

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

DISCIPLINE, THE FORGOTTEN COMMANDMENT

Kenneth D. Cohn

A lack of discipline is responsible for the chaos in which the world now finds itself. Disregard for authority is evident on every hand. Discipline has faded into almost complete obscurity in the affairs of nations, states, communities, and has all but disappeared from the church of God. No home can be strong without discipline. No church can properly function without discipline. No nation can stand if its people flagrantly disregard discipline.

The early church believed and practiced discipline. It always disciplined with the right objective in mind. The early church grew and prospered because it worked constantly to maintain its purity. Discipline was used over and over to accomplish this.

Today, about every sin that can be found in the world can also be found in the church. There is a tendency to wink at sin among God's children and excuse it with the excuse that to try to correct it is to meddle into peoples' private lives. This is not true. It is the duty of the church to reprove, rebuke, exhort—even to cull out, delete, to withdraw fellowship from all who walk in an unruly manner and will not repent.

The above, the foreword to the booklet titled *The Forgotten Commandment* by the late Ed Smithson, was written by the late Foy L. Smith. Such observations are no less true today than when they were made so many years ago.

EXAMPLES OF DISCIPLINE

There are essentially two forms of discipline, preventative and corrective. Paul wrote about both in 2 Timothy 3:16-17*,

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruc-

tion in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This article shall be limited to corrective discipline.

There can be no corrective discipline imposed unless there is first an obligation to perform a certain commandment or to comply with a certain rule, principle, or instruction. The obligation is an imperative for a lesser authority to obey the instruction and commandments of a higher authority. When there is disobedience, then corrective discipline is required. Furthermore, fellowship is predicated on one's adherence to rules, commands, pronouncements, and instructions of an established authority properly exercising that authority. Such is the case when reference is made to fellowship between God and man, and between men.

The Holy Scriptures are replete with examples of disobedience and the ensuing discipline and severance of fellowship. One could start with Adam and Eve in Genesis and end with some of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters two and three and 22:18. But a few examples only shall be given for sake of brevity.

In Leviticus 10:1-3, we read the following:

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, This is what the Lord spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified. So Aaron held his peace.

Whatever the profane fire was, it was clear to all concerned, including Nadab and Abihu, that it was not authorized by the Lord, therefore, it was profane. Accordingly, Nadab and Abihu were punished for their willful transgression by the forfeiture of their lives. Aaron and

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

“A FALSE IMPRESSION”

An article I recently read closed with the following sentence: “While we can be tactful in our comments, we cannot leave a false impression.” It is from this sentence that the idea for this piece came to mind.

To know what is meant by “we can be tactful,” I consulted a few online dictionaries to see how they defined it. For instance, the *Cambridge English Dictionary* defines it to be, “careful not to say or do anything that could upset someone” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tactful>, Accessed 2/27/21). The *Free Dictionary* defines it as, “having or showing a sense of what is fitting and considerate in dealing with others” (<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/tactful>, Accessed on 2/27/21). *Collin’s English Dictionary* tells us that people are “tactful” when “they are careful not to say or do anything that would offend or upset other people.” It also adds that, “Sometimes it’s more tactful not to ask for the truth” (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tactful>, Accessed on 2/27/21). *Merriam-Webster* simply says, “having or showing tact.” Then it gives two synonyms that are supposed to help define what it is to be “tactful.” The two words given are “diplomatic” and “politic” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tactful>, Accessed on 2/27/21).

These dictionaries inform us that in current usage most people equate being tactful with not hurting someone’s feelings or offending them. Being truthful has little to do with their definition of tact or what it means to be tactful, except as the *Collin’s English Dictionary* said, “Sometimes it’s more tactful not to ask for the truth.” As is typical of our age, in many cases, truth takes a back seat to one’s feelings. Of the previous dictionaries, *The Free Dictionary* does a little better job at what I mean when I describe someone as being tactful—“having or showing a sense of what is fitting and considerate in dealing with others.” However, even that definition is very subjective, the meaning of “fitting” and “considerate” changing according to the person using it. But knowing that truth is objective (it corresponds with reality, standing outside of man and independent of his situations circumstances, gender, wealth, etc.). I am very much interested in God’s viewpoint (the only one that matters) concerning the meaning of “tact” and what it means to be “tactful” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Cor. 2:12, 13; John 12:48).

