

I want to combine a couple of things as we move forward in this series. So I'll take pieces of what we've already done and begin to remind you of them as we move into church discipline, a topic that isn't very popular. But we'll just throw it out there and let the Lord be the Lord and trust that the full council of God is better for us than only parts of it. So I think it's always helpful for us to get up high and look down on what God is doing in regards to how it flows and moves. So as long as God lets me pastor you, I want to over and over again get you up high enough to see the metanarrative, to look at exactly what God's doing, how this begins, how this ends and what God is doing in regards to its progress. Because I believe that if you can get high enough to see that, if you can get out of the weeds of your own life, difficult subjects like this become a lot easier to comprehend, understand and apply to our lives.

So my first five minutes here is going to be nothing new for you if you have any background here at all. So if we go back to week one of this series, we know that God is the Creator God. He created all things, which means there is not a sacred/secular divide. It's not like certain things are sacred and certain things are secular. Because God created all things. And the Scriptures are unbelievably clear that His creation was good and that there was nothing in that creation that was created to terminate on itself, but rather to communicate to all of us that there is something greater than creation. The illustration I've always used is that God gives us food, but He gives us food so that we might worship Him, that we might know His creative brilliance in the flavors that He has given us and His provision in the fact that He has given us food. We could say the same about wine, about sex and about shelter. We could go on and on, but everything that is was created by God and was given to us so that we might know He is and that we might worship Him in His goodness for giving us these things. We get about two chapters of that in the sixty-six books of the Bible. In Genesis 3, we see the Fall enter into the world, and the lie that is given to Eve and her dumb husband is the same lie that most of us buy into to this day. Here's the lie, "You would make a better god than God." That's the lie. As simple as that sounds, that's what gets every one of us almost daily.

So get your head around Genesis 1 and 2. Adam and Eve are created by God and put in the garden naked. God's command is, "Enjoy one another. Enjoy creation." I have more rules than that in my house. I have to tell my boy, "Put some pants on, dude. You can't run through the house naked." So there are more rules in my house right now than there were in the creative design of God. There was one rule, "Don't touch this tree. If you touch this tree, you will die." The one rule was given so that we might know and understand that submission to God is a good and beautiful thing. "Enjoy creation. Enjoy one another. Fill the earth and subdue it. Just don't touch this tree, or death enters into the world." Now Eve is walking through the garden with her husband, who is apparently staring at a bush or something. I have no idea what he's doing exactly, but the serpent begins to lie to Eve. Now watch the lie. "Take this fruit and eat it." "No, God says if we do that, we'll die." Listen to the lie, "You won't die. You'll become like God, and God doesn't want you to be like Him. So take and eat." And Eve sees that the fruit is appealing to the eye, and she eats it. And then she nudges Adam, who is still staring at the birds or whatever, gives him the fruit and he eats it too. And it fractures the universe. One rule fractures it all and death begins to rule and reign over everything. Now food is gluttony or indifference. Now wine is indifference or alcoholism. Now sex is lust or indifference or a thousand other perversions. On and on we could go. Everything gets fractured in the Fall. From there, it just gets worse. You have Cain who killed Abel and murder is introduced. On and on it goes, until the Bible tells us that God regrets that He made man. And you know the felt board children's story. He kills everyone except Noah and his family. He sends the animals to Noah, who builds the ark, and then He floods the earth and kills everyone and starts anew with Noah. Sin is still ruling and reigning, so it doesn't get much better after that.

