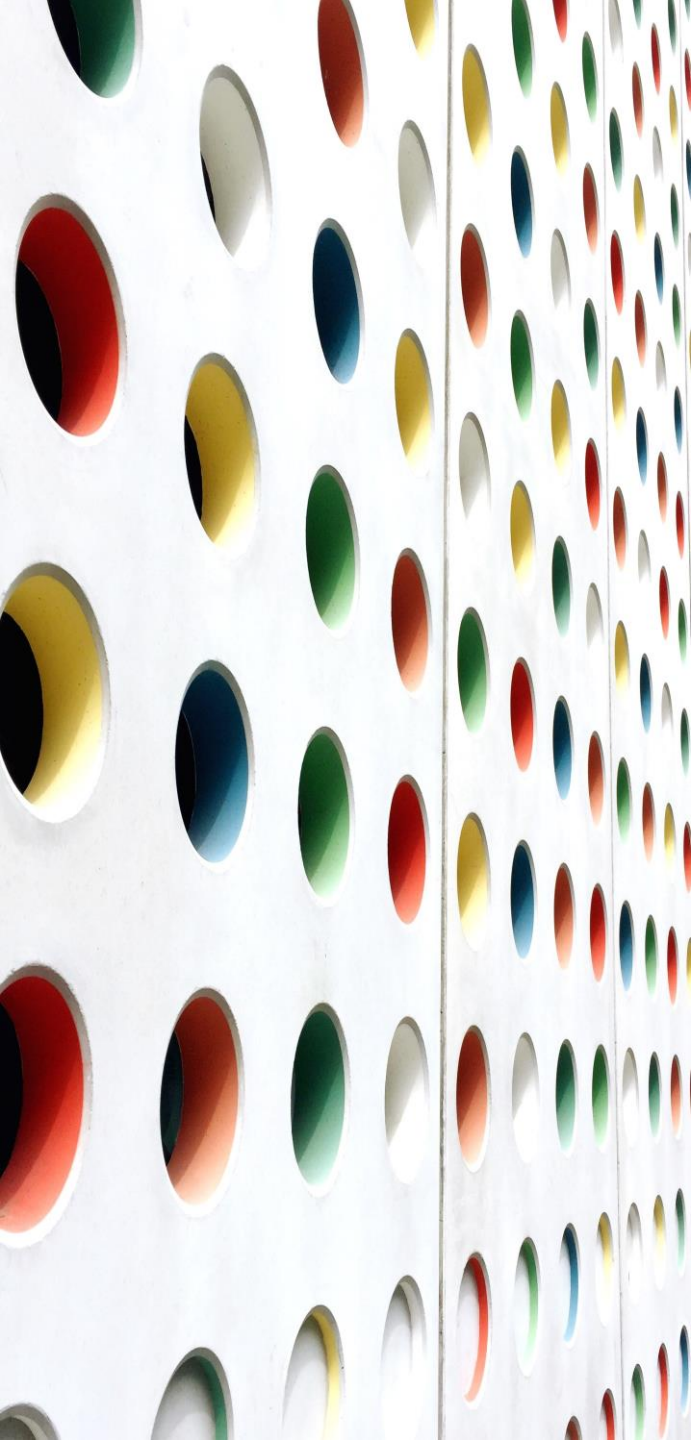


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CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

The Place of a Local Church in the Life of a Believer

A SEMINAR PRESENTED VIRTUALLY TO MEMBERS OF KINANGOP
EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATES TEAM (KSCF KEAT) ON 17TH OCTOBER 2021

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PREAMBLE

- **APPRECIATION:** TO THE LEADERSHIP FOR CONSIDERING ME WORTH OF THE MINISTRY AND EXTENDING THE HONOUR
- **COMMENDATION:** TO THE LEADERSHIP FOR INVESTING IN THE CRITICAL CONVERSATION AROUND CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN CONTEXT OF A 'PARACHURCH' MINISTRY GROUP
- **TOPIC:** FOCUS ON THE INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE AND THE LOCAL CHURCH; THUS **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**
- **ASSUMPTION:** THAT YOUR INTEREST IS ON 'DEEPER' CONCERNS WITH INDISCIPLINE AMONG CHRISTIANS RATHER THAN ON ASPECTS OF PERSONAL DISCIPLINE
- **ENCOURAGE:** PARTICIPANTS TO ENGAGE FULLY THROUGH THE AVAILABLE PLATFORMS—DON'T BE PASSIVE

