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Towards a Vineyard Center-Set Ecclesiology:

Is Church Discipline Appropriate?

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Introduction: The Kingdom of God as Foundational for Ecclesiology

The Vineyard is a movement that emphasizes that the theology and praxis of the kingdom affects *everything*. This means that there are implications to every area of theological construct, especially in the area of ecclesiology. Simon Chan notes that ecclesiology is “one of the least developed areas of Protestant thought, especially among evangelicals”¹ and that “evangelicalism has a strong ontology of the person but not an ontology of the church.”² We would be wise to recognize that “the attempt to divorce ecclesiology from theology is cumbersome and careless.”³ Despite the fact that there is wide agreement regarding how the kingdom of God relates to the church⁴ and how God intends for the church to interact with the world,⁵ our movement has often had no voice in conversations within the wider ecumenical world. Hopefully the Society of Vineyard Scholars will help reconcile this problem. Today I want to think out loud about the relationship between the kingdom of God and ecclesiology, specifically through the lens of church discipline within the context of the Vineyard movement.

The Briefest Explanation of Church Discipline *Ever* (I think)

What exactly do I mean by the term “church discipline”? To even mention the concept of church discipline almost immediately raises concerns about being judgmental and controlling.

¹ Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: 1998), 103.

² Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: 2006), 38. Furthermore, Chan notes that “many evangelicals are aware of their ecclesiological deficit” and refers readers to the “Chicago Call” of 1977 which included six out of eight articles related to ecclesiology (p. 11). Cf. Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) and *Above Earthly Powers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 263-309; Russel D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 131-173.

³ Mark Liederbach and Alvin L. Reid, *The Convergent Church* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 78. In support of this, Liederbach and Reid direct us to Mark DeVine, “Fast Friends or Future Foes: The Emerging Church and Southern Baptists,” *Midwestern Journal of Theology*, 5:2 (2007), 26-43.

⁴ George Ladd writes that “the church is the community of the Kingdom” (*A Theology of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 111).

⁵ Cf. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 131.

Many appeal to the Sermon on the Mount's "judge not"⁶ as evidence against the practice of church discipline. But is the concept of church discipline always a mean-spirited expression of heavy-handed manipulative leadership? Do I really need to identify myself as a Fundamentalist who hates people if I believe church discipline is an important ecclesiological practice?

Jay E. Adams offers a helpful definition:

"Discipline is not, as many have thought, simply the negative task of reading troublemakers out of the church. Rather, first above all, it is God's provision for good order in His church that creates conditions for the instruction and growth of the members. *Discipline has a positive function.*"⁷

Therefore, church discipline functions to: (1) restore and reconcile believers who have fallen into sin, (2) keep sin from spreading to others, and (3) protect the purity of the church and the honor of Christ.⁸ Church discipline can be described as "a means by which the purity of the church is advanced and holiness of life is encouraged."⁹

Though there are many biblical texts related to this subject,¹⁰ due to space constraints, we will briefly consider two:¹¹ Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Corinthians 5.

(1) Matt. 18:15-20

⁶ For a good starter towards understanding Matt. 7:1, see Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 164.

⁷ Jay E. Adams, *Handbook of Church Discipline: A Right and Privilege of Every Church Member* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 17, emphasis mine.

⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 894-96. For further explanation, see James Leo Garrett, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 543-49; Robert D. Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical & Historical* (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2005), 956-61; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 896-899.

⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 956.

¹⁰ E.g., Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 6:1-10; 2 Cor 2:5-7; 7:8-12; Gal 6:1; 2 Thess 3:6-15; 1 Tim 1:20; 5:19-24; Titus 3:9-11; Heb 12:1-14; Rev 3:19.

¹¹ Beyond the biblical texts related to the subject, time could be spent exploring the connection between church discipline, formal regenerate church membership, and baptism. Many theologians argue that church discipline and biblical leadership imply formal church membership; e.g., see Baruch Maoz, et al., *Local Church Practice* (Rushden: Carey Publications, 1978); Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 131-73; Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004); John S. Hammet, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005); Culver, *Systematic Theology*, 918-22.

Matthew 18 indicates that in the event that a person is caught in sin,¹² the three-step process¹³ towards restoration includes (1) personal and private confrontation, (2) personal confrontation along with a neutral small group of others,¹⁴ and finally (3) bringing it before the church.¹⁵ In the event that the person brought before the church does not repent, they may be treated as “unredeemed and outside the Christian community,”¹⁶ which is the contextual application of being regarded as a Gentile and a tax collector.¹⁷ This text indicates that church discipline was a necessary component of Christian community and that it was actually the natural corollary to Jesus’ conclusion regarding the authority described in vv.18-20 (i.e., “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven”). The community of the kingdom has the authority to make decisions pertaining to discipleship, even to the point of exclusion.