And in Genesis 12, you have a marker, you have a real legitimate stake that goes into the ground where God tells Abram that He's going to make a people through him and through that people, He's going to begin to communicate His plan to redeem and reconcile all things to Himself. A Messiah in the line of Abram, the Jewish people, will be raised up and He will deliver people from what really broke everything, sin. The whole rest of the Old Testament screams this reality. From the Psalms to the prophets to the law to the sacrificial system, everything is a shadow of what is to come in Jesus Christ. Things go silent for four hundred years before John the Baptist shows up. We find out very quickly that the Pharisees are very interested in John the Baptist, so they send runners to ask, "Who are you? Are you Elijah?" They begin to ask him these questions, and he keeps dodging the question like a true prophet does. In the end, he finally says, "I'm the forerunner for the Messiah. I'm the one who is preparing a way for the Messiah." And then Jesus explodes on the scene, lives a perfect, spotless, righteous life that will be imputed (given) to those who trust in His cross. He goes to the cross and absorbs God's wrath towards you and me. This is the gospel as plain and simple as I can make it to you. This is the gospel. It's this great exchange where Christ takes God's wrath towards you on Himself and gives to you His perfect righteousness so that God sees you as spotless and holy in His sight. This is the great exchange. This is the gospel. This is why we're here. This is what we celebrate. We don't celebrate our righteousness. We don't celebrate our ability to do this and not do this. We celebrate the fact that we stand in front of God clean because of Christ. And that's the gospel. Now He is crucified, resurrected and He begins to impart and empower the disciples to push back what's dark in the world and fulfill what was prophesied about in Genesis 12, where all the nations on earth will be blessed.

And that's where we pick up the story. Matthew 28, starting in verse 18, "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . ." Now it's imperative that you know this because any model of church that is after converts and not disciples is not a biblical model. Because the great commission is not, "Make converts;" it's, "Make disciples." So where you have converts and where you're baptizing but there is no disciple making planned, you're no longer within the bounds of what Christ calls His church. "Make disciples of all nations." He's going to help us work through this. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." So a disciple is one who observes all that God commands. In other words, he obeys all that Christ has commanded. And then you have the promise that Jesus is with us always, even until the end of the age. It is difficult to observe or obey all that Jesus has commanded, is it not? Does anybody find that there is something in them, something around them that wars against completely surrendering their life to Christ?

Let me explain what this is. The reason it's like climbing uphill in regards to growing in your holiness and submission to Christ is that you and I face some legitimate enemies to this reconciling work of God. Flip over to 1 John 2. There are three enemies of us maturing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. So we are filled with the Holy Spirit, made regenerate, given a new heart, a new life and we are born anew with desires for God, with desires to follow Him, and then here comes the enemies of us maturing in that. 1 John 2, starting in verse 15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world." Now this is not a reference to the physical world. He's not saying, "Don't love mountains. Don't love the beach." Let's keep reading "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." So our first enemy in regards to our maturity is what the Scriptures simply call "the world." He defines it like this. We have in us the lust of the eyes, which means there are wicked desires in all of us. Nobody gets out from underneath this one. There are wicked desires in us all. For you not to acknowledge that leads us to another text in 1 John that says you're a liar and the truth is not in you. There are times you want to do harm to someone. Now you might be on the up and up. You might not want to kill them, but you do want harm to befall them. There are times that good things happen to people and you don't like that good things happened to them. There are times that bad things happened to people and you're glad it happened to them. You have wicked desires. You have perverse desires. This is

true about us all. This is the lust of the eyes. He talks about the desire of the flesh and desire of the eyes. So you've got these two pieces. You've got the lust of the flesh that then looks at what the world has created. So the world, in the end, is our cultural scheme that really is built out by demonic activity.

Our Western culture is all about coveting. Every commercial you see, every billboard you see, every bit of commercial appeal is simply that you would be a more complete person, you'd be a better person, you'd be a happier person if you just had this, if you just drove this, if you just got this or if you just got your body to look like this. And what you and I are bombarded with is, "This is what deep, real, satisfying, meaningful life is." And it's a lie. It's the air we breathe. I'll give you a current example. Nothing was wrong with our iPhone 3GS's. They worked fine. There is a software patch that helped that slow down thing, but it didn't stop any of us. It didn't stop me. I went and grabbed the 4G. Why did we grab the 4G? Because it made us all happier. It made us all better people, better humans to have it. This is what happens. You've got the world that says, "This is what you need to satisfy you. This is what's going to make you whole." And then you've got the eyes of the flesh that have wicked desires going, "Well I want to be accepted by men. I want to be in that in-crowd. Well I want to be at the top of that social pecking order. I want my body to look like this." And you can put whatever idol you want up there, and we begin to pursue those things. A great Puritan writer called the relationship between the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh like a hook and bait. He said, "In the end, the desires of your flesh is the hook and the world is just constantly chumming the waters, throwing out bait." I don't know what you know about fishing. I don't know a lot. I do know that fish aren't the smartest animals on the earth. In the end, you put some bait on a hook and throw it in there and wait. Even a smart fish just kind of nibbles on it, but a good fisherman has learned to pop him. And then when he's got it on the line, he reels it in, guts it and then fries it. . . or bakes it in lemon sauce. According to our Puritan brother, this is how the devil gets all of us. He baits a hook, throws out the line, waits for us to get tired enough, waits for us to get weak enough, waits for us to feel entitled enough and then we latch on. And then he's got us on the path to destruction.

