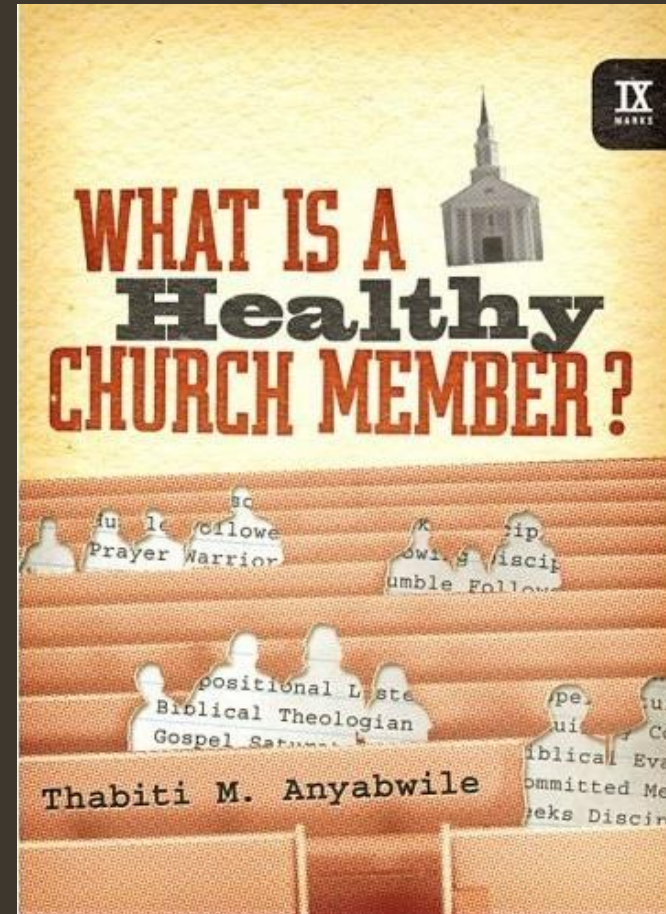
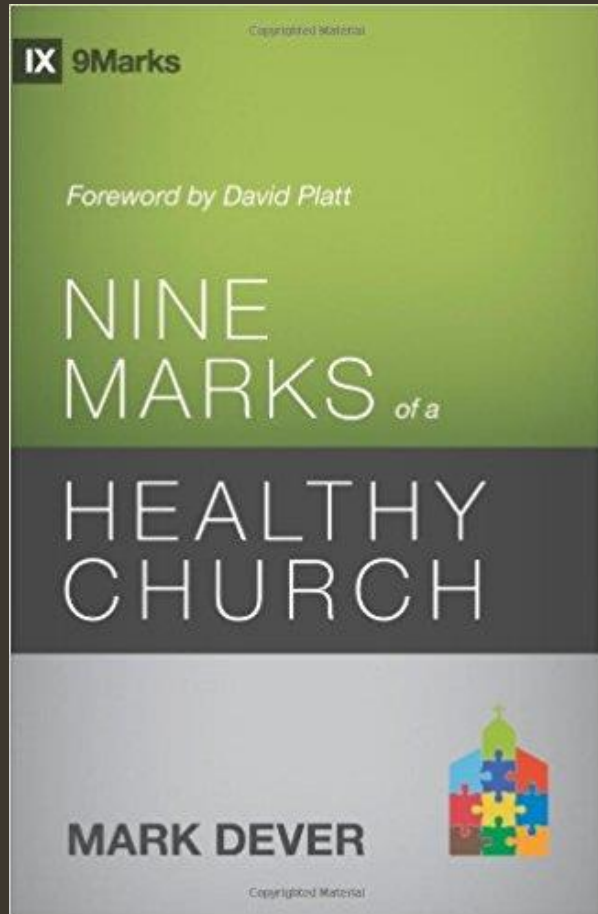