(2) 1 Cor 5:1-13

Of note is the fact that if it weren’t for the necessity of church discipline, *we would not even have Paul’s epistles to the Corinthian church* (weddings would feel empty without chapter

¹² There is disagreement as to whether *eis se* (“against you”) is original. Metzger’s committee enclosed the words in square brackets, indicating their difficulty in determining its authenticity. If we accept it, Jesus is referring to do when another believer sins against us; if we reject it, he is speaking of what we are to do when another believer sins in any way. Cf. Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 36; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 743-45; Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 466-67.

¹³ The Qumran community followed a similar threefold process, cf. Géza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Harmondsworth, 1968), 80.

¹⁴ I say “neutral small group” as the point for this group is to judge “by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” No one should be convicted on the evidence of a single person.

¹⁵ Matthew’s use of the term *ekklēsia* provides continuity between Jesus’ followers and the people of God in the OT. For lexical support, see William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 110; William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 303 (BDAG hereafter). Further support is found in the presence of *ekklēsia* in the LXX (e.g., Dt 31:30; Judg 20:2; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Kings 8:14; Ps 21:23; etc.). Clearly the “church” was the most obvious way in which the disciples would have understood the community of God’s people (cf. Acts 7:38).

¹⁶ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 279.

¹⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 279-80. We must remember that it was Jesus who also said that we should love our enemies (Matt 5:4) and that he had “other sheep” outside of the Jewish people (cf. John 10:16).

thirteen and Charismatics would have nothing to talk about without chapters 12 & 14). 1 Corinthians *represents* and *is* church discipline, as it addresses numerous problems in Corinth: division,¹⁸ immorality,¹⁹ lawsuits among believers,²⁰ misunderstandings and misuse of spiritual gifts,²¹ disorderly worship gatherings,²² and explicit opposition to the Apostle Paul.²³ The entire correspondence functions to support the concept of church discipline. More specifically, in 1 Cor. 5, Paul informs the Corinthians that sexual immorality defiles the church and that such immorality *must* be dealt with through the application of church discipline.²⁴ According to Paul, the arrogance of *not* addressing the sexual immorality should have brought about great mourning,²⁵ and the lack of confrontation *itself* needed correction immediately. Paul's concern was for the well being of the entire congregation because he believed that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump."²⁶ In the same way that a small amount of leaven will affect a large quantity of dough, Paul's metaphor is used to communicate that sexual sin will affect the whole church.²⁷

So how does Paul indicate church discipline should be carried out? As we've already noted, he does so in the strictest of terms. The church in Corinth was to immediately remove the

¹⁸ 1 Cor 1:10; 3:1-9; 11:18.

¹⁹ 1 Cor 5:1-13.

²⁰ 1 Cor 6:1-11.

²¹ 1 Cor 12-14.

²² 1 Cor 14:26-40.

²³ 1 Cor 4.

²⁴ See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 194-228; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 380-418; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 153-92.

²⁵ Paul's use of *penetheō* suggests strong sorrow, grieving, mourning, and deep anguish (See BDAG, 795; Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 202).

²⁶ 1 Cor 5:6.

²⁷ Paul's use of the leaven imagery suggests an OT background (e.g., Lev 2:11; 6:17; Hos 7:4); cf. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 708.

man involved,²⁸ to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of his flesh,²⁹ and to no longer associate with him. This passage is relevant for our discussion *because* Paul instructs the Corinthians “not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one” (v.11).³⁰

These two passages, along with the other NT examples, clearly indicate that the NT church practiced discipline as a significant feature of the discipleship process.³¹ Discipline is implied by discipleship – if not by etymology, *by way of NT emphasis*. Furthermore, we must take into account the fact that the cultural (and contextual!) backdrop to the NT concept of church discipline is the OT.³² One theologian notes that there are “many instances of divinely ordained acts of discipline within the community of Israel.”³³

We now turn to investigate the historical definition of Vineyard as a Center-set movement and how that definition has functioned in praxis.³⁴

The Vineyard Movement as a Centered-set Movement

²⁸ Cf. 1 Cor 5:2, 4-5, 7, 13. It seems safe to assume that the stepmother involved was not a believer due to the fact that Paul does not refer to how the church should deal with her. This is further supported by Paul’s statement in 5:12-13.