And then according to our text, we become boastful and proud about what we've done and accomplished. So if you remember back to God's creative design, it's no longer, "Look at what God has done. Look and what God has given. Look at how beautiful God has been to me. Look at how gracious God has been to me." It's instead about me, what I did, what I accomplished and what I made happen. And this becomes those who love the world boast in themselves. They're the ones who did it, they're the ones who accomplished it, they're the ones who nailed it and everyone should listen to them. It's a sign of worldliness when you think that your voice deserves to be heard above everybody else's. And that's what we see happening in 1 John. I'll give you one more verse on this. Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world."

So you've got the world, you've got your flesh, those wicked desires inside of us, and then the third one is simply demonic activity. Let me give you just a couple of texts here. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11, "Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." So once again, we are not built for this in the Western world. We are linear, mathematical, we love apologetics, we love graphs and charts and very little attention is paid at all to how often the Scriptures bring up the reality of demonic activity, bring up the power of demonic activity and bring up how influenced we can be, even as believers, by demonic activity. So here are our three great enemies. You've got the world that is constantly enticing, and you've got the flesh that is hungry for wicked things. So your flesh is hungry, the world keep serving up dinner and the devil baits the hook and just waits for you to bite. These are our three great enemies that really attack our desire to be mature, fully surrendered followers of Jesus Christ.

So that then gets us into church discipline. There are three types of church discipline in the Scriptures. The first one is actually a very positive one. In fact, I believe all three are very positive, although the last one is very difficult for people.

The first one is simply formative discipline. That means when I hear the good news of Jesus Christ and Christ saves me, gives me a new heart, gives me a new mind, gives me a desire to know Him and follow Him, I begin to engage in what historically has been called the spiritual disciplines. I begin to attend church, I begin to study my Bible, I begin to get around Christian community and I begin to figure out what it looks like to follow Him and submit my life to Him. A lot of people find this very easy at first. Some people find it very difficult at first. At the end of the day, I've just got to chalk that up to the sovereignty of God. Some people just get so radically transformed in an instant that it's not hard for them at all. Their relationships are changing, they're losing relationships and gaining new relationships and it doesn't matter to them. And then there are other people for whom it's a lot slower process than that. It was a lot slower of a process for me. But our hearts are awakened to the reality of God, and then we begin to participate in the formative disciplines.

And then eventually for all of us, the desires of our flesh, the enticement of the world, the weakening of our resolve by demonic activity leads to the second part of discipline, which is restorative discipline. But before we get into that, let me simply show you a couple of things. Flip over to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." The Bible says that the Scriptures are going to bear weight on all of us. They are going to correct, they are going to reproof and they are going to rub and engage us in a way that we at times don't find pleasant. They are going to call us things that we don't like being called. They are going to tell us that our way of living is wrong and that we need to repent. It is not politically correct, and it is not interested in your approval of its commands. It is simply going to say, "This is the Word of God. If God is ultimately authoritative and these are God's words, then these words are authoritative." You can submit or you can reap the consequences of your rebellion, but the Word of God is given to rebuke and correct us, all of us. And that leads me to Proverbs 12:1. "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid." Now don't get all upset because I called you stupid. I didn't call you stupid. God called you stupid. That's completely different. I didn't go, "Oh, I think you're stupid if you don't listen to correction." God says you're stupid if you don't listen to correction. This is a universal truth across all demographics, across all ages. If you cannot be corrected, if you cannot be rebuked, if you can't be reproofed, if you can't be trained and taught, you are taking a posture of being God Himself. If the Word can't correct you, then you're saying, "I don't need the Word to correct me. I've got it." Well what about where you're living in such a way that runs contrary to the Word? "Well the Word just doesn't get our culture." And you have to start making all sorts of weird arguments. "Well, god didn't know about me and my specific circumstances."

