

BIBLICAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE

RELEVANT SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Matthew 18:15-17 ~ *If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.* ¹⁷ *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

Romans 16:17 ~ ¹⁷ *Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*

1 Corinthians 5:1-11 ~ *It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.* ² *You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.* ³ *For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.* ⁴ *In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,* ⁵ *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶ *Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?* ⁷ *Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.* ⁸ *Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* ⁹ *I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;* ¹⁰ *I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.* ¹¹ *But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.*

Galatians 6:1 ~ *Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any 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.*

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15 ~ ⁶ *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us....* ¹⁴ *If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.* ¹⁵ *Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

1 Timothy 1:20 ~ *Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.*

1 Timothy 5:19-20 ~ *Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.* ²⁰ *Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.*

Titus 3:9-11 ~ ⁹ *But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.* ¹⁰ *Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,* ¹¹ *knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.*

2 John 10-11 ~ *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;* ¹¹ *for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*

PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church Discipline is a term that has been used to describe the corporate body's loving involvement in the personal lives of believers who are struggling with sin. This always should be done with an attitude of deep humility and gentleness with a goal that the person would repent and be restored to fellowship. Though church discipline is often on a private level between two believers, the elders in a local church have the responsibility and authority to ensure that the biblical guidelines are followed. Prayer and the person and work of the Holy Spirit are crucial in the church discipline process. It is only through His working that anyone will turn from their sin, which is always the goal of church discipline.

To Glorify God by Obedience to His Instructions

2 Corinthians 2:9 ~ For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

To Restore the Sinning Brother/Sister

Matthew 18:15 ~ If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

Galatians 6:1 ~ Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any 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.

2 Timothy 2:25 ~ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

James 5:19-20 ~ My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

To Keep the Sin from Spreading to Others

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ~ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? ⁷ Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Timothy 5:20 ~ Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

- A maxim in *The Farmer's Almanac* says, "One bad apple can spoil the whole barrel." The same is true of truth when it is mixed with error.

To Protect the Purity of the Church

- The unblemished nature of God sets the uncompromising standard for all who bear His name.

Matthew 5:48 ~ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

1 Corinthians 11:27 ~ Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 11:2 ~ For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin

Ephesians 5:27 ~ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless

Colossians 1:22 ~ yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach

1 Peter 1:14-16 ~ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'

To Prevent Giving Cause for God to Discipline a Local Church

Revelation 2:14-25 ~ ⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. ¹⁵ So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the

churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' ¹⁸ And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: *The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:* ¹⁹ *I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.* ²⁰ *But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.* ²¹ *I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.* ²² *Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.* ²³ *And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.* ²⁴ *But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.* ²⁵ *Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.*

PRACTICAL CHURCH DISCIPLINE STEPS – MATT 18:15-17

Note: Scripture treats all who profess faith in Christ the same. Hence, these actions are to be taken with anyone who identifies himself as a Christian.

STEP 1 Private Reproof

- This is done privately. There is no need for anyone else to know.
- This is to be carried out by the person who is aware of the sin. If they approach an elder without first going to the person in sin, the elder must refuse to become involved or listen to the accusation, but will rather exhort the person to follow the principles taught in Matthew 18.
- Publicity and gossip at Step One only creates unnecessary anger and bitterness, especially if it really is not a case of sin, but rather a simple misunderstanding.

STEP 2 Take One or Two Witnesses

- Coordinate your efforts with those who will be witnessing the action (with one or two witnesses).
- At this step it is possible to bring in an elder of the church, but it is not necessary.
- The purpose of the witnesses is to:
 - 1) Help protect everyone from misunderstanding, misquotation, further sin, etc.
 - 2) Verify the sin so that there is no unjust accusations.
 - 3) Create necessary support and basis for further action.
- Communicate to the person the direction that the church discipline process will go if they refuse to repent.

Step Two Confrontation of Sin: An Example

Introduction

“Thank you so much for allowing us to meet with you. As I am sure you are aware this is not merely a social visit, but rather we are very concerned about some issues in your life.”

2 Tim. 2:24-25 says “And the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.”

“Please know that we come in gentleness and great patience, yet are under biblical mandate to confront sin and call to repentance. This is not motivated by revenge or a personal attack, but rather with a desire for the purity of our body as a whole and you as an individual. Please know, that we are not personally confronting you, but rather it is Christ and His Word. We are mediators of the truth of God’s Word, so your issue is not with us, but with the Scriptures.”

Confrontation

- Specifically identify their sinful actions.
- Share specific Scriptures that confront their sin.

Call to Repentance

“On the basis of these Scriptures we are calling you to confess and repent of your behavior. We sincerely love you and desire healing and restoration, but confession and repentance must be a part of that. Will you confess and repent from your actions?”