²⁹ This is one of the most difficult verses in the NT to interpret. There are both textual issues and interpretative challenges. For our purposes we will simply acknowledge the difficulties. Interestingly, Paul tells the Corinthians to deliver “such a one” (*ton toiouton*) rather than “this one” (*touton*) to Satan, giving indication that this applies to anyone who repeats.

³⁰ Paul indicates that the Corinthians were “not to associate” in the sense of giving support for or connection to the community’s identity; cf. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 415.

³¹ Discipleship implies *process* rather than *arrival*. The Great Commission implies continued relationships that involve teaching people to follow Jesus’ commandments. This does not happen overnight.

³² Cf. Gen 17:14; Exod 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 32:25-35; Deut 23:1-8; Lev 10:1-7; Num 16:31-35; etc. Note the prominence of “cut off” (Heb. *karath*) throughout the OT in relation to discipline.

³³ Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 543.

³⁴ Our survey is concerned primarily with the defining works written by earlier Vineyard leaders. More time could be spent addressing the Vineyard praxis by surveying the practices found within local churches within the Vineyard.

The Center-set model of Social Set Theory³⁵ has been undeniably influential in Vineyard praxis. This is largely due to the influence of John Wimber³⁶ as well as through a popular book by Alexander Venter, *Doing Church*. Venter's work is essentially a practical "Vineyard ecclesiology."³⁷

To clarify, the Center-set model is an approach that assesses integration into the organization (organism!) by way of measuring whether or not people are moving towards the center (Jesus and the kingdom). A key question is: *are people "living out" the vision and values?* Advocates of Center-set methodology generally avoid conversations regarding whether people are "in" or "out" in favor of asking where people are at in relation to the center. In many ways this is the *sine qua non* for Vineyard community.

Wimber wrote that he "purposely steered [the Vineyard Movement] away from either divisive dogmatism (bounded set) or a fuzzy ("anything goes") way of relating" and instead chose to lead the movement "toward the key values and practices we hold most dear" *because* "we were and are intent on being a centered set group."³⁸ Building upon Wimber,³⁹ Venter writes that "what undergirds [the Center-set model] and makes it work is the emphasis on acceptance, relationship, process, nurture, equipping, teamwork, and real life, as opposed to

³⁵ Social Set Theory is one way that sociologists talk about how people relate to each other. The three Social Set theories are fuzzy-sets, bounded-sets, and centered-sets. For a basic summary, see Alexander Venter, *Doing Church*, (Cape Town, South Africa: 2000), 50-55. For missiological implications, see Paul G. Hiebert, cf. *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1994).

³⁶ Cf. July 1995 - February 1996, John Wimber, "Staying Focused: The Vineyard as a Centered Set Movement," *Vineyard Reflections*, 1-5.

³⁷ Venter suggests that he writes to "all who are interested in and would like to learn about how people do Church, and in so doing, may learn something of the Vineyard history and approach to Church life" (p. 14). While not being a technical ecclesiology, *Doing Church* certainly lays the implications of ecclesiological assumptions. This is why the foreword, written by Bob Fulton, notes the influence of John Wimber's "ecclesiological thinking" (p. 3).

³⁸ Wimber, "Staying Focused," 2.

³⁹ Venter makes clear that Wimber is the primary influence behind *Doing Church* (cf. pp. 13-14).

getting, keeping and controlling.”⁴⁰ Who in the Vineyard would not find this summary adequate in describing the strength and attraction of our ecclesiology?

Bert Waggoner, the current Vineyard National Director, states that “the King and the Kingdom are at the center of our centered-set. We will go anywhere in theology or practice that the Kingdom leads us.”⁴¹ Waggoner suggests that the Vineyard Movement’s diversity is due to the fact that “we have always been committed to being a centered-set movement”⁴² and that “we have never been a movement of fences.”⁴³ Rather, Waggoner states that the Vineyard has “endeavored to stay focused on the center and move in that direction” and that “all were welcome who were going in the same direction.”⁴⁴

As an ecclesiological practitioner, i.e., a pastor, I have found the Centered-set model to be effective, invigorating, and essential for kingdom-oriented missional praxis. Yet questions remain: *Does the Vineyard Center-set approach allow for church discipline? What does Center-set ecclesiology look like?*

The “Over-realized” Centered-set Model

Before we consider a Vineyard Center-set ecclesiology, I want to briefly address what I call an “over-realized” Centered-set model.⁴⁵ This is similar to an “over-realized” eschatology.⁴⁶ While attractive, I believe this has negative consequences for the church.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Venter, *Doing Church*, 55.