Truth takes precedence over and supersedes any and all things and people. Of course, in this article we are interested in spiritual truth. In His earthly sojourn Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). Also, for His apostles He prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”

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AN ANDREWS' BOY GONE BAD!

Roelf L. Ruffner

February 7, 2021, Max Lucado, co-minister of the apostate Oak Hills Church (formerly Oak Hills Church of Christ) in San Antonio, Texas, spoke at the Washington National Cathedral (Episcopal Church USA) in Washington, D.C. This was a “high honor” for Max. But before he spoke, he released a letter of apology to the “LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community” for his use of the Bible as a “weapon” against them in a sermon he delivered on same-sex marriage at Oak Hills in 2004. He claims he “wounded” others by that sermon. Apparently, the homosexual members of the Cathedral were offended by the invitation for Lucado to speak and being a religious liberal he did not want to offend anyone. Offending others with the Truth did not stop Jesus, Max. **“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?”** (Mat. 15:12).

The LGBTQ mob has won the battle for acceptance in American society. Their aim now is to persecute and extinguish any objection to their sad, sinful lifestyle. The religious folks Max hobnobs with have fully embraced them as a persecuted minority. Those who point out their sin are branded a bigot or a “homophobe” and shunned by polite society. Offensive to some or not, God’s Word still stands!

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9,10 – NKJ).

Max is a true wordsmith. Over the last thirty years, he has earned lots of money writing cotton candy devotional books and speaking ear tickling words to all who would hear.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

He has gone so far down the “**broad way**” (Mat. 7:13) of apostasy that he will fellowship anyone who calls God “Father.”

In his letter, he claims that he believes in “the traditional Biblical understanding of marriage.” But God’s “love and grace” now prevents him from pointing out sin as the Bible demands. Pure codswallop! The apostle Paul wrote to the evangelist Timothy, **“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine”** (2 Tim.4:2). This spiritual schizo-

phrenia and lack of spine is characteristic of what passes for Christianity nowadays. One cannot imagine Max going to jail for preaching New Testament Christianity like the apostles and Timothy did two thousand years ago. He simply does not believe the Bible anymore. His views change with the prevailing winds of popular theology.

In his letter, Max pulls out his favorite strawman to beat up the church. He wrote:

Over centuries, the church has harmed LGBTQ people and their families, just as the church has harmed people on issues of race, gender, divorce, addiction, and so many other things. We must do better to serve and love one another.

What “church” are you referring to, Max? False teachers like Max love to throw around imaginary accusations against the Bride of Christ as the clapping seals in their audience nod their heads in approval. Any congregation of God’s people who does not proclaim the Truth and stand up to sin is also guilty of sin (Jam. 4:17, Mat. 12:30, Rev.2:18-23). We often forget that Jesus was not crucified for preaching the Sermon on the Mount. He was crucified for rebuking the sinfulness of others. As one preaching brother told me, “I would rather someone was offended by my preaching in this life and repent than to be offended on the Day of Judgment, with no opportunity to repent.”

I hold no ill will towards Max. We share much in common. I grew up near where he hails from—Andrews, Texas. We both attended Abilene Christian University at the same time and are about the same age. It is my prayer and plea that Max truly bends the knee and repents of his errors before the Lord and His brethren. Yes, he would lose a lot in this world. But, life is too short and eternity unending to do otherwise. In the Day of Judgment, God will no longer accept apologies/repentance. As the Master said, **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent”** (Rev. 3:19).

[<https://reformationcharlotte.org/2021/02/12/max-lucado-apologizes-to-lgbtq-for-preaching-against-homosexuality-harming-them/> as of February 19, 2021]

—2500 Moore Court
Columbia, TN 38401

*“With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.”*

Psalm 119:10

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his two remaining sons were not permitted to mourn the deaths of these two which is a powerful indication of just how serious this whole matter of discipline is.