Now most people don't have a problem with this until it's time to apply it. Where this gets difficult is who holds this tool of correction and reproof. Nobody minds the scalpel; they just don't like who gets to hold it. So let's go to Matthew 18, and we'll start getting into restorative discipline. We'll pick it up in verse 15. "If your brother sins against you. . ." So now we're talking about a sin issue. There are multiple times in the Scriptures where there is simply a disagreement that's not about sin where a mediator is brought in to get to the bottom of the disagreement, but it's not sin. So we're not talking about just a disagreement here. We're talking about sin. If you're just going to agree to disagree, then bring in a mediator who can help you guys sift through it. This is what you're going to find happening in the book of Philippians when apparently two women are being a bit catty, and everybody is getting sucked in to the drama. So Paul says, "Timothy, get a couple of guys, sit down and let this be resolved peaceably so we can concentrate on the gospel and not get caught up in this. You'll find this again between Paul and Barnabas when Barnabas wanted to take John on the second missionary journey, when on the first missionary journey John Mark bailed on them, and Paul's like, "He has no spot on my roster." So they end up disagreeing, the council meets and they go their separate ways, and the gospel goes in two different directions. But there was a mediator that separated them. And years later you'll see Paul saying, "Tell John Mark to bring my my cloak. He is a faithful brother who encourages my soul." So although they disagreed to the point where they went their separate ways, years later there is still a deep affection for one another. That's how you resolve conflict that's not sinful. You bring in a mediator. But this has to do with sin. "If your brother sins against you, go

and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." So this isn't a group dynamic yet. This is not you sitting in your home group going, "You know what this verse made me think about? This verse made me think about Brad, because I don't think he does this verse very well. Anybody else think Brad stinks at this verse?" The Bible says, "You go to Brad as your brother." Which means it's not vindictive, it's not about power, it's not about getting your way. There is a clear biblical sin that has been committed and you are lovingly going to your brother and sitting down with him biblically in error. You sit him down and show him in the Scriptures, "Man, I believe that what your doing is sinning and I'm fearful that you're going to get on that hook and that you're going to find yourself in a really bad spot being destroyed by the enemy, being enticed by your flesh." And you plead gently and in humility for repentance. For what gain? Look at what gain. "If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." You have saved him. The goal in it is not to be theologically right, and it's not to flex your biblical knowledge. It's that your brother, who stands on a precipice, is restored. That's the goal. That's what you're after. That's your hope. That's the desire when you engage your brother about sin.

Now often times it gets much more complex than that, so let's keep reading. "But if he does not listen. . ." There are times where you have to go in and sit down with him and go, "You know the Scriptures say this, this and this, and I just see you blatantly doing this. And I'm fearful for you, fearful for your heart and fearful for your mind. What I want for you is the fullness of Jesus Christ, maturity in Christ. I feel like this is a blind spot in your life. So would you consider these things? Would you pray about these things? Would you ask others about these things?" And often he'll do the old switch-aroo misdirection on you where he goes, "Well I feel like you're judging me. I don't like how you've come at me like this. What you're saying might be true, but the fact that you've handled it the wrong way means that I don't have to listen to what you're accusation is." That is classic misdirection. It's brilliant, but it still ends up with your brother falling off the cliff. So what happens if there is misdirection? What happens if they go, "Well what about this text? What about this? How are you going to come up on me like that? Well shouldn't you have done it this way?" For all that stuff, the Scriptures tell us what to do. "But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." That doesn't mean you get two or three of your boys or your sisters on your side who see the way you see and you go mug this guy. This works best when you find people who love the person you're confronting, men or women who are for this person. By the way they have lived their lives, by the way they've interacted with his family, by the way they have walked with him faithfully, there's evidence for them to say, "I'm not trying to control you. I love you. I've cried tears for you." And then you sit down and let the facts be established. And then maybe I have to own my part. Maybe I have to go, "You know, I didn't come with a lot of grace. I didn't come with a lot of mercy. Please forgive me in that. But can we still look at the reality that this may be in your life?" Maybe he comes back with Scriptures, maybe he comes back and says, "Well this, this and this gives me the freedom to do this." Now what we have is people in the room who love and care for him, who are able to speak both to you and him concerning these issues so we can get to the heart of the matter.