PERSONAL DISCLOSURE

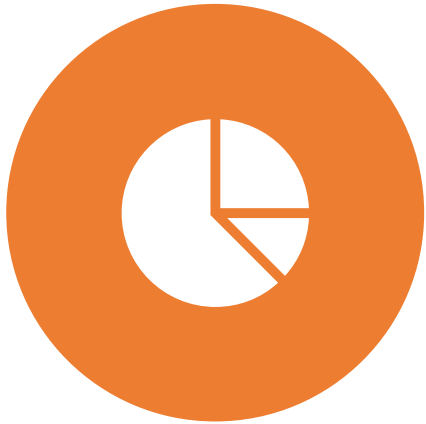
- ❖ **Testimony:** Born-again convert from 'Christianity' to Christ—a growing disciple & follower of Christ by choice and continual intentionality
- ❖ **Worldview:** Decisively biblical—convictions, principles, perspectives & practices—aversive/suspicious of non-biblical prescriptions from popular 'Christian' and secular perspectives
- ❖ **Purpose/Calling:** Pursuit of righteousness/godliness in each and every aspect of personal and corporate life while working for God's highest gain and glory
- ❖ **Career/Vocation:** A Bible Preacher-teacher and missiologist Missionary-Pastor working to build the Church of Christ, to multiply disciples of Christ and to propagate the gospel of the kingdom
 - ✓ Consultant in Missions and Church Growth as well as Intercultural Communication
 - ✓ Currently University Chaplain—platform to fulfil God's purpose and calling for my life.
 - ✓ Previously General Secretary of Trinity Fellowship and immediate former Senior Pastor at CITAM Parklands
- ❖ **Denomination:** Evangelical Charismatic Pentecostal
- ❖ **Family**.....



PURPOSE

To reexamine the subject of Church Discipline and the place of a local church in the life of a believer while highlighting contemporary perspectives, practices and challenges—especially in the evangelistic, discipleship and missions movement—and to minister healing from wounds incurred due to negligence or experience of ineffective discipline.

Content



**2. THE IRONY OF
UNDISCIPLINED
CHRISTIANS**



**1. UNDERSTANDING
CHURCH DISCIPLINE**



**3. BIBLICAL ADVISORY
& BEST PRACTICES**

PERSONAL CONFESSION

- **Have held an idealistic view of the perfect universal Church**
 - Had a low opinion and regard for the church and her ministry and leaders
 - Viewed the church as compromised and non-visionary for kingdom purposes
 - Always identified with a local church but was non-committal—remained at periphery
 - Served selectively for my own interest, not for the good of local church
 - Refused to join leadership—including appointment as an Elder
- **Fortunately lived with ministry colleagues—ensuring accountability and discipline**
- **Joined Pastoral Ministry in 2013**
 - Surprised by dynamics and complexity of church ministry
 - Appreciated the depth of kingdom resources (human and financial) hoarded in church
 - Amazed by reality of inadequate discipleship and fruitless busyness
 - Shocked by disturbing levels of indiscipline across board
 - Impressed by existence of clear authority structures to enforce discipline
 - Gained renewed commitment to build the church to become what it should be so as to do what it ought to



Opening Discussion

Have you witnessed any case of discipline in the church or among brethren? How was it handled? What was the outcome?

Have you been directly involved in cases of discipline in the church or among brethren?

Are there cases of indiscipline among Christians that bother you?

What is the role of the local church in matters of discipline?

Would you willingly submit to church discipline if need arose?

Illustrative Case Studies

Private and Informal

- A brother 'cautioned' for carrying a sister on a bicycle
- Brethren confronting a brother for his wavering approach to a relationship
- Sitting in the field to interrogate a sister after rumours of ungodly relationship
- Confronting Pastors after 'revelation' of their immorality

Public and Formal: Local Church

- A group of women excommunicated for speaking in tongues
- Muthoni excommunicated for disregarding counsel on moral issues
- A ministry leader asked to step down because of complaints about his financial integrity
- 'Single couples' confessing publicly because of fornication resulting in pregnancy

Public and Formal: Denomination

- AGM voted to excommunicate a brother for his contentious/antagonistic views on worship
- Former Moderator of PCEA defrocked for controversial ideas on spiritual warfare
- Recommendation for Council of Elders to 'fellowship' with a sister for disrespect of established authority
- Cases of Pastors asked to step down because of moral and/or ethical concerns

Conceptualisation

❑ Church as community of God's holy people

- ✓ Governed by His Word (the Bible)
- ✓ Living in obedience
- ✓ Serving in God's redemptive mission
- ✓ Expectant of Jesus' return any time

❑ Christian as essentially related to Christ and submitted to His righteous decrees in loving obedience

- ✓ Often viewed religiously to mean not Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Atheist, etc
- ✓ Often suggestive of a certain perspective and way of life
- ✓ Often complicated by diverse theological interpretations and denominational polity

❑ Discipline as a concept

- ✓ Learning = instructional discipline
- ✓ Formation = formative discipline
- ✓ Correction = corrective discipline