In Joshua chapter 7, we read that the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things of Jericho (everything but the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron which were to be put into the treasury of the house of the Lord), for Achan took some of the accursed things. Consequently, the subsequent attack on Ai was unsuccessful.

Joshua was in great distress over this defeat at the hands of Ai. The Lord told Joshua the reason for the defeat.

Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. Get up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you” (11-13).

When it was discovered that Achan had taken the accursed things, Achan, his whole family, and all his animals were stoned to death and then burned with fire. Clearly, the Lord took the matter of disobedience and discipline very seriously and so should we as a mark of our faithfulness.

In the previous two examples, God had given instructions as to what was to be done or not done. In Acts 5:1-11, we read of a situation in which there were no restriction on the latitude and discretion upon the actions of the central figures. There was a need for the support of the brethren in Jerusalem at that time. Many brethren contributed to the common treasury to help with the people’s needs. The last verse of Acts chapter 4 states that Barnabas sold a piece of land and gave the proceeds to the apostles.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

The same fate awaited Sapphira. There was no obliga-

tion on the part of Ananias or Sapphira to contribute to the needs of the brethren in Jerusalem, to sell their possessions in support of the same, or to disgorge all the proceeds from the sale. But they did have an obligation to tell the truth. This they failed to do and were disciplined accordingly.

DISCIPLINE AND FELLOWSHIP

What these few examples demonstrate is that fellowship is based upon obedience to the commandments of God and that disobedience disrupts fellowship. When disobedience occurs, discipline of the offender is expected and required. One cannot be in fellowship with God, and consequently with the faithful, by failing to properly discipline those who themselves are not faithful. Although the examples just cited resulted in the deaths of the offenders, the New Testament sets forth the procedures and protocols for administering discipline to the unrepentant offender. Make no mistake about it, fellowship, and the conditions for extending or withdrawing the same, and the discipline required to be imposed upon the unrepentant sinner are serious matters. Indeed, the condition of fellowship defines the faithfulness of the Christian.

The idea that faithful Christians are in fellowship with one another and Christ is a well-established tenet of the doctrine of Christ. In fact, if you think about it, the whole Bible from start to finish is about fellowship: from the creation when man was in fellowship with God, how that fellowship was lost, how to regain and retain it, how to treat those who lose fellowship, and who not to fellowship. In Acts 2:42, we read **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”** This passage, among others, establishes the case that fellowship among and between Christians is inseparable from the apostles’ doctrine. Scripturally authorized fellowship flows organically from the apostles’ doctrine and from no other source.

The apostle John wrote the following recorded in verses 1-4 of the first chapter of First John:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

John is saying that he has declared and written certain things that the apostles have seen and handled respecting the Savior that would permit his readers to have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and by extension, fellowship with them. John goes on in verses 5-7 to declare to them exactly how this fellowship is to be achieved.

This is the message which we have heard from Him and

declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

What was the message heard from Him and declared to the readers of John? It was that God is light and in Him is no darkness. Jesus said that **“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”** (John 8:12). This message spoken was the **“faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3b). It was delivered by a declaration to the saints based on revelation. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:3-5,

how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

So, the apostles all taught the same thing. The knowledge revealed to and written by Paul is the same as the apostles’ doctrine of Acts 2:42 and the message of 1 John 1:5 heard and declared by the apostles.

Paul further wrote in Philippians 2:14-16 to:

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

How does one shine as lights in the world? By holding fast to the word of life. Is the word of life any different from **“the apostles’ doctrine”** of Acts 2:42 or the **“message”** of 1 John or the **“knowledge”** of Ephesians 3:4 or the **“faith once for all delivered to the saints”**? It is not. Furthermore, the light of the gospel is the only thing that will dispel darkness. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, only then can we have fellowship with Him and one another. It is by that process of walking in the light that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses and keeps on cleansing us from all sin.