⁴¹ Waggoner, *National Director Letter 1.10.11*, 9.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ As far as I know, I’ve invented this term. Whether it is helpful or not is up to the reader.

⁴⁶ Over-realized eschatology is essentially the idea that we can experience the consummation of the kingdom *now*, before Jesus returns, and avoid the affects of sin. For a related issue, see Martin Luther’s comparison between a “theology of the glory” and “theology of the cross,” starting in the *Heidelberg Disputation*.

To be sure, this “over-realized” Center-set perspective seems to embody an *ethos* more than a clearly defined position.⁴⁸ From my perspective, it seems that an “over-realized” Center-set is the result of a biblically (and theologically!) uninformed approach to ecclesiology. For what it’s worth, it also seems to imply a misunderstanding and/or misapplication of the popular works by Ken Wilson⁴⁹ and Dave Schmelzer⁵⁰

The danger of applying the “over-realized” Center-set to our ecclesiology is that it essentially neuters the discipleship process and methodology laid out in Scripture.⁵¹ The intention may be to avoid the judgmental atmosphere that many post-moderns reject,⁵² but it is ecclesiological suicide.⁵³ This is where I have concerns. I believe that an “over-realized” Center-set *ethos* that removes *all* “boundaries” does so with great cost.⁵⁴ Furthermore, it does not reflect the Vineyard’s historical position on being a Center-set movement.

The Vineyard Center-set *has* historically had “boundaries”

⁴⁷ See Liederbach and Reid, *The Convergent Church*, 106-107.

⁴⁸ I’m unaware of any published works advocating this view. It may be helpful to consider the influence of post-conservative evangelicalism, e.g., see Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) and Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). For criticism of the post-conservative approach, see Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor, *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004). *Reclaiming the Center* includes an essay by J.P. Mooreland, a scholar associated with Vineyard.

⁴⁹ Ken Wilson, *Jesus Brand Spirituality: He Wants His Religion Back* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

⁵⁰ Dave Schmelzer, *Not the Religious Type: Confessions of a Turncoat Atheist* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008).

⁵¹ Consider the NT emphasis on correction, rebuking, and exhortation (cf. Gal 6:1; 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:15; etc.).

⁵² Many young post-moderns believe that Christians are, among other things, hypocritical, anti-homosexual, and judgmental. See David Kinnaman, *UnChristian* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) and Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007). For other interesting studies related to the subjects of post-moderns and missional theology, see Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Thom S. Rainer and Sam S. Rainer III, *Essential Church?* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2008); Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010); David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011); and Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2011).

⁵³ I do not believe that having a welcoming community and being willing to carry out church discipline are mutually exclusive.

⁵⁴ E.g., I am concerned that Scripture loses its function as the primary authority of the church (*Sola Scriptura*) when biblical imperatives are ignored related to church discipline. I’m also concerned that ignoring those imperatives would render the authority of the church as empty and functionally useless.

Ecclesiological convictions, as with other biblical/theological disciplines, should be developed with awareness to the past.⁵⁵ As the western philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”⁵⁶ While the Vineyard Movement’s history is relatively short, and it is certainly not the only historical perspective to consider, we would be wise to reflect on what Wimber and others have stated regarding the Vineyard Center-set model.

So how did the early⁵⁷ Vineyard leaders understand the relationship between being Center-set and maintaining certain boundaries? Bill Jackson indicates that the Vineyard is “joined together as a tribe, or family, by a set of common values and mission.” According to Jackson, the Vineyard “genetic code” and our values and mission “serve as our boundaries to keep us on track.”⁵⁸

Alexander Venter helps articulate the tension of being Center-set while maintaining certain boundaries when he discusses how values and “absolutes” relate to one another. For example, he states that “the use of this language of values, priorities and practices, is of a value in itself” because “it reflects an approach... that avoids absolutes, either/or, right/wrong, black/white categories.” Yet Venter clarifies that “this does not apply when it comes to basics of our Christian faith, *as well as to ethical and other matters.*”⁵⁹ It seems that Vineyard Center-set methodology seeks to avoid using language that functions as a barrier between people, yet still maintains doctrinal and ethical (moral?) boundaries. Those boundaries may be debatable, but the fact remains that they are acknowledged as existing.

⁵⁵ A decent introductory historical survey of issues related to ecclesiology can be found in Greg Allison, *Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

⁵⁶ George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 82.

⁵⁷ Use of the term “early” is relative, to be sure.

