

Study Guide

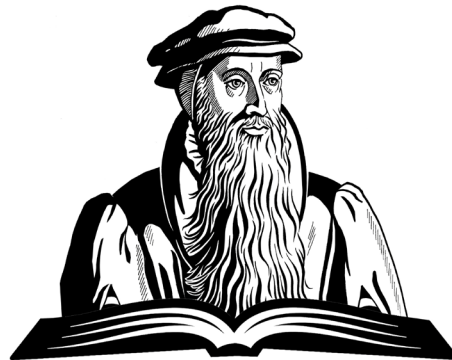
for

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE CHURCH

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

Lecture 5

Excommunication and Restoration



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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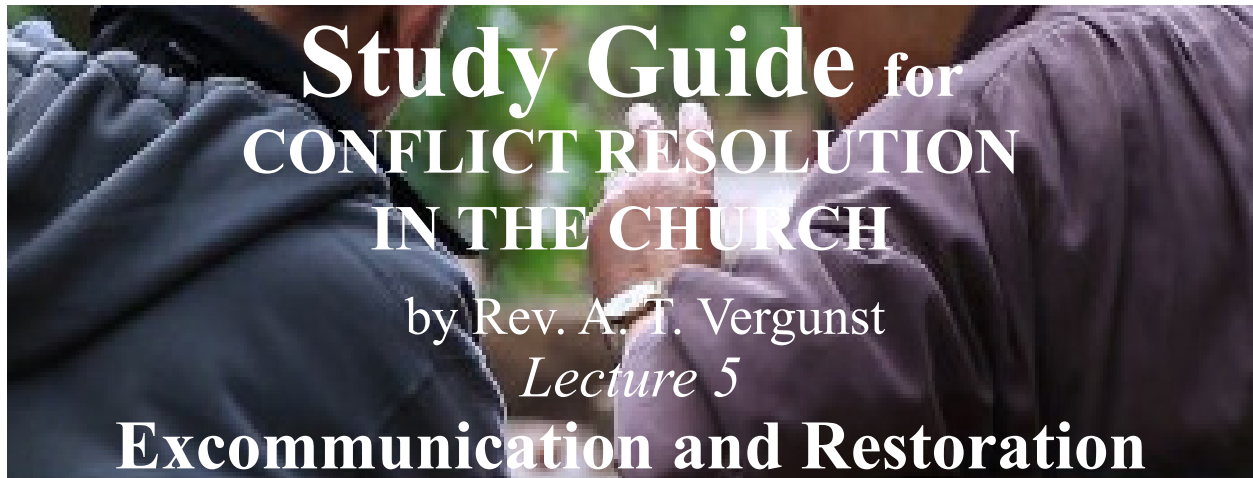
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Video Lecture Series

by Rev. A. T. Vergunst

1. Introduction
2. Jesus' Instructions on Confrontation
3. Repentance, Confession, & Forgiveness
4. Surrounded with Prayer and Love
5. Excommunication and Restoration



Study Guide for CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE CHURCH

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Lecture 5

Excommunication and Restoration

Scripture Texts

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

—Matthew 18, verses 15 to 17

Key Points

1. The Lord Jesus directs us to deal with sin in the church in a timely and loving way.
2. The fourth level: Excommunication
 - a. No matter in the church is more serious.
 - b. Apostle Paul initiated this discipline in 1 Corinthians chapter 5.
 - c. The purpose is to bring the sinner to repentance and restoration.
 - d. Not punishment. Only the civil authority can punish, with the sword of justice.
3. Close Christian fellowship should be discontinued.
 - a. Treat them as an unbeliever.
 - b. Do not shun them.
 - c. Evangelize; seek their repentance and restoration.
 - d. Love them. Pray for them.
3. Repentance brings restoration and reconciliation.
 - a. If the sinner repents, we are to forgive and receive them back into fellowship.
 - b. Taught by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:6–8.
 - c. The Lord Jesus’ directions to the church in Matthew 18:18–20.
 - d. The church acts for God when this process is done correctly.

4. Forgiveness taught and explained in the Lord Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:23–35.
 - a. Christians are forgiven, and they are to forgive.
5. Summary—church discipline is like medicine, to bring healing and reconciliation.
 - a. The dangers of allowing sin to continue in the church—1 Samuel 3, verse 13.
 - b. God's own words: "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2:30).
 - c. Faithful church discipline, in the Spirit of Christ, to the glory of God, and to the building up of each member of the church.

Review Questions

1. Does the New Testament church have the power of excommunication, or did that power only belong to the apostles?

2. What is the purpose of excommunication?

3. The Lord Jesus says, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." So, how are we to treat one who has been excommunicated?

4. What example do we see in the way that Jesus treated heathens and publicans? Did he witness to them? Did he call them to repent? What do we learn from this?

5. What if the excommunicated one is hostile to us? Should we continue to witness to them and pray for them?

6. What is necessary for someone who has been excommunicated from the church to be restored again?

7. In John 20:23 Jesus gives authority to the church: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” What does this mean? Does it bring comfort?

8. What principle is taught by the Lord Jesus in his parable recorded in Matthew 18:23–35?

9. What are the main points of this parable in Matthew 18:23-35?

10. What can we learn from the example of Eli and his sons, as recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 3? What was Eli’s sin? How does that relate to church discipline as taught in this lecture?

Personal Applications

1. Have you ever had the experience of dealing with an excommunicated Christian brother or sister? What spiritual challenges did you face? Do you think prayer is an important way to prepare for such challenges?

2. Did this lecture series help you see the relationship between the church on earth and the church in heaven? How does this affect your view of church discipline? What insights and understandings have you gained from this lecture series? Please write about it and share what you've learned with others.
