This article will highlight a few points we must consider when practicing this command.

### **Fellowship**

Fellowship is “joint participation with a common goal”. Our fellowship must be with the Father (*1 John 1:6-7*), the Son (*1 Corinthians 1:9*), the Holy Spirit (*2 Corinthians 13:14*), & with those whom have fellowship with the Godhead (*1 John 1:3*). Fellowship is a spiritual relationship with the Divine & those of like precious faith. When it is practiced in purity & not perverted, then it is a beautiful thing. Unfortunately, when fellowship is not practiced to its fullness, then many believe that church discipline will be ineffective & must not be practiced. To this I say, “*Two wrongs do not make a right*”. Church discipline must still be practiced with the sinning member because it is commanded. Our challenged today is to find brethren who we may be disconnected from & encourage them to be faithful to the Lord. This way, punitive discipline may be prevented.

### **Can Fellowship Be Perverted?**

The answer is YES! Sometimes, a church can be so desperate for members that they will have fellowship with anybody, when fellowship has its limits (See Previous Section). The Scriptures are clear. We cannot have fellowship with unbelievers, nor with those who are out of fellowship with God (*2 Corinthians 6:14-18 & Ephesians 5:11*). We pervert fellowship when we accept those whom God has rejected (*2 John 9-11*) & reject those whom God has accepted (*3 John 9-10*). Our challenge today is to re-evaluate our relationships with our brethren by asking these questions:

1. Are we walking together (*Amos 3:3*)?
2. If so, are we walking in truth (*2 John 4*)?
3. If I find myself walking alone, am I walking by faith (*2 Corinthians 5:7 & Romans 10:17*)?

### **Perverting Church Discipline**

Church discipline is needed in the body of Christ because it saves souls & keeps the church pure. However, it can be perverted.

- We must never seek to implement discipline for the purposes of making room in the auditorium or “recycling” members. All things must be done for edification, including church discipline (*1 Corinthians 14:40*).
- We must never seek this process for the purposes of getting rid of members we don’t like. If we have the heart to discipline punitively, then remember, we must also have the heart to restore spiritually (*Galatians 6:1*).
- We must never use church discipline as a tool for revenge. Vengeance belongs to God (*Romans 12:19*).

