

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

NORTHSIDE EXHORTER

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1513 W. Rollercoaster Rd. Tucson, AZ 85704

www.northside-churchofchrist.com

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“Church Discipline: Rebuke & Restoration”

Church discipline is 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*”. This is the third & final article in this series on this subject. It started with a message helping us to understand it & created dialogue about it. The last two articles were for the purposes of assisting us to see the need for it & how to practice it lovingly without perverting it. This article is dedicated to the actions of rebuking & restoring within this spiritual work of soul saving.

Church Discipline Encourages Rebuke

The basic definition of rebuke is “correction, reproof, strong disapproval”. Rebuking is what we are commanded to do when edification has not produced the desired fruit in a Christian’s life. We rebuke as follows:

1. **Public Instruction (Acts 20:20-21 & 27)**. When Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders, he shared with them everything they needed to know in an effort to encourage many to repent. Public instruction does not mean that if we know of a person in sin, then we must call them out publicly. However, it does mean that maybe a message is necessary for all to hear. This way the guilty we know about & the guilty we are oblivious to may be moved to cease sinning.
2. **Private Instruction (Hebrews 3:13)**. Exhortation is not limited to collective worship on Sunday & agreed upon times for collective Bible study. This work is something Christians must do daily, for it is designed to prevent one’s heart from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Children of God have never had a difficult time in coming together, but what we do when we come together may need to be revisited. Is our

conversation holy & causing those we hang out with on a regular basis to examine themselves?

3. **Private Rebuke & Admonition (Luke 17:3-4)**. Sometimes, & especially at this moment, sins need to be exposed & the soul that sins need to know that “*you are the man*”! If a person just isn’t getting it, then we need to have a Nathan/David moment (**2 Samuel 12:1-15**).
4. **Public Rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20)**. These are the instructions from an apostle to a young preacher. Public rebuke is a difficult thing to do because we begin to think about ourselves & others in our family. “*What if I find myself on the receiving end of this?*” Nevertheless, it must be done, IF a person persists in sinning. There is no easy way to do it. This action should motivate all Christians to stay away from iniquity.
5. **Disfellowship (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)**. The separation has already taken place in Heaven. We must follow God & acknowledge such a separation by purging the evil from among the congregation.

Church Discipline Encourages Restoration (James 5:19-20)

Punitive discipline is one work that is overlooked among congregations, but restoration is even more overlooked. When church discipline is practiced, it creates hurt, pain, brings tears, & some may even get angry for the wrong reasons. However, what better way to show we care by working hard to restore the fallen? If we were the 1 sheep who has wandered from the fold, wouldn’t we want Jesus to find us? Therefore, we must go & do likewise!

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Antoine N. Holloway