

Church Discipline
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What is its purpose?

Under what circumstances should it be exercised?

How is it to be exercised?

SUPPORTING TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE

Galatians 6:1 "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."

Hebrews 12:5-11 "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

2 Corinthians 2:5-11 "If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent--not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15 "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us... If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother."

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We, the members of _____ Church, believe we are called to join with each other for the purposes of helping one another grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ and be effective in building the Kingdom of God. Our love for one another and our holiness of life are our greatest testimonies to the world around us of God's transforming love.

We believe God has called us to encourage each other and hold each other accountable for our growth in Christ-likeness. That encouragement and accountability are to be administered with mercy and grace, recognizing that God's work in each life is unique.

We further believe God has given his church (meaning the local church acting in concert, not just individuals in the church) the responsibility for discipline when a Partner disobeys God's Word. **Discipline is always for the purpose of restoring a Christian to Christ-like living and never for the purpose of revenge or punishment.** While Christians often differ on lifestyle issues, only such conduct as is expressly commanded or forbidden in Scriptures should be the grounds for discipline.

Using Matthew 18 as our guideline, we believe it is the responsibility of a Christian to lovingly confront a Christian friend when that friend is harming himself/herself and the church by his/her disobedient conduct.

If that confrontation does not result in a change of behavior, the Christian is responsible to take one or two other **MATURE** believers and once again confront the Christian - pleading with him/her to stop his/her sinful behavior.

If that confrontation does not result in a change of behavior, the Elders of the Church should be informed. The Elders may then ask the Church (in a duly called business meeting) to join the Elders in calling upon the sinning Christian to change his/her behavior.

If the Christian ignores all prior counsel, including the plea by the Church, the Elders shall ask the Church to remove the person from the Partnership of the Church. If the Church agrees, such a person will be contacted and encouraged to continue attending the church for teaching in the Word but informed that they will no longer be treated as a fellow-believer. They are to be loved as an unbeliever whom we are seeking to bring to faith and repentance.

Upon confession of their sin and repentance (a demonstrated commitment to obedience) a person removed from the Partnership of the Church may be restored to Partnership through the normal means of applying for Partnership.

Please remember God's discipline of us (even His discipline of us through His church) is because of his love. Discipline is always for the purpose of restoring a Christian to Christ-like living and never for the purpose of revenge or punishment. Even what is commonly called "excommunication" is for the primary purpose of encouraging repentance.

This policy statement shall be given to each person applying for partnership in the church and shall be distributed annually to the "partnership" of the church as a reminder of the mutual commitment we have made to discipline each other.