

## Handout for Day 02

### **Sinful Brethren Must Be Disfellowshipped**<sup>1</sup>

**Scripture Readings:** Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

#### **Introduction:**

1. Discipline of self and of any group is essential in every area of life – at home, at school, at work, at church, etc. for order & progress.
2. Disfellowship, an inherent part of church discipline, is grounded in biblical precepts.

#### **I. God Thinks His People Must Be Disciplined** (Some examples . . . )

##### **A. In Old Testament times –**

1. For rebellion, Miriam was stricken with leprosy and expelled from camp for one week (Numbers 12:1-15).
2. For offering strange fire not commanded, Nadab and Abihu were killed (Leviticus 10:1-2).
3. For usurping priestly role, King Uzzah was stricken with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:11-23).

##### **B. In New Testament times –**

1. For hypocrisy, scribes and Pharisees were denounced by Jesus (Matthew 23:1-36).
2. For pretending to be God, Herod was killed (Acts 12:20-23).
3. For lying, Ananias and Sapphira were killed (Acts 5:1-11).

##### **C. Reason:** In all cases, these examples would cause others to abstain from those sins, and give respect to God's commandments.

#### **II. God Commands Disfellowship Of Sinful Brethren!**

(Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 5:20; 6:3-5; Titus 3:10-11; Revelation 2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19)

#### **III. What Does “Disfellowship” Mean?**

##### **A. To not fellowship!** Since fellowship means “to hold in common,” “to be partners,” “to commune together,” “to contribute with,” etc., then disfellowship means “to not hold in common,” “to not be partners,” “to not commune with,” etc. (Disfellowship is the last process of church discipline – to be done when all else fails!)

##### **B. Scripture designations of disfellowship**

1. “To withdraw,” i.e., to move back from association with those who persist in their sins (2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Timothy 6:3-5).
2. “To reject,” i.e., to expel a heretic (Titus 3:10-11). This does not require rejection from the assembly, since by that he may be admonished (2 Thessalonians 3:15), nor from the Lord's Supper, since each must examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:27).

---

<sup>1</sup>© Copyright by Robert L. Waggoner, 2006. Originally prepared for presentation at Houston Park Church of Christ, Selma, Alabama, June, 1984.

3. “To mark,” i.e., to declare by name (Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14).
4. “To avoid,” (Romans 16:17), i.e., “to have no company with” (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14); “to receive not into your house” (2 John 9); “no, not even to eat with such a one” (1 Corinthians 5:11).

#### IV. When Should A Sinner Be Disfellowshipped?

- A. *When he refuses to repent* (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Corinthians 12:21; 13:2).
- B. *When he persists in sin* (1 Timothy 5:20).
  1. In doctrinal sins (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10; Titus 3:10-11; 2 John 9-11)
  2. In moral sins (1 Corinthians 5:11; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:2-5)
  3. In selfish sins (1 Corinthians 6:1-11; James 2:9; Hebrews 10:25-26)

#### V. What Is The Process of Disfellowship

- A. *The Christian’s Private Approach* – (Matthew 18:15) –
  1. Who goes?
    - a. The injured party (Matthew 18:15)
    - b. The party who inflicted injury (Matthew 5:23-24)
    - c. A third party, i.e., elders (Hebrews 13:17), any brother (James 5:19-20)
  2. Why go? – to gain your brother (Matthew 18:15)
  3. How go? – in the spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1)
- B. *The Christian’s Semi-Private Approach* – (Matthew 18:16) –
  1. Who goes? – the injured party, plus two or three witnesses (Matthew 18:16), preferably elders (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17), preferably not evangelists for practical reasons.
  2. Why go? – to counsel (Matthew 18:17), to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), to instruct, to promote forgiveness (Matthew 6:13; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13), “that every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16)
  3. How go? – reminding them . . . (Titus 3:2)
- C. *The Congregational Approach* – (Matthew 18:17) –
  1. Who tells it? Presumably the elders, for “they watch for your souls” (Hebrews 13:17).
  2. Why tell it to the church?
    - a. To inform of a brother’s error
    - b. To get brethren to seek erring brother’s repentance
    - c. To motivate the sinner to repent
    - d. To create fear among brethren (1 Timothy 5:20)
- D. *The Congregational Expulsion* – (Matthew 18:17) –
  1. Why must church disfellowship the unrepentant sinner?
    - a. To obey God (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 14-15; Titus 3:10).
    - b. To motivate sinner to repent (1 Corinthians 5:3-5; **Note:** Disfellowship will not motivate a sinner to repent if he has not had satisfactory fellowship with the saints.)

- c. To save the church (1 Corinthians 5:6) **Note**: Achan's sin (Joshua 7:1, 20-21) caused Israel's defeat at Ai (Joshua 7:2-5), making it necessary to expel sin before victory was possible.
- d. To promote purity in the church (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 5:20)
- 2. What happens after disfellowship?
  - a. Brethren will be tested
  - b. The sinner will either remain in his sin, or he will repent
    - 1) If he remains in his sin, congregation must treat him "as a heathen"
    - 2) If he repents, congregation lovingly forgives and restores him to fellowship in the church.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

- 1. How blessed it is to "walk in the light as He is in the light, and to have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7).
- 2. If we love like God loves, we will seek to discipline one another that we might walk in purity and righteousness.
- 3. In order to obey God, we must disfellowship the erring brother who refuses to repent, who persists in his sins.
- 4. Disfellowship means to withdraw, to reject, to mark, to avoid an erring brother.
- 5. Disfellowship is intended to motivate a sinful person to repent and to keep the church pure.
- 6. Brethren must proceed orderly, making every possible effort, to restore an erring brother, prior to expelling the sinful brother from their midst.
- 7. When an erring brother has been disfellowshipped, every Christian must abide by it if the sinner is to be motivated to turn away from his sins.
- 8. When an erring brother repents, all Christians are to forgive him and restore him to their fellowship.
- 9. This is God's way. The practice of it will benefit the church.