Response

“Yes I confess my sin and desire to repent”

2 Cor. 7:9-12 The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret...

1. Will you openly acknowledge that your actions were sinful and wrong? (They must not make the sin appear less sinful by hiding behind others or extenuating circumstances)
2. Will you openly tell each instance where you have sinned in this way (Come clean completely)?
3. Will you forsake this sin and totally avoid further involvement?
4. Are you willing to confess this sin to all parties that have been affected by it?
5. Will you completely submit to the leadership of the elders in helping you repent from this sin? (Possible removal from ministry)

“No, I did not sin and will not repent”

“Based on the Scriptures you have been warned and called to repent from your sin. Based on your response, you need to know that the elders take this very seriously and will follow through completely on Church Discipline as identified in the Scriptures. If you continue to demonstrate unrepentance, this will be brought before the entire elder team and then before your small group/ministry, and if you continue to be unrepentant, before the entire church body at our next communion service. With great humility we sincerely call you to repent.”

STEP 3 Tell it to the Church

Their small group

- Inform the elders of the need for this step.
- The person and their offense will be reported to their small group for the purpose of mobilizing those that know them towards his/her restoration. The various steps that have been taken should be communicated, yet not a lot of detail is given
- This will be done by the elder who is over that small group

The entire church

- Send a letter to the sinning Christian warning them that the church will be informed unless they repent. Include in the letter that unless we hear from them prior to the next communion service (date), the issue will be presented to the church.
- Usually the letter should be taken in person by an elder because this allows for face to face loving confrontation. If this is not possible, it should be sent by registered mail.
- The elder handling the case will be contacted before the next communion service (at which time the name will be given to the church) to verify whether we should discipline.
- If we should proceed, the name and offense will be reported to the church at the next communion service for the purpose of mobilizing the entire body towards his/her restoration. The various steps that have been taken should be communicated, yet not a lot of detail is given to the church regarding the sin.
- If repentance should take place anytime previous to communion, the proper pastor/elder should be contacted immediately.

STEP 4 Let Him be as a Gentile and a Tax-gatherer

- If there has been no repentance reported, an additional letter should be sent indicating that at the next communion service they will be dismissed from our fellowship.
- If repentance does take place, notify the proper pastor/elder immediately. If there is no report of repentance, then the name will be reported to the people at the communion service.
- From this point, the person is no longer welcome at any of the activities of MBC, and will be asked to leave if they show up.
- The congregation should be instructed how they are to interact with the person—basically they are to shun the believer in sin except to confront them on their sin. They are not to fellowship with them in any way but rather should pray for and exhort them to repent.
- Typically with communion services being held on a monthly basis, the time between Step 3 and Step 4 should be only one month.

