

# Church Discipline and Excommunication

“Church discipline” sounds so heavy and harsh, so full of Law. And “excommunication” has such a tone of finality. It’s no wonder that this is the least understood and least talked-about subject in the church. We lose sight of what discipline and excommunication are all about and the importance of them in the life of the church.

The **Explanation** refers to **Matthew 18**. **Matthew 18:15-18** is Jesus’ instructions on how to handle church discipline. Basically, He says if your brother sins against you, go, and talk with him privately, one-on-one. If the situation is not resolved, take a couple of witnesses with you. If it’s still not resolved, take him before the church. If the church cannot resolve the situation, *let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Matthew 18:18)*.

We see here that excommunication doesn’t just come out of midair. It is a process that takes time and only happens when all avenues of restoration have failed. Another thing people sometimes lose sight of is the goal of excommunication.

(Read **2 Corinthians 2:5-11**). Many scholars believe that Paul is talking here about the man in **1 Corinthians 5** who was sleeping with his father’s wife, who Paul said they should excommunicate. Now, he has repented, and Paul instructs the church to forgive him and welcome him back into the congregation. The goal of excommunication is the goal of everything in the church – redemption and restoration. This is what it means to forgive as God has forgiven us. No matter how heinous our sin, He always forgives and welcomes us back when we repent.