



Scotts Hill Baptist Church

CHURCH QUESTIONS • CHURCH DISCIPLINE • MATTHEW 18:15-17 • 8/16/2026

MAIN POINT

Church discipline is a loving pursuit of redemptive correction, intended to restore wandering believers, protect the health and witness of the church, and display the holiness and grace of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When you hear the phrase "church discipline," what is your immediate reaction? Why?

Why is it often easier to avoid confronting someone about sin than to lovingly pursue them?

Have you ever had someone lovingly point out something in your life that needed to change? How did you respond?

Church discipline can sound harsh, judgmental, or punitive. But Scripture presents something very different. Biblical discipline is rooted in God's love for His people and His desire to rescue us from sin. The goal is never humiliation or punishment for its own sake, but repentance, restoration, holiness, and the glory of Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 18:12-17 AND HEBREWS 12:5-10.

How does the parable of the lost sheep help us understand the heart behind church discipline?

According to Hebrews 12, why does God discipline His children?

Church discipline begins with God's loving pursuit of His people. Just as a shepherd goes after a wandering sheep, God pursues His children when they wander into sin. His discipline is not evidence that He has rejected us, but that He loves us and desires our holiness. The church is called to reflect that same loving pursuit toward one another.

How does understanding discipline as an expression of love change your perspective on it?

What is the difference between loving pursuit and judgmentalism?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 18:15-17 AND GALATIANS 6:1.

What does Jesus instruct us to do when a fellow believer is caught in sin?

Why does Jesus begin with a private conversation?

The goal of confrontation is redemptive correction. The first step is personal and private, with the hope that the person will listen, repent, and be restored. Galatians 6:1 reminds us that even when correction is necessary, it should be carried out with gentleness.

What makes confronting someone's sin difficult?

How can we make sure our motivation is restoration rather than proving that we are right?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 18:16-17 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-7.

What happens when someone repeatedly refuses to repent?

Why does persistent, unrepentant sin eventually become a concern for the entire church?

Jesus describes a gradual process: private correction, involving a small group, bringing the matter to the church, and ultimately removing someone from the fellowship if they persistently refuse to repent. This is not meant to be a quick or punitive process. It is a careful, prayerful pursuit designed to call someone back to Christ.

Paul also explains that unaddressed sin can spread throughout the church like leaven. Church discipline therefore protects not only the individual but also the health and witness of the entire body.

What makes this process difficult for both the individual and the church?

How does the possibility of restoration help us understand the purpose of church discipline?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How does this study change the way you think about church discipline?

Are you willing to lovingly pursue a fellow believer when you see them moving toward destructive sin?

What makes you personally hesitant to confront sin in another believer's life?

How can you grow in receiving loving correction from other believers?

Is there an area of persistent sin in your own life where God may be calling you toward repentance?

How can our church cultivate a culture where biblical correction is viewed as an expression of love rather than judgment?

What would it look like for our group to become better at pursuing one another toward holiness and restoration?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God that He does not abandon His children when they wander into sin. Thank Him for His loving discipline, the sacrifice of Jesus, and the gospel that provides forgiveness and restoration. Ask God to give our church humility, courage, gentleness, and wisdom as we pursue one another toward holiness. Pray that we would be quick to repent, willing to receive correction, and faithful to lovingly pursue those who wander. Above all, pray that the holiness, grace, and glory of Jesus would be clearly displayed through the life of His church.

COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 18:12-17; HEBREWS 12:5-10 — LOVING PURSUIT

Jesus' teaching on church discipline occurs immediately after His teaching about the shepherd pursuing a wandering sheep. This context shows that correction is fundamentally an act of love. Hebrews likewise teaches that God's discipline is an expression of His fatherly love and is intended for our good, producing holiness in His children.

| MATTHEW 18:15-17; GALATIANS 6:1 — REDEMPTIVE CORRECTION

Biblical correction is intended to restore rather than shame. Jesus begins with a private conversation and only expands the circle when the person refuses to listen. Galatians 6:1 emphasizes that correction should be carried out gently. The desired outcome is always repentance, reconciliation, and restored fellowship.

| MATTHEW 18:16-17 — PERSISTENT REBELLION

When a professing believer persistently refuses to repent, Jesus provides a progressively broader process of correction. The goal remains restoration at every stage. Removal from church fellowship is the final and heartbreaking step, not the first response. It communicates the seriousness of unrepentant sin and calls the individual to repentance.

| 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-7 — THE HEALTH OF THE CHURCH

Paul warns that tolerated sin can spread throughout a congregation like leaven. Church discipline therefore serves the health of the entire body. It protects the church from the destructive effects of persistent, serious, unrepentant sin and helps preserve the church's witness to the world.

THE HOPE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The ultimate goal is not exclusion—it is repentance and restoration. The gospel reminds us that Jesus died for our sins not so that we could remain enslaved to them, but so that we could experience freedom from sin and reconciliation with God. Church discipline is

therefore best understood as a rescue mission: a loving pursuit of those who are wandering, for their good, the good of the church, and the glory of Jesus.