

## **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

by Pastor Larry E. McCall

### I. What is Church Discipline?

A. Formative discipline

“Everything the church does to instruct, train, and equip believers for the Christian life.”

B. Corrective discipline

“Everything the church does to restore wayward members.”

### II. On whom should church discipline be used?

A. Only those who profess to be Christians

*“I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).*

B. No Christian is immune

*“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning” (1 Timothy 5:19-20).*

### III. Which sins should be dealt with?

A. Some sins mentioned in God's Word

1. Offenses against *love*

*“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” (Matthew 18:15).*

2. Offenses against *unity*

*“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Romans 16:17).*

*“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (Titus 3:10).*

3. Offenses against *morality*

*"I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat"* (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

4. Offenses against *truth*

*"Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work"* (2 John 9-11).

B. But really, ANY sin?

*"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"* (Galatians 6:1).

IV. Why deal with sin?

A. For the sake of the individual

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"* (Galatians 6:1).
2. *Make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed"* (Hebrews 12:13)
3. *"Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his own way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins"* (James 5:20).

B. For the sake of the body as a whole

1. *"Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth"* (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).
2. *"Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness'"* (2 Timothy 2:16-19).

C. For the sake of Christ

1. *"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him"* (2 Corinthians 11:2).
2. *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight"* (Ephesians 1:4).
3. *"Husbands, love you wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless"* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

## V. How should we carry out discipline?

### A. Preparation

1. *Check own motives. "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"* (Galatians 6:1).

2. *Check for planks in the eye*

*Jesus said, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in you brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:3-5).

3. *Pray for soft hearts for all*

*"So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you, night and day with tears"* (Acts 20:31).

4. *Pray for wisdom and boldness*

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5).

### B. Step #1 -- Private Appeal

*"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"* (Matthew 18:15).

1. *Make sure of privacy*
2. *Ask questions; get the facts; listen!*
3. *Be gentle and humble*

*"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"* (Galatians 6:1).

*“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).*

*“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses” (Proverbs 27:5-6).*

4. Use the Word of God

*“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

Repentance?

*“First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.” (Acts 26:20)*

*“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” (Matthew 18:15).*

*“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man=s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (James 1:19-20).*

No Change?

Then Move to Step #2

C. Step #2: Small Group Appeal

*“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” (Matthew 18:16).*

1. Take witnesses

*“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of a crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Deuteronomy 19:15).*

2. Be cautious

*“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” (Galatians 6:1).*

3. Be gentle

*“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” (Galatians 6:1).*

4. Remember goal (restoration)

Repentance?

*“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” (Galatians 6:1).*

No Change?

Then Move to Step #3

D. Step #3: Whole church appeal

*“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” (Matthew 18:17).*

1. Whole church confronts

2. Must be cooperation

*“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 ~~Y~~ 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” (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14).*

3. Should be with *grief*

*“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?” (1 Corinthians 5:2).*

Repentance?

*“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” (2 Corinthians 2:6-10).*

No Change?

Then Move to Step #4

E. Step #4: Excommunication

*“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. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be*

*bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:17-20).*

1. Decision of a majority of the church

*“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him” (2 Corinthians 2:6).*

2. A cutting off of church membership, fellowship, and communion

*“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? . . . But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (1 Corinthians 5:2,11).*

3. Don’t treat like an enemy

*“Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother” (2 Thessalonians 3:15).*

4. Treat as an unconverted person

*“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” (Matthew 18:17).*

5. Pray for salvation, restoration

*“Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 5:5).*

Repentance? Forgive and restore him to the church.

*“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” (2 Corinthians 2:7-11).*