Now let's keep going. Verse 17, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." In my eight years here, we have not ever rolled somebody out church-wide. We have been tempted before, but we haven't done it. Here's why. On a given weekend, there are about ten thousand people at the Village Church. About three thousand of you are covenant members, which means to roll something out to all ten thousand of you isn't to roll it out in front of the church. Because a lot of you are not the church in regards to the Village Church. So airing our business to you is of no business of yours. So what we have done is we've gone to group, we've gone to department, we have rolled it out in geographical locations and we've said, "Okay, here's the situation. Here's what we've walked through. The group has already been made aware, his friends have already been made aware, we have followed the thing as we're biblically supposed to follow it and he still refuses to repent of his sin."

Let's finish the text out. "And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." So let's talk about Gentile and tax collector. Now we started our service tonight with announcements referencing John

4 where Jesus is speaking to a Gentile and sharing the hope of the gospel with the Gentile. So it's not that we no longer associate with this guy. We'll get to that in the third form of discipline. This is simply saying, when we engage him, we're asking him to no longer live as an enemy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We're asking him to repent of his sins and to come home. And this is how restorative discipline works. It should happen all the time in the church of Jesus Christ. If He is our foundation and we actually care and love for one another's souls, this will be a part of our lives. So in my eight years here at the Village, I really have lost count on the number of times people have engaged me over something. Some of them are in this room tonight who have said, "Hey Matt, I think you were off here biblically. . . I think you were a little too harsh here. . . I think you spoke before you thought here." That last one is probably the most consistent drum that gets banged. And so if you are serious about growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ, I think the smartest thing you can do is invite people into this. My hope is that you would say to other people who you trust, who know the Word of God and who love you, "Hey, please watch my blind spots. Please confront me when necessary. Please call me what I'm being." There are guys outside of this church and inside of this church who I have begged, "If I get off, if I sell out, if I begin to preach a gospel contrary to the one found in Scripture, if this changes, if I buy into this, if I start doing this, if I start going down here, if my money becomes about being my money, spent like I want it to be spent, if you see in me an inconsistency between what's coming out of my mouth on stage and how I'm living my life, please for the sake of the glory of Christ and for my soul, engage me, confront me, rebuke me and correct me with the Word." The smartest thing you can do is ask for this and not believe that you're beyond it. Peter was rebuked by Paul. This is the same Peter who walked on water. This is the same Peter of whom Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon." Of course a few seconds later He calls him the devil. This is the same Peter about whom Jesus says, "On this rock I'll plant my church." Peter, the minister to the Jews, a powerful man of God, is rebuked by his own disciple. You don't get beyond this, ever. Men who get beyond this find their way into sin. Because the world, the flesh and demonic activity are sly and slick and will slowly woo over time. Just a little bit off trajectory fifteen years later has you a long way from where you started. And this is a classic ploy against godly, well-meaning, God-loving people. The devil's not going to get you with black tar heroin in the parking lot tonight. . . not all of you. That's not going to happen. You're not even going to wrestle with that, are you? Maybe some of you are, may God sustain and help you. But most of us aren't going out like that tonight. It's just a simple, "Hey, change this just a little bit. Aren't you entitled to just a little bit of this? Don't you deserve just a little bit of this?" And over time, it snatches your soul. This is restorative discipline, and it belongs in the body of Christ. Once again, the church growth movement has absolutely robbed us from our desperate need for this in our churches. Because you end up with a room full of people, many who don't know Christ at all, who absolutely defame the name of Christ in how they live their lives and are not asked to live holy lives at all. They simply get baptized, become a convert and attend on the weekend. The problem with that is actually the Bible.

Now there's one more type. This is the hard type. Let's go to 1 Corinthians 5. This is the hard one that people hate, but in the end, we need to submit our lives to the Scriptures. This is punitive discipline. So let's look at it. Starting in verse 1, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans. . . ." Now get your mind around that. Paul is saying that, within the church at Corinth, there is a sexual perversion occurring that makes pagans go, "That's nasty." He's going to tell us what it is. Thank God for that, because I would have wrestled with, "What would pagans not tolerate? I mean, they are deviant outside the body of Christ." Let's look at it. ". . . for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. 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. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 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. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 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. 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." Now let me stop there and just simply tell you what's going on in Corinth.