Church/Christian Discipline = process of correcting sin in the church

Confusion

1. Mission and parachurch organisations keeping members away from local churches and not providing requisite services, accountability and discipline
2. Reality and crisis of untended lamps
 - a. **Observation of rampant 'hyper-activism' in the ministry based on misguided zeal**
 - i. Reality of widespread cases of poor performance—especially peddling the gospel
 - ii. Reality of widespread cases of burnout
 - iii. Reality of widespread cases of ethical and moral breaches
 - b. **Observation of misinformed/unbiblical exchange of obedience with sacrifice leaning towards willingness to 'die' for a lost world and/or for the Church**
 - i. Failure to continually cultivate personal faith
 - ii. Glaring character deficiencies
 - iii. Disturbing compromise on personal and family responsibilities
 - iv. Increasing casualties of dysfunctional marriages and families among ministers
 - c. **Observation of unaccountable ministers, too many casualties in the ministry and short-lived ministers/ministries**
 - i. Too many 'mushroom' ministers
 - ii. Limitation of God's calling to youthful years
 - iii. Disturbing presence of just a few seasoned ministers and role models

Need for solid biblical ecclesiology to deal with perpetual confusion in mission and parachurch groups

Perspective

1. All of God's redeemed people belong to His Body (the Church) and must identify with a local church
 - You cannot claim to be a Christian and not a part of the Church!
2. God has entrusted His redemptive mission to His people—the Church
 - You cannot claim to be in the mission of the church but not a part of the Church!
3. God has only one church—the visible one in a given locality in spite of its shortcomings
 - Failure to recognize the local Body of Christ and to submit could be a sign of immaturity and pride
4. God puts His people in a local church as different members of the same body for mutual edification and accountability
 - It is unbiblical to withdraw from the church irrespective of giftedness and 'anointing'

Principles & Practices*

1. Discipline is an indispensable part of normal healthy life
2. Like any other organisation, the church can only discipline her members
3. Church discipline (corrective) should be anchored and guided by love—"The Lord disciplines the one he loves" (Heb. 12:6)
 - For the sake of loving the individual caught in sin, that he/she might come to repentance (1 Cor. 5:5)
 - For the sake of loving the weaker sheep in the church, that they might not be led astray (v6)
 - For the sake of loving non-Christian observers, that they might not be confused by a false witness (v1)
 - For the sake of loving Christ, that His name might be protected and honoured (v7-8)
4. Sin should be dealt with to the extent of its effect
 - Privately for isolated sins without significant outward implications
 - Initially privately for significant, outward sins seeking for brokenness and repentance (Matt. 18:15-16)
 - Publicly for significant, outward and unrepented sins

*Some ideas are borrowed from Jonathan Leeman '10 Things You Should Know about Church Discipline' in <<https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-church-discipline/>> accessed on 15th October 2021.

5. Church discipline should be redemptive—seeking to restore (1 Cor. 5:5); thus. systematic and progressive

- Must avoid embarrassing or defaming a Christian and/or his/her family or jeopardizing their interests
- Excommunication limited to significant public (visible/outward) unrepentant cases (Matt. 18:17)
- Excommunication means church can no longer vouch for someone's confession of faith
- An excommunicated member is not forbidden from attending church gatherings (just like other nominal Christians and non-believers are welcome)

6. Negligence of church discipline undermines/compromises the ministry by confusing the non-believers—claims of changed lives vis-à-vis irony of uncorrected believers

7. "When discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it."*

- "Christ means for his churches to be trained, exercised, and disciplined so that they will share in his holiness."

*John L. Dagg quoted in Leeman, '10 Things You Should Know about Church Discipline'

Caution

1. Against negative influences of secular worldview prevailing today
 - Individualism
 - Personal freedom and choice
 - Human rights
 - Inclusivity, tolerance, etc
 - Situational ethics
 - Claims of “nobody is perfect” and accusations of a ‘holier-than-thou’ attitude
2. Against the popular unbiblical doctrine of hyper-grace theology
 - Emphasizing God’s love and ignoring His judgement
 - Confusing loving correction with judging

3. Against unbiblical practices in disciplining

- Spreading rumours—without checking to confirm facts
- Gossip/slander in the name of prayer concern

4. Against abuse of church discipline*

- Unclear and/or unbiblical procedure and process
- Excesses of overstretched unbiblical exercise of authority
- Misguided narrow-minded legalistic attitudes unable to hold/contain obvious tensions in a fallen world—insisting on ‘straitjacket’ solutions
- Overemphasis on official procedures while downplaying Pastoral concerns

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Scriptural Affirmation

1 Cor. 5:1-8 “**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” (ESV).

Matt. 18:15-17 “¹⁵ “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (NIV).

Gal. 6:1-5 “Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. ² Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. ³ If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important. ⁴ Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else. ⁵ For we are each responsible for our own conduct” (NLT).

Conclusion

God disciplines His own children in His own church through His own Word administered by His own people

Negligence or failure to submit to church discipline is to exclude oneself from the commonwealth of God's people

Exercising healthy church discipline is a sign of personal maturity and concern for God's church and His people therein

A church (denomination, local congregation or ministry team) lacking in proper practice of church discipline will be seen as a disgrace to Christ and struggle in her witness to non-believers

The Decisive Question

Bq: What is the place of a local church in your life as a believer?

bQ: As a believer, what is your place in the life of a local church?

BQ: If need be, before who would you submit for discipline as a believer?

*Thank
you*



Group
Response

Q & A