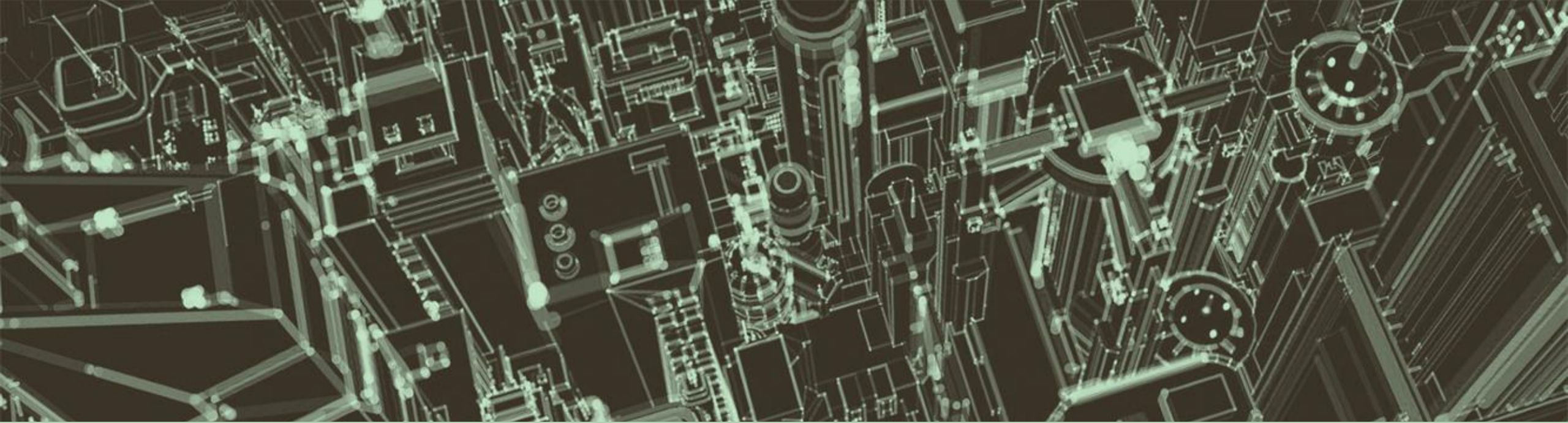
What Is A Healthy Church? Part 4

CITY SESSIONS



SOURCE MATERIAL





7. Biblical Understanding of Church Membership



Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

- Many today believe the idea of church membership is outdated and/or unnecessary for the believer.
 - This is for a variety of reasons. Maybe they are indifferent, ignorant, indecisive, “independent,” or have inverted affections.
 - At the root, all of these have a deep misunderstanding of God’s intent that the local church be central to the life of his people.

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

What is a church?

- “According to the New Testament, the church is primarily a body of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God’s grace alone...” and “is a local collection of people committed to Christ, to regularly assemble and have his Word preached and obeyed, including Christ’s commands to baptize and to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.”
- Although there are a few references to the universal church in the NT, the majority refer to a “local, living, and loving collection of people who are committed to Christ and to each other.”

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

What is a church?

- “Consider this: if there is no way for you to be *excluded* from the local church you are currently attending, perhaps that’s because you have not *included* yourself in it as the Bible intends.”
- Another thing to consider is that although unbelievers are welcome, the church’s purpose and membership is for believers.
 - This is why the NT epistles that address the church(es) address them as believers.

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

What is a church?

- Church Membership, a covenanting of believers to each other in a local context, has always been part of the plan.
- Consider practices and commands given in the NT that would lose all their meaning if church membership is not important and necessary:
 - Church Leadership: 1 Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, Heb. 13:17
 - Church Discipline: 1 Cor. 5, Matt. 18:15-17
 - Keeping Lists and Voting: 1 Tim. 5:9, 2 Cor. 2:6

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

What is a church?

- “The church is for everyone who is a Christian. The church is not a homogeneous group, centered around one subtask such as evangelizing college students or publishing a magazine. A Christian church is not just for you and your friends; it’s for all believers.”

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

Why join a church?