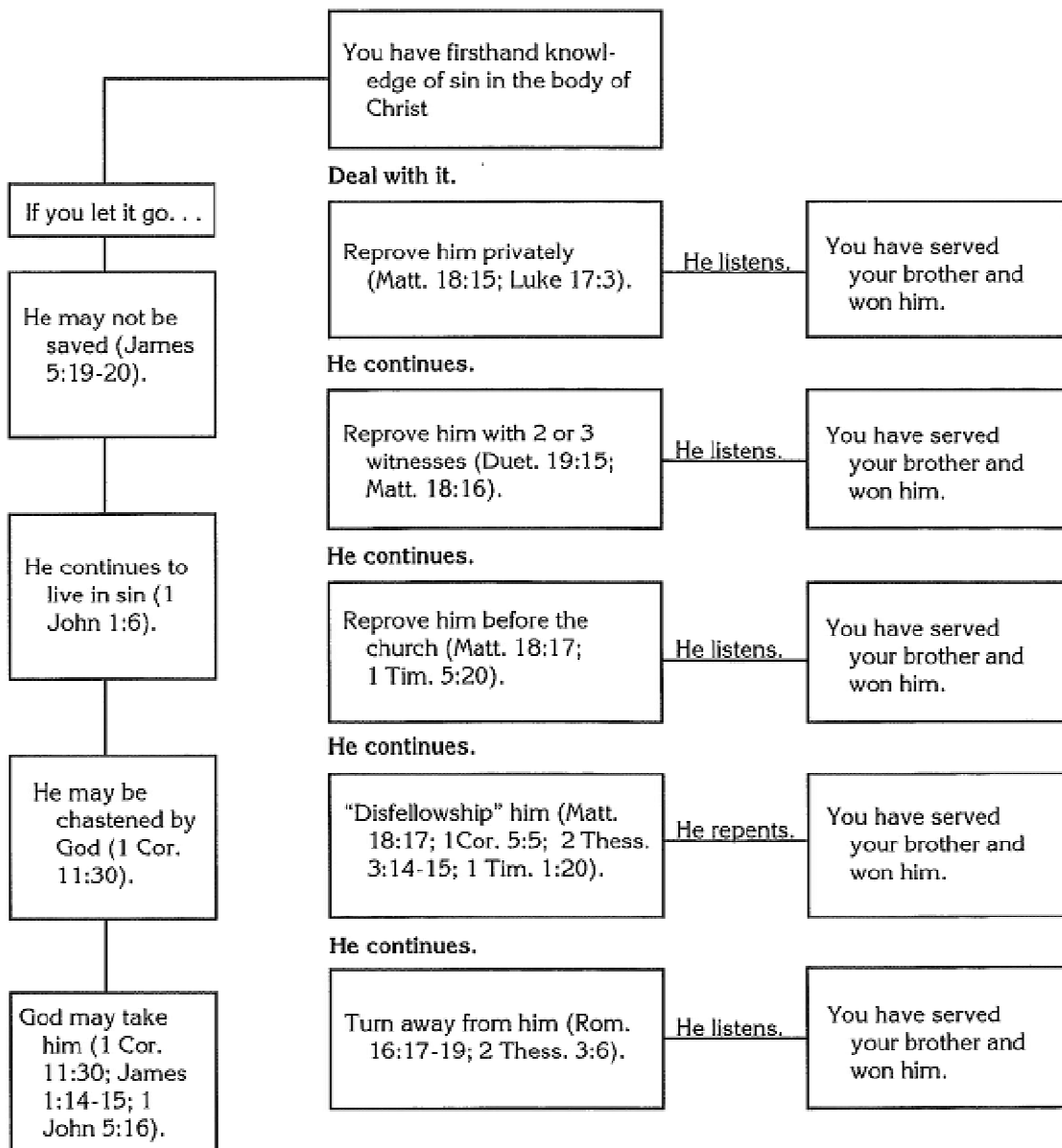
RESTORATION AND REPENTANCE

- With the dismissal from our fellowship, we would still desire and pray that there would be repentance and restoration.
- If, at any time, the individual should indicate repentance, notify the proper pastor/elder and the chairman of the elders will be informed so that the individual may come before the elders.
- Upon satisfactorily being cleared by the elders, the name will be given to the church at the next communion service indicating restoration.

2 Corinthians 2:7-8 ~ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him

82. Church Discipline Flowchart

1. Open sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)
2. Unresolved personal conflicts (Matthew 18:15-20)
3. Divisiveness (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10)
4. False teaching (Galatians 1:8, 9; 1 Timothy 1:20; 6:3-5; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 2:14-16)



ATTITUDE IN CHURCH DISCIPLINE

With Gentleness

Galatians 6:1

2 Timothy 2:25

With Love

Hebrews 12:5-6 ~ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; ⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.”

Without Hypocrisy

Matthew 7:1-5 ~ Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

With Patience

2 Timothy 4:2 ~ preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction

- Follow the 4 steps

IS DISCIPLINE UNLOVING OR LOVING?

- Our world may think that this process is harsh or unloving; but that is just the opposite of the truth!
- Rebuking sin is loving, not unloving. To discipline is to show concern and love whereas to ignore the sin or neglect discipline is to show indifference and hatred.

Proverbs 9:8 ~ Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, Reprove a wise man and he will love you.

Proverbs 27:5-6 ~ Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed. 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.

Proverbs 13:24 ~ He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

Hebrews 12:5-6 ~ and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; ⁶ For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.”

81. Church Discipline

“Many people fail to make a clear distinction between punishment and discipline, and there is a very significant difference between these two concepts. *Punishment* is designed to execute *retribution* for a wrong done. *Discipline*, on the other hand, is to encourage the *restoration* of one involved in wrongdoing. Punishment is designed primarily to avenge a wrong and assert justice. Discipline is designed primarily as a corrective for the one who has failed to live according to the standards of the church and/or society.”*

Passage	Problem	Procedure	Purpose
Matthew 18:15-18	The sin of a “brother” (undefined)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Private reproof 2. Private conference 3. Public announcement 4. Public exclusion 	Restoration (to win “your brother over”)
1 Corinthians 5	Immorality Greed Idolatry Drunkenness Swindling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate grief 2. Removal from midst 3. No association 	Restoration (5:5) Purification (5:7)
2 Corinthians 2:5-11	Unnamed	After sincere repentance <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forgive him. 2. Comfort him. 3. Love him. 	Restoration (2:7) Protection (2:11)
Galatians 6:1	“A sin”	Restore him <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As spiritual persons 2. With meekness 3. With reflection 	Restoration (2:11)
2 Thessalonians 3:6-15	Laziness, gossip (“busy-bodies”)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take note of him. 2. Keep aloof from him. 3. Admonish him (as a brother, not an enemy). 	Restoration (“He may feel ashamed.”)
1 Timothy 5:19-20	An accusation against an elder entertained without witnesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need 2-3 witnesses. 2. If sin continues, then rebuke before all. 	Purification (so “others may take warning”)
Titus 3:9-11	Divisiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give 2 warnings. 2. Reject him (as warped, sinful, self-condemned). 	Protection (against division)