The Corinthians are celebrating grace that is not grace at all, and they are celebrating love that is not love at all. They are watching a man sleep with his father's wife and pointing and saying, "Isn't God good. Look how gracious and merciful God is." Paul says, "You're arrogant. You're fools. We do not sin all the more so that grace may abound." So when you do punitive discipline, the charge is that you're arrogant. They say, "Who are you to tell someone that you can't come to the church? Who are you to excommunicate?" Now you can't kick people out of the kingdom if they're in the kingdom. You can't do that. God holds those keys. Peter doesn't hold those keys. God holds those keys to the Book of Life, and if you remember, only one Person can open it. Revelation says, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to open it." So in the end, removing someone from fellowship is not removing them from the kingdom. More than likely, they were never part of the kingdom to begin with. But when you do that, the accusation is, "Aren't you arrogant? Aren't you unloving? Aren't you ungracious?" And the Scriptures are saying the exact opposite. "If you tolerate such a brother, such a sister, you are arrogant, intolerant and wicked."

Let's keep reading. Verse 9, "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world." Did you catch that? It's really brilliant writing. He's saying, "I told you not to associate with the sexually immoral, but I'm not talking about those outside of the church who are sexually immoral, greedy, revilers and sinners, because then you'd have to leave the world." So this is classic Pauline missiology. "Be in the world; don't be of the world. Engage the world, but don't become like the world." Once again, "the world" is this kind of demonic cultural system that woos our flesh into sin. Let's keep reading, "But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." So when that card gets thrown of, "I feel like you're judging me," I always respond, "Because I am." If you're a covenant member of the Village Church, if you're a regular attendee of the Village Church, I am judging you. By what merit? By the merit that God gives me to judge you by. It's the same merit that I am judged by, that I sit under and that I have to submit to. It's the same merit that the elders, the deacons, the staff and on and on sit under. We all sit under it. 1 Corinthians 5 is addressing a situation that is wolvery at it's finest. This is a man or woman who has mastered the game of Matthew 18 and just tries to put the church in this constant spinning of the wheel, this constant misdirection, who wants to argue certain things, who wants to cause division, who is openly and outright living in sin, and if they do anything that the church would require them to do, it's simply the motions to get back among the sheep to continue to do their damage. And Paul says, "Shoot them. Kick them out. They have no place among the brethren." Did you hear what he said? "Don't even share your table with them. Don't have a meal with them." Paul says, "Turn them over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that he might be saved." When you are turned over completely to your sin, like Romans 1 says God does to us when we want our sin more than we want Him, sin when full grown destroys and kills. So if you cross reference that with Romans 8 where God subjects the world to futility in hope, you have the hope in God's heart, that in your sin, when you reap the full thunder of it, that you might remember that He is good and merciful and you might run home and return. And at that moment, the church embraces the prodigal with open arms. But if you have this guy, he's out.

Now we've done this quite a bit. It almost always revolves around marriage. If your marriage is on the rocks, if you're in the middle of an affair right now, if you're a swinger or something like that, if you want to repent and chase Jesus Christ, come on. We are home for you. We are a warm blanket for your soul. If you want to bring your girlfriend here who you're sleeping with right now, where your wife has to bring your kids and drop them off and try to avoid you? That's not happening. If we learn of it, we're going to tap you on the shoulder, ask you to step outside, show you in the Scriptures where you are sinning and ask you to repent. If you refuse that, then we'll let you go somewhere else while your wife, while your husband, while your children continue to reap the benefits of the love and encouragement of the body of Christ. No way should they feel hamstrung, beat up and robbed of community in a time they need it because of your