- To assure ourselves.
- To evangelize the world.
- To expose false gospels.
- To edify the church.
- To glorify God.
- NOT to obtain our salvation. Joining a church does not save us any more than any other works do.

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

What does church membership entail? Or, what does a committed church member do?

- There are two initial things we do as we join a church to signal God's grace through repentance and faith:
 - In Action – Initially by Baptism
 - In Writing – by Signing a Statement of Faith and Church Covenant
- In addition to these two initial things, there are other things a church member should do...

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

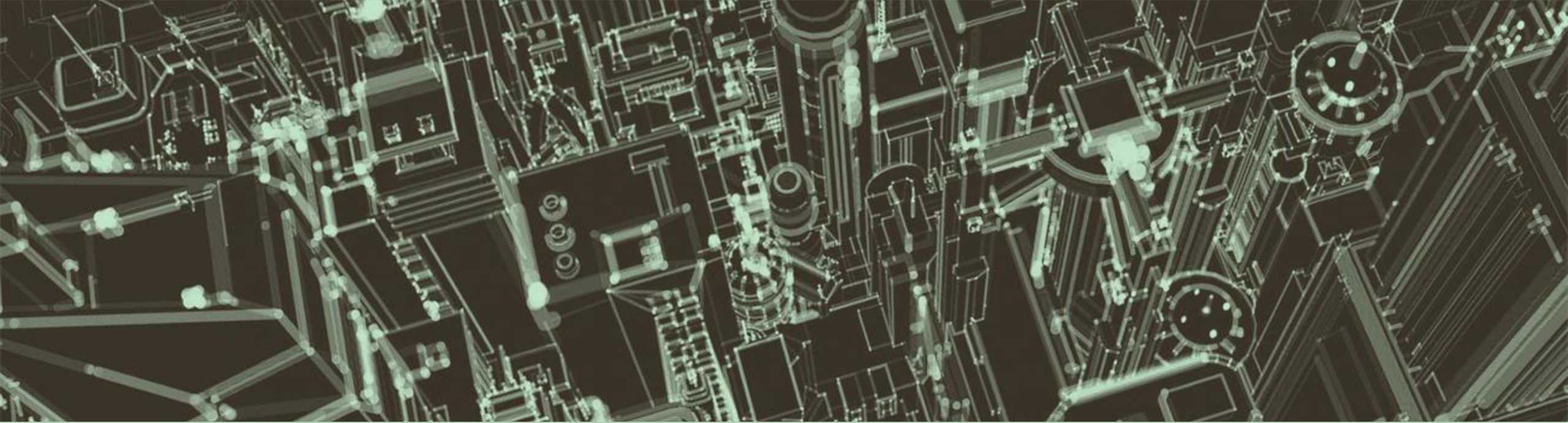
What does a committed church member do?

- Attends Regularly: Heb. 10:24-25
- Edifies Others: 1 Cor. 12, 14; Eph. 4:11-16; Mark 10:45
- Warns and Admonishes Others: (discussed in next section)
- Pursues Reconciliation: 2 Cor. 5:18-21, Matt. 5:23-24
- Bears with Others: Matt. 5:5, 18:21-22; Rom. 15:1; Gal. 6:2
- Participates in the Ordinances: Matt. 28:19, Luke 22:19
- Supports the Work of the Ministry: Rom. 12:6-8
- Gives Regularly: 2 Cor. 8-9, Luke 6:38, 1 Cor. 16:1-2

Biblical Understanding of Church Membership

“It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God’s Word and sacrament. Not all Christians receive this blessing. The imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, the proclaimers of the Gospel in heathen lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing. They remember as the Psalmist did, how they went ‘with the multitude...to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday (Ps. 42:4)...Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living in common Christian life with other Christians praise God’s grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer



8. Biblical Church Discipline



Biblical Church Discipline

What is church discipline?

- In order to thrive and grow, all life needs order. Chaos is the enemy of growth.
- The words *discipline* and *disciple* share the same Latin root and are tied closely to the idea of education and order.
- “It is discipline in the life of the congregation and the healthy church member that provides an atmosphere for growth and development. It leads to the rare polished jewel of Christlikeness.”