But we have yet to give the definition of fellowship. According to reputable Greek lexicons (*Thayer, Arndt & Gingrich, Robinson, Bagster, et al.*) the word *fellowship* translates the noun *koinonia* and the verb *koinoneo*, which mean communion, fellowship, sharing, communication, contribution, partaker and partner, companion, etc. Thus, the things shared and the ones doing the sharing are organically connected. There are two types of fellowship. One derives from walking in the light (1 John 1:7) and the other from walking in darkness (1 John 1:6, see also Eph. 5:11-14, 2 Cor. 6:14-15). The two cannot exist at the same time in the same person. It is little wonder, then, that Jesus speaks of the necessity of separating the two. He said that,

If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire (Mat. 18:8-9).

What is the one who is walking in the light to do with the one who is not walking in the light, i.e., walking in darkness? As Jesus said and Paul writes, there must be separation. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Paul wrote:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”

We were called into the fellowship of Jesus as Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 1:9: **“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”** (See also 2 The. 2:14).

So, what is the process of separation? First, the one not walking in the light must be identified. In Romans 16:17, Paul urges brethren to **“note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”** In 2 Thessalonians 3:6, brethren were commanded in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from the apostles. Anyone acting contrary to the doctrine which they learned from the apostles is causing divisions and offenses. Any brother who walks not according to the tradition (i.e., the teaching of the apostles) is walking disorderly. It is these brethren from whom fellowship must be withdrawn if they will not repent.

What does this withdrawal of fellowship look like? Although the Jews got many things wrong about the coming of the Anointed One, one thing they did know was how to withdraw fellowship. Jesus said the following:

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” 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 (Mat. 18:15-17).

The Jew would not have any social intercourse with a heathen or tax collector. You will recall what Peter said to those gathered with Cornelius: **“You know how unlawful**

it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation” (Acts 10:28). This is how Jesus said to treat the unrepentant sinner, one who is walking disorderly. It would be presumptuous to try to modify His approach in any way.

Paul also had something to say about how to withdraw fellowship in 1 Corinthians 5:1-11. In verses 1 through 5, he writes that,

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Paul records in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 a list of sins that could not be tolerated. Are these not the things of the flesh that Paul seeks to destroy? Why, of course. In chapter five vs. 6-8, he continues to say that,

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Even if the action taken against the erring brother does not bring about his repentance, it will at least remove the bad leavening influence on the church that the unrepentant brother will have if he was not isolated. Paul writes further in vs. 9-11,

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.

Why did Paul fail to mention the wife of the erring brother's father? Was she not as guilty of sin as the erring brother? Indeed, she was. Since she was not mentioned, a reasonable assumption is that she was one of **“the sexually immoral people of this world,”** i.e., she was not a Christian. Paul says not even to eat with the erring brother. A Jew would not eat with a heathen or a tax collector. That is how we are to treat an erring and unrepentant brother.

Paul commanded the Thessalonian brethren in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7 that they **“withdraw from every brother**

who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you.”

Paul further stated in verse 13 that Christians are not to grow weary in doing good. Withdrawing from every brother who walks disorderly was doing good and they were not to grow weary in the doing of it when necessary. In verses 14 and 15, Paul writes that **“if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”**

The action that is to be taken is to identify that person that does not obey the apostles' word and do not keep company with him. The action that constitutes **“not keeping company with him”** is to bring him to shame thereby prompting his repentance. If the action is not designed to bring about his shame, then it is the wrong action. He is to be admonished as a brother and not as an enemy. His repentance is sincerely desired all the while his leavening influence is to be isolated. The erring brother is not to be treated in any way that would signify to him that things can continue as it would, say, with the sexually immoral people of this world contemplated in 1 Corinthians 5:10. As the commentator Albert Barnes stated respecting Chapter 5 of First Corinthians,

We see the OBJECT of Christian discipline; 1 Cor 5:5. It is not revenge, hatred, malice, or the more (sic) exercise of power that is to lead to it; it is “the good of the individual” that is to be pursued and sought. While the church endeavors to remain pure, its aim and object should be mainly to correct and reform the offender, that his spirit may be saved. When discipline is undertaken from any other motive than this; when it is pursued from private pique or rivalry, or ambition, or the love of power; when it seeks to overthrow the influence or standing of another, it is wrong. The salvation of the offender and the glory of God should prompt to all the measures which should be taken in the case. (from *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997-2014 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