lack of courage. So this is where it plays out often here. It also has played out in regard to sexual deviance, where people have just said, "I know that's what the Scriptures say, I know that's what has been commanded but I'm going to do whatever I'm going to do." And our response has always been, "We have no power in which to stop you from doing what you want to do, but we do have this power. You won't do it here." And then here's the heartbreaking part. Dallas is so rich in churches that most people, when confronted about their sin, simply go, "Okay, cool." And they just simply go to another church. Now when we learn of this, we usually call the other church. We're not tattlers. We're trying to protect sheep. So we'll simply call and go, "You need to bring them in. You need to have this conversation. Here are the discussions we've had, here's when we met." Whenever we confront people on this, we have them sign off on documents that say, "Here were the meetings I was in. Here is what I was told. I agree that the Scriptures say this. I was asked to do this, I have refused to do this and in refusing to do this, I know I'm being removed from fellowship." And we have them sign it. I've never been so baffled as to be in those meetings. "Yeah, I know that. I know that the Bible teaches that what I'm doing is sinful and is going to lead to my death. I know that I'd be welcomed back here if I simply repent and do what God commanded me to do. I'll initial that. I know that if I would simply do what God has commanded me to do, greater joy would be had. I know it's better to submit to God than to get hooked by the devil with my flesh being enticed by the world. I'll sign that." It's baffling, but that's why Matthew 18 and a culture that says, "I love you too much to let you get hooked" is so important. Because once you get to punitive discipline, it gets really dark, muddy and convoluted. There has only been three or four in my eight years here who have actually returned. Most have spiraled into darkness. And where we've heard of them, it's almost always really bad news, self-destructive bad news.

So this is church discipline. This is how it works. The elders don't get involved until it gets well down the road. In fact, the ones we see are almost always the bad ones. Guys like Jason Holleman, Bill Seal, Adam Lancaster, Lee Lewis and Michael Snetzer, those guys speak for the elders when they do these things. I'm just trying to be legit with you here because some of you want to roll it up to the elders because you think that's going to be better for you. I will tell you that they are a far more compassionate room than ours, because by the time it gets to ours, you have sat through about fifteen meetings where you have tried to do misdirection, tried to be smarter than everyone else. So by the time it gets to us, it's so painfully clear that you're playing a game that you really are putting the bullet in the rifle as you read through all the meetings, as you read through all the misdirection, as you begin to hear the testimonies Lee, Snetzer, Jason, Adam, Bill Seal, Steve Hardin and Beau Hughes as well as testimonies of those in their group, testimonies of their family, testimonies of dozens and dozens of people who are pleading with them to repent, only to have them say, "No, I'm writing this."

Let me throw two things at you just to wrap this up. One, my earnest hear for us is that we would be this kind of place that the love of Christ compels us to encourage one another, confront one another and love one another like this. And secondly, I want to just ask you some questions in the hopes that the Lord would stir up your heart and show you some things. Are you nibbling at a hook? Are you aware of how he's going to get you? For some of you, it's lust. You know it. You know it and you live in a world that gives you all the opportunities in the world to give in to the lust. For some of you, it's power. For some of you, it's just looking a certain part. Some of you are getting your identity from either a way of looking, a way of being or a way of living, and it's going to betray you and destroy you. Is that the hook? Is that the bait? What are the wicked desires in you, and how does the world try to woo you into submission to those wicked desires? To be aware of the devil's schemes for you enables you to fight against the devil's schemes. If you're ignorant of the devil's schemes, you keep getting caught on that hook. So will you consider what you might be nibbling on, what you might be leaning toward? Some of you are already on the hook tonight. The good news is there is grace and mercy for those who cry out for Christ to get them off it. So for those of you who are on the hook, whether that's lust, adultery or looking a certain way, and you're doing all you can to avoid God, my hope would be that you would repent and find Christ to be a sweet Savior who loves you where you are.

Let's pray. "Jesus, I thank You for these men and women. Thank You for an opportunity to just sit under the Scriptures and have You press on us a bit. My hope is that we might sit under these things, that we might sit under the realization that our flesh, the world and the demonic powers that are woo us and try to lead us away from You. It's like the hymn Come Thou Fount. We are prone to wander, prone to leave the God we love. Some of us right now are in situations where people are confronting us, and we're trying to rebel and run. Give us the courage to humble ourselves before You and repent. Some of us are straight up on the hook, being owned by some of these things. Give us the courage to ask for forgiveness and submit our lives to You. Help us, Jesus. We need You. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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