⁵⁸ Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle*, 101.

⁵⁹ Venter, *Doing Church*, 106.

When Wimber wrote an article describing the Vineyard as a Centered-set movement, he stated that he “purposely set out to center our movement around an orthodox/evangelical theology and, for the most part, practice.” He went on to affirm that while he was open to a person whose teaching or practice “stands on a position that is clearly articulated within the Church,” he was “not so open when an individual’s stand cannot be defended with orthodox/evangelical theology and practice.”⁶⁰ For Wimber, the Vineyard’s Center-set approach is not without a clearly defined center, a center that implies certain boundaries. These boundaries govern how one relates to the overall movement.⁶¹ This explains how our leadership previously dealt with the theological and practical differences between the Association of Vineyard Churches and the former Toronto Airport Vineyard.⁶²

Church Discipline in a Center-Set Kingdom Ecclesiology

Kingdom theology calls for a radical commitment to kingdom qualities, such as grace, mercy, faith, hope, patience, gentleness, and love. Since the “greatest of these is love,”⁶³ we need to remember that *because* the Lord loves his people, he disciplines them.⁶⁴ While at “the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant... later it yields the peaceful fruit of

⁶⁰ Wimber, “Staying Focused,” 2.

⁶¹ This is the clear implications of what Venter means when he writes concerning assessment and integration taking place “on the basis of people’s direction, i.e. are they journeying toward the values that the group is committed to” (*Doing Church*, 54). The defined center functions as a “boundary” and an invitation!

⁶² See Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle*, 281-338; Wimber, “Staying Focused,” 4-5. See also how the Vineyard dealt with issues related to Metro Vineyard of Kansas City, Mike Bickle, Bob Jones, and John Paul Jackson. Bill Jackson reports that “Wimber said that God had told him that the way he dealt with Mike [Bickle] would set a precedent for disciplining leaders in the future,” which led Wimber to discipline Bickle before 7,000 people at a conference (Jackson, *The Quest*, 216-20). This example of discipline was based on issues related to doctrine and ethics, which is exactly the boundaries that Venter said were maintained in the Vineyard’s Center-set ecclesiology!

⁶³ 1 Cor 13:13.

⁶⁴ Cf. Heb 12:6-11; Rev 3:19. See also Deut 8:5.

righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”⁶⁵ Discipline and love are not mutually exclusive concepts. In fact, one is a result of the other.⁶⁶

Furthermore, ecclesiological depth will develop as our church leaders commit to the same process-orientated discipleship methodology found in the NT. This is one of the great strengths of being a Center-set movement – *where are people at in relation to the center?* Yet this does not remove the fact that pastors are accountable for those in their care⁶⁷ and may be required to lovingly confront people,⁶⁸ sometimes at great personal cost, by exercising “the benevolent use of authority.”⁶⁹ This echoes the language of the “keys of the kingdom” authority found in Matthew 18.

Finally, kingdom ecclesiology leads a reconciled community to commit itself towards influencing others towards reconciliation through kingdom restoration;⁷⁰ it is characterized by both the *fruit* of the Spirit⁷¹ and the *power* of the Spirit.⁷² Why shouldn’t the *charismata* function in how we carry out discipleship, as well as inform our practice of church discipline? Integrating church discipline within the framework of kingdom ecclesiology need not be identified as a heavy-handed Bounded-set; rather, church discipline within the context of kingdom ecclesiology

⁶⁵ Heb 12:11.

⁶⁶ Perhaps it goes without saying, but theologians are careful to acknowledge that while God is responsible for this discipline, he often does so through *means*.

⁶⁷ Heb 13:17; cf. Acts 20:28.

⁶⁸ 1 Thess 5:12; note that leaders are to, at times, admonish those who they are over.

⁶⁹ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 247. Laniak states that “some situations require militant protection and discipline” while “others beckon for gentle nurture.”

⁷⁰ See James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

⁷¹ Gal 5:22-23.

⁷² There is no reason why we shouldn’t see “signs and wonders” (i.e., prophecy and healing) at work in our pastoral care. As an “empowered evangelical,” I’m committed to experiencing the Spirit’s presence during all facets of discipleship work!

seeks to “major on flexibility and sensitivity”⁷³ in light of the gospel of the kingdom, the Great Commission, the grace and love of the Lord, and a commitment to a prophetic ethos that sees the church as a community of healing and reconciliation.

⁷³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 279, emphasis mine. Blomberg refers readers to J. C. Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1985); *idem.*, “The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline,” *BibSac* 143 (1986): 353–64.