THE FAILURE OF (UNBIBLICAL) DISCIPLINE

If then the Bible is so clear on the need, the method, and the purpose of corrective discipline, then why does it work so seldom? It is not because the method set forth in scripture is in error. *It is, rather, because the erring know that no one is going to try to do anything about it.* Those of us who sit by and watch unconcerned and act as if no discipline has taken place are in sin as much as the one who has been disciplined and refuses to repent. While this is true in most churches today, it is even more so when the disciplined one moves to another congregation, be it local or remote. It is typical that when a newcomer expresses a wish to place membership at new congregation no inquiry is made respecting the newcomer's fellowship status at the former congregation. Furthermore, it is typically the case that when a member of the new congregation knows the newcomer has been disciplined

by the former congregation and remains unrepentant, nothing is said at all such as informing the membership of the newcomer's fellowship status. Indeed, the former member may likely welcome the unrepentant newcomer as a friend. Also, the new congregation, for the most part ignorant because they have made no appropriate inquiry and the former member fails to inform the new congregation of the newcomer's fellowship status (they may have no concern about such matters if they did know), may invite the newcomer to preach and teach Bible classes. Now we recognize that the new congregation could just as well invite an unrepentant non-member to preach and teach Bible classes. That happens all the time because there is a general disregard for the authority of the Scriptures.

What about visiting the new congregation, perhaps at the invitation of a dear friend there, knowing how that congregation has no regard for the Bible's teaching on fellowship and that certain members, particularly the dear friend, of the new congregation know that an unrepentant person is preaching and teaching? If one has been paying attention to this lesson, what possibly could the answer be? When there is a general

disregard for the authority of the Bible, the Bible's teaching on fellowship will be disregarded as well which, of course, is sin.

If this question was posed to Aaron after the deaths of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, what do you suppose his answer would be? Or Cain? Or Achan's friends? Or the man with his father's wife? Or Hymenaeus and Alexander? We know the answer.

Please do not treat lightly the matter of fellowship, the breach of fellowship, or the discipline imposed on the unrepentant, or ignore the whole mechanism of discipline! A cavalier disregard for such matters does yourself spiritual harm, fails to bring repentance to the disobedient, and results in an impure church. Be it not so!

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* All scriptures cited herein are from the *New King James Version* unless otherwise indicated.



(Editorial, Continued From Page 2)

(John 17:17; Also see Luke 8:11; Acts 20:28; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). Many years after Jesus had returned to heaven, the inspired James echoed our Lord when to Christians he wrote, **“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth”** (Jam. 1:18a). The apostle Paul wrote that one of the attributes of love (*agape*) is it **“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”** (1 Cor. 13:6). Thus, Timothy was admonished by the same apostle to **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”** (2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore, we see why Jesus declared, **“If ye love me, keep my commandments”** (John 14:15). Thus, Paul admonished Christians, **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him”** (Col. 3:17).

Any remarks we make to, or our actions involving others, must convey the truth in any and all situations and circumstances. When it comes to teaching the truth to others we must follow Paul's example. To the Corinthian brethren the apostle wrote, **“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech”** (2 Cor. 3:12). Yes, “to be understood is to be found out.” And, that is one reason some people do not follow Paul's example in their teaching. I fear they align themselves with the dictionary definitions of being tactful as previously noted. Indeed, being tactful does not permit compromising or altering the truth so it will not prick the sinner's conscience. The examples we set by our conduct either influence people to live according to the truth

or not. Thus, people not only teach orally and in writing, but also by means of their conduct. Paul instructed Timothy and, thus, all Christians with the following words, **“...be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”** (1 Tim. 4:12a).

When our Lord taught lessons that severely upbraided the Pharisees, the scriptures reveal, **“Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying”** (Mat. 15:12). Clearly, the disciples were concerned about the Pharisees being offended, but Jesus was not. He was solely interested in the truth they needed to hear. Thus, we may rightfully conclude that God's truth must be preached plainly regardless of the feelings of the people that hear it—whether it offends them or not. In the first recorded gospel sermon, Peter boldly declared to his audience:

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do (Acts 2:36, 37)?

