

Joshua Modeled Discipline for God's People

Anchor command. "With gentleness correct those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth." *2 Timothy 2:25*

Anchor story. God commissions Joshua to be Israel's military leader. *Joshua 1:1-9*

Anchor verse. Colossians 2:5, "For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ." *Colossians 2:5*

Learning goal. Find and examine God's teaching about discipline for his people.

Growth goal. Value highly biblical discipline, both to maintain order and to correct offenders.

Skill goal. Carry out both kinds of discipline:

- 1) Discipline the congregation: have it follow biblical order.
- 2) Discipline offenders: correct them the way Jesus requires.

Outcome goal. Believers and churches maintain consistent, godly discipline.

Background

After delivering His people from slavery in Egypt, God let them wander in the desert for forty years, because they did not trust Him. Before their leader Moses` died, he prepared Joshua to conquer the land that God had promised to Abraham's descendants. Joshua maintained strong discipline during this military operation.

Correcting believers who persist in sin is one of the hardest tasks you will face. We must do it with great patience and love. Let the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit guide you.

Once, in an African village, as a visiting elder entered a house, his host screamed, "Stop! Back up slowly!" A black spitting cobra, two meters long, slithered across the bed, watching them open the door. "I don't know how to get him out," his host said, "It could spew venom in your eyes and bite you."



The elder, a villager who knew how to remove such snakes, made the house safe again.

Sin in your flock is like a poisonous snake. If you leave it, it will poison everyone. You must know how to remove it, or it will poison you.

Basic Study

Learn from the account of Joshua becoming Israel's military leader. *Joshua 1:1-9*

- What did the Lord tell Moses to do after Joshua died? 1-2
- What did God assure Joshua concerning the Promised Land? 3-4
- What did the Lord assure Joshua concerning God's assistance? 5
- What did God tell Joshua to be concerning his role as a leader? 6-7
- What did God tell Joshua concerning the government of the people? 8
- What did the Lord promise Joshua concerning God's presence? 9
- The story of Joshua that follows Joshua's commissioning shows how he disciplined the people, and led them courageously in spite of many difficulties.

First, through a miracle of God, he led them across the Jordan River, and captured the walled city of Jericho.

He conquered many cities with God's help, and settled the tribes of Israel in the areas that God had appointed for each one.



God caused Jericho's massive walls to fall.

Unfortunately, some of the pagans remained in the land and became a thorn in the flesh for the Israelites, as they are to this day. The Philistines continually warred against Israel in the Old Testament, and continue to do so today; the name *Philistine* is now pronounced *Palestinian*.

During the week...

- Now much of the discipline exercised in churches deals with correcting errors. If anyone has a complaint against another believer, then do carefully what Jesus requires in Matthew 18:15-17.
- Deal firmly with 'wolves' who try to steal believers from your flock, in order to build their own flock.
- Pray for a gentle spirit and courage before speaking to erring believers, as Galatians 6:1 requires.
- Pray for, and with, any believer who needs to be restored.

During worship...

- Tell how God commissioned Joshua, and ask the questions above. Let believers discuss the answers.
- Ask the children to present what they have prepared.
- Memorize together Galatians 6:1. “Brothers, if anyone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”

Advanced Study

1. Jesus and Paul both told us how to remove sin from our flocks and to restore offenders.

Find in **Matthew 18:15** what we must do first to correct an offender.

- Whom must we correct?
[Answer: “A brother.” You must correct brothers in Christ. A shepherd has no authority outside of the body of Christ. If you are unsure if someone is a believer, then do nothing.]
- What must you correct?
[Answer: “If a brother sins against you.” Are you certain that he is guilty of sin? If you accuse someone because of untrue gossip, then you will wound him. He will lose confidence in you as a shepherd.]
- Who should speak first to the offender?
[Answer: The brother “sins against you.” An offended believer should try to correct a problem with another believer first, by himself. Teach the believers to talk to people who have offended before discussing the problem with other people. The shepherd should help correct bad relationships between believers only when they cannot do so themselves.]
- Who should the offended person talk to about the offence?
[Answer: “Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.” This is important! The offended believer must go to the offender in private. Such confrontation is hard, but the Holy Spirit will help him to do so. You, as a shepherd, must correct people in private. Tell no one else about their problems, not even your spouse. Wise shepherds do most of their correcting in private counselling sessions. No one else needs to know how much sin you deal with privately.]
- What will be the result, if the believer heeds the correction?
[Answer: “If he hears you, then you have gained your brother.” Careful correction strengthens our relationship with our brother. We also discipline our children when they need correction, because we love them. We must assure them that we do so, because we love them. Likewise, we should correct offenders, not to punish but to restore them.]
- Find in **Matthew 18:16** the next thing to do, if an offender does not heed the correction.
[Answer: You are to speak to the offender in front of others who witness the conversation.]



Show him his offense in the presence of witnesses.

- Find the final thing to do in **Matthew 18:17**, if the offender still refuses to change.
[Answer: The shepherd of the flock should correct the offender before the flock. If he refuses to heed the flock, then the believers are not to have fellowship with him. Do not eat the Lord's Supper with him until he repents. When he repents, then be quick to restore him, so that he will not become discouraged with sorrow (compare 2 Cor. 2:6-7).]
- Find in **Titus 3:10-11** what you are to do with persons who cause divisions among believers.
- Find in **Galatians 6:1**...
What kind of people you are to take with you, if an offender does not first listen to you alone.
The attitude you are to have when you correct someone.
What you are to be careful of, as you correct them.
- Find in **Acts 20:28-31** what Paul warned the elders to watch for, and what 'wolves' would do.

2. Plan with co-workers the upcoming worship time

- **Explain** the steps to correct and restore unruly believers. Ask the questions under section 1 above.
- **Explain** the purpose of discipline in Christ's body:
Discipline is to help people to obey Jesus, not to force them to obey human rules.
Correct erring believers to restore them, not to punish them. In Joshua's time Israel was under the "letter of the law that kills" (2 Cor.3:6). But since Jesus came, we are under grace.
- To introduce the **Lord's Supper** read 1 Corinthians 11:23-30. Explain how God punished those who broke bread unworthily. They did not respect the body of Christ. The Body means three things, which God considers as one: the body of Jesus that suffered on the cross, the body of believers that break bread together, and the bread of which Jesus said, "This is my Body."
- Meet in **groups of 2 or 3** to discuss the week's topic and to pray for God's help to maintain holiness and discipline within the body of Christ.
- When sinning believers have been restored through following Jesus' rules for correction, and is willing to praise God publicly for his restoration, then let them do so.
- Those who **teach children** should read study #82 for children.