Biblical Church Discipline

What is church discipline?

- There are two general purposes of discipline:
 - Formative discipline refers to how Scripture shapes and molds the Christian as he or she imbibes its teaching and is trained to live for God.
 - Corrective discipline involves the loving reproof or correction of a fellow church member that is indulging in sin.
- The “healthy church member embraces discipline as one means of grace in the Christian life.”

Biblical Church Discipline

What is church discipline?

- Scripture passages concerning church discipline:
 - Hebrews 12:1-14
 - Matthew 18:15-17
 - 1 Corinthians 5:1-11
 - Galatians 6:1
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15
 - 1 Timothy 1:20
 - 1 Timothy 5:19-20
 - Titus 3:9-11

Biblical Church Discipline

Why practice church discipline?

- For the good of the person disciplined
- For the good of other Christians, as they see the danger of sin
- For the health of the church as a whole
- For the corporate witness of the church
- For the glory of God, as we reflect his holiness

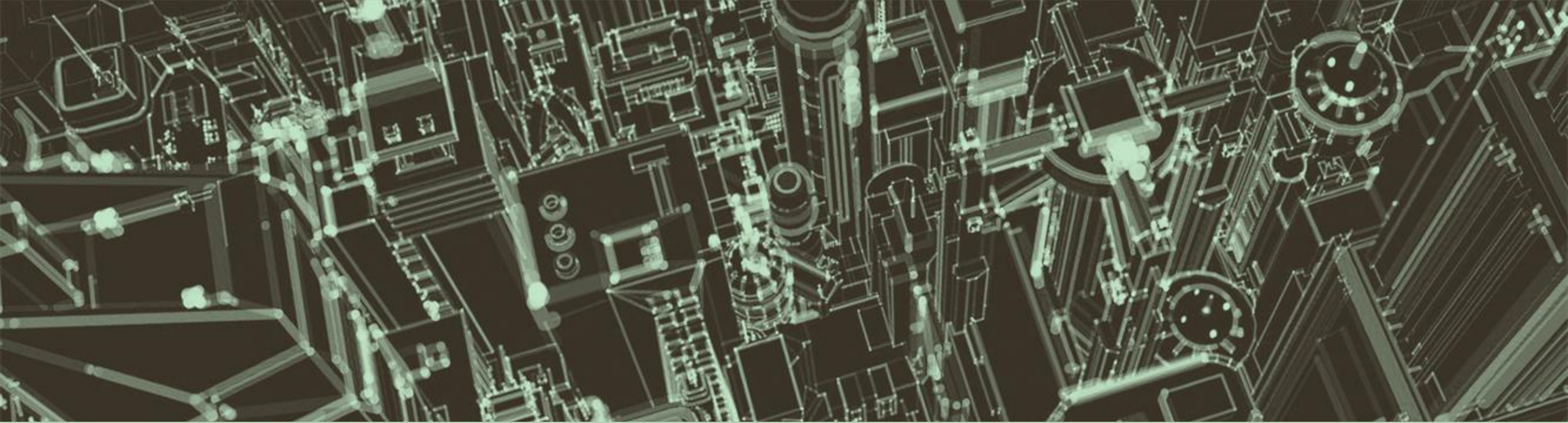
Biblical Church Discipline

How do we seek church discipline as members?

- Receive the Word of God with meekness: James 1:21
- Learn to recognize chastisement as evidence of God's love: Heb. 12:5-10
- Humbly accept correction from others: Prov. 27:5-6, 1:7
- Take seriously our responsibility to discipline others
- Don't forget to rejoice!: 2 Cor. 2:6, James 5:19-20

Biblical Church Discipline

“...if members shy away from getting to know one another so that there is no context for meaningful fellowship, then neither positive nor corrective discipline will occur. The house of God will be inadequately ordered, his children poorly taught, and the witness of the church tarnished by unrepentant and uncorrected sin.”



QUESTIONS?

