

# Church Discipline: The PURPOSE of church discipline (1)

## Genesis 11:6

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### Introduction:

- I. The 1980 Winter Olympics were held in Lake Placid, NY. Those games are forever remembered for one event – the US Hockey Team's gold medal. This event was the subject of the movie called "Miracle." The credit for the win was entirely due to coach Herb Brooks. The coach developed a strategy that brought the hockey players together. The strategy was followed by a rugged discipline. Brooks knew that if he any chance of beating the Soviets, his team would have to play together. He would have to take the hot-shot collegiate stars and meld them into one unit. The successful winning of the gold medal proved Brooks strategy to be true. The discipline was hard but the objective was never misplaced – unity so that victory would be won.
  
- II. The victory of the 1980 USA Hockey Team aptly illustrates the purpose of church discipline. Only as true unity is maintained in the local congregation will the victory over Satan be realized. If Satan can destroy the unity within the congregation, he can destroy the souls of the members in that congregation. The Devil's strategy is simple — "Divide and Conquer!"
  1. The purpose God has designed church discipline is so local congregations can maintain unity.
  2. Church discipline controls members actions, words, beliefs, and associations so that the purity of unity in the Lord is protected.
  3. When church discipline is not exercised then members allow pride to push and pollute so that unity is impossible.
  4. When church discipline is exercised then members realize they are a part of others and must speak, live, believe, and associate so that the entire congregation maintains unity in love.
  
- III. The next three lessons focus upon unity and will reveal why church discipline must be practiced so that the purpose of the Lord's Church will not be compromised. Our first lesson examines the unity described in Genesis 11:6. The text takes us back about 4,500 yrs to the plains of Shinar (later known as Babylon). Everyone spoke the same language and were together. As the population grew, the desire to build a magnificent city arose. No one would have to leave and move to other parts of the world. To signify their resolve a tower was begun. It would be a great tower reaching into heaven. They were striving to make a great name for themselves (v. 4). Their arrogance and pride resulted in God's punishment (v. 8, 9). Think about their resolve.
  1. It sounded like an impossible task. No cranes; no construction equipment; no modern building materials or engineering designs.
  2. The odds were against them accomplishing the task – but they began. Verse

6 indicates their plan was a real possibility.

3. How could they be successful? With unity! They were united in purpose, plan, and performance.

IV. God's Church faces impossible odds today. We have a mission and success seems so far away. The Lord's Church seems to have little growth. Splits and divisions occupy the time and attention that ought to go to evangelism. "Our vision has turned inward rather than outward. We are pre-occupied with Self."

1. Such are indicators of loose disciple that make conditions discouraging. We become disheartened. We begin to bicker and fight ourselves instead of Satan.
2. The mission of the Church loses its focus and force when a lack of discipline leads to dis-unity.
3. Christians need to imitate these on the Plains of Shinar and find unity. The Tower of Babel illustrates how we can celebrate victory!

### **Body:**

I. Three positive points from Shinar

#### **A. We must have UNITY OF PURPOSE!**

1. Why are we here today? Why are you a member of God's Church?
2. Many have lost focus of purpose because they lack discipline and lack unity with one another!
3. Our purpose is to imitate Christ and find the victory that He found. Two ways:
  - a. By serving others (Matthew 20:28). Serving others was the priority with Jesus (Philippians 2:7-8). He was willing to do whatever He could. He was willing to suffer personal insults. He did this to show us what to do (Philippians 2:1-4).
  - b. By a disciplined message (Matthew 4:23). Jesus wanted others to know the joy of salvation that comes to those who live disciplined lives.
4. We must be disciplined so we will not lose sight of our purpose! Church discipline enables us to join together in service and to join together in spreading the Gospel message.
5. Babel was united in purpose and God said there was nothing they could not do! Let us be the same. Such unity results from discipline that eliminates selfishness.

#### **B. We must share a UNITY OF PLAN!**

1. Babel had a plan (Genesis 11:1-9). It was simple but effective.
2. The Church must have a plan and members must be disciplined so all share an attitude of unity in these plans. Without unity there is no plan that will succeed. Pride will tempt some to critical rebellion. Even if you do not like the plan, do your best to make it work!
3. Those who refuse to work with a plan are undisciplined and hurt the entire

Body. That undisciplined conduct must be corrected (1 Corinthians 12:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).

4. Many congregations lie stagnant because members refuse to be disciplined in following the plan – each will have his own way that is seen as the “best” and few cooperate! (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

### **C. We must share a UNITY OF PERFORMANCE!**

1. This is critical – all purposes and plans are useless if no one will perform. Discipline is worthless if it does not correct behavior!
2. Think of Babel – a good plan; the purpose was clear. What if some did not want bricks? Or another color of bricks? What if some did not want to work? What if some refused unless it was done “their way”? We all know the answer – FAILURE! And this is exactly what happened. When God confused the language each began doing the task according to self and unity was lost!
3. This vital lesson is ignored by many in the Church today. We laugh at the childishness of not working because the bricks are the wrong color. Yet we fail to see that it is just as childish to refuse to cooperate with plans that we do not like. We may talk a good plan and offer clear purposes but unless we show performance we are failures. Because of our lack of working, a few will try but they cannot get the job done by themselves.
4. The tragedy is that we allow our commitment to God to be weakened (governed) by other things. Soon we are around brethren who are constantly discouraging and our performance weakens and then stops (v. 8). Satan learned a lesson from God at Shinar – if he wants a work to stop he follows the same procedure and halts and disrupts the building. And many are partners with Satan's evil deeds!

### **II. Three positives resolutions to make**

- A. “I will be ever-alert to my purpose as a Christian. Because of my purpose I will put my feelings aside and serve with humility.”
- B. “I will cooperate with the plans of this congregation. I may not agree 100%, but I know MY ways are not always 100% correct. I will therefore cooperate for the sake of unity.”
- C. “I will participate to assure unity in this congregation. I will perform with my brethren to achieve the purpose of Christ.”

### **Conclusion:**

- I. If we are to succeed and find victory we must follow these 3 principles – purpose, plan, and performance. These are critical if God's will is to be accomplished.
  1. Failure to be unified will bring tragedy to this congregation (1 Corinthians 8:12; Romans 14:15b). Does anyone want this on their account?

2. Selfishness is the greatest foe facing God's Church and the most effective weapon in Satan's arsenal. If we really want God to succeed each must put aside Self (My feelings; MY ways; MY ideas; etc.). and follow Jesus (Philippians 2:5).

II. Genesis 11:6 — Are you acting, speaking, and living so that unity is encouraged?  
Let us follow these principles and reap a harvest of unity for God's Church!