Also see Acts 7:51-60 for a different response from those who were cut to the heart by the truth they heard.

NATHAN AND KING DAVID

When the prophet Nathan confronted David to his face with the sins of the king, he clearly revealed what the true meaning of being tactful is when applied to teaching the truth

David needed to hear. (Before finishing this missive, please pause here and read Second Samuel 12:1-7.) The loving and bold prophet Nathan demonstrates how to state the truth so that it will be brought to bear on the sins of David, causing the errant king to see his need to repent. What an example of being tactful! Truly, it is genuine tactfulness that Christians must cultivate in exposing and refuting sin in a person's life. This example of old is included in the truth of Romans 15:4 (also see 1 Cor. 10:6) regarding the value of the Old Testament scriptures in tactfully preaching the gospel to anyone at anytime, or place, or in whatever circumstances or situations people find themselves. How anyone can read and understand the foregoing scriptures and fail to realize what Paul meant by using "**great plainness of speech**" is beyond me. *Thus, being tactful means to speak, or write the truth as well as living it before others so it will accomplish the good it alone can do in converting them from the error of their ways.*

SETTING A BAD EXAMPLE IS TO TEACH A LIE

The sentence we are studying also noted that being tactful did not permit one to give a "false impression" to others. Of course, that which is false is a lie and our previous discussion has already covered this to some extent. No doubt the writer of our sentence meant for his readers to understand that in being tactful one must not speak or write falsely. But he did not stop with speaking or writing a falsehood. He also declared that Christians must not set a sinful example (pattern of life) and lead others by their "false impression(s)" to engage in sin. *Thus our actions are examples/patterns that influence (teach) others either to engage in obeying the truth or disobeying it—to be faithful to God or not.*

A STRANGE DOCTRINE

With the previous material before us, I want to apply it to a false doctrine I came across some time ago. As far as I know, the church member who believes and teaches this error does so by example (his conduct) and not orally or in print. However, as is the case with any written or spoken doctrine, his belief may be reduced to a precisely stated proposition. In this case, this person's conduct affirms the following proposition—"The scriptures teach that as long as a church member practices a certain error without propagating it orally or in writing, said member remains in fellowship with God."

Does the church member who lives as the foregoing

proposition states not know that living a lie makes "a false impression" on others—it teaches others? Of course, if the foregoing proposition is true, is it not also the case that the following proposition is true? "The scriptures teach that fellow church members must remain in fellowship with unrepentant church members as long as said unrepentant church members only teach their false doctrine by example." If the foregoing is not the case, then why is it not? Since when did an "example" (good or bad conduct or pattern of life) cease to influence others—make a good or "false impression" on them? Does not the manner in which we live our lives before others influence them to live in harmony with the Word of God or not (Mat. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12)?

A DOCTRINE THAT LEADS ONE TO FELLOWSHIP THE UNFAITHFUL

The foregoing error certainly impacts the fellowship of brethren with one another. It is not being "tactful" to fellowship brethren who by their conduct violate any obligatory matter on the basis that they have not taught it orally or in print. To the contrary, it is sinful to do so. The apostle Peter was not guilty of teaching in print or orally the error he practiced in the church at Antioch of Syria, but the apostle Paul dealt with Peter on the basis of the sinful influence the latter's erroneous conduct exerted on other brethren, which evil influence (example) led other brethren into sin. Peter's conduct on that occasion taught a false doctrine and the apostle played the hypocrite (Gal. 2:11ff). If Peter and those who were influenced (taught) by his bad conduct (example) had not repented of their sinful conduct, does anyone truly think that Paul would have ignored their sin (Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 John 9-11)? Indeed, the fact that the Holy Spirit led the apostle Paul to include it as part of the New Testament of the Christ refutes the error that teaches—"as long as a church member practices a certain error without propagating it orally or in print, said member remains in fellowship with God." One's conscience ought to be seriously pricked by the truth that condemns false teaching whether one is guilty of teaching error orally, in print, or by example (one's pattern of conduct). As Paul wrote, "**Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample**" (Phi. 3:17).

—David P. Brown, Editor