



GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
CHURCH DISCIPLINE
POSITION PAPER

POSITION P-8
Adopted: 1/21/14
Revised: 6/1/15
Reviewed: 1/28/22

Discipline inside the Church is an essential part of the life and maturity of any body of believers. We at Grace Community Church take very seriously the issue of church discipline because it is our strongest desire that as many as possible would grow into maturity in Christ.

There are three major reasons that we practice church discipline; we are to protect fellow believers from false accusation (1 Cor. 6:1-8), if someone is truly guilty of sin, then we have the responsibility to restore that person to holy living through repentance and restitution (Gal. 6:1), we are called to maintain the purity of our personal and church life. (2 Cor. 7:1, Eph. 4:29-32)

Biblical discipline is primarily training. To be a disciple of Jesus means to live a disciplined life and to humbly receive discipline as needed. There are two major kinds of church discipline; formative and restorative. Formative discipline is primarily positive, instructive, and encouraging. Restorative discipline is primarily corrective.

Formative discipline consists of many of the things that we should be doing on a regular basis to stay close to the Lord. These are practices or disciplines that if done regularly, the Lord can use to train us. As we spend time in scripture study and prayer, as we sit under the authority of solid biblical teaching and preaching, and as we walk in community with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, God will refine us more into the image and likeness of Jesus.

The process of restorative discipline begins when we become aware of sin in another believer's life. Jesus commands us to go to that person with a redemptive attitude. We have neither the option of ignoring the sin nor being condemning or arrogant. Before we go, we must be careful to examine our own heart and motives, seeking the Holy Spirit's leading before we confront someone on an issue of sin. (Gal. 6:1) Following self-examination, we should examine the perceived sin. Usually we deal with five major areas of sin. These can include doctrinal deviation (Gal. 1:9), sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-5), offending one another (Matt 18:15), divisiveness within the body (Luke 11:17, Rom 16:17, 1 Cor. 1:10-17), or any other kind of flagrant sin (Acts 5:1-11, Eph. 4:21-32).

The next step in restorative discipline involves individual confrontation. This should be done in a one-to-one fashion by someone with first-hand knowledge of the sin. (Matt 18:15) If the sin is corrected by this caring confrontation (either by clearing up a misunderstanding/perception or by confession, repentance and restitution), the matter is finished. We are to



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forgive as God has forgiven us, not holding the offense against the offender. If there is significant sin involved, the process of forgiveness may include a time of restoration where the offender will work through their sin issues with some trusted, Godly people who can help them return to a state of full health and maturity in the Spirit. This process may include a time of stepping back from certain responsibilities and leadership roles within the church, to allow the individual as well as those close to them, time to heal. (Matt. 18:21-22)

If, however, there is defiance and the situation continues without resolution, the next step must be taken. The second confrontation will include one or two wise, Spirit-led believers who can examine the situation carefully to surface any misunderstandings or sin. The goal is always redemptive and the attitude gracious. (Matt. 18:16, 2 Cor. 13:1, 1 Tim. 5:19)

In the event that the individual is unwilling to meet again or unwilling to work through the process of repentance, the final step in restorative discipline involves disciplinary action through the leadership of the church. (Matt. 18:17)

Turning the matter over to the church will take the form of entrusting the procedures to the Elder Team. The Elder Team will then deal directly with the individual in an attempt to bring the person to repentance. This process will continue to be done in an honest, direct, loving way, while maintaining the confidentiality of the situation where possible. Should the individual continue to be in defiant, unrepentant sin, the individual and the matter are to be turned over to God, treating the individual as a non-believer. (1 Cor. 11:32, Matt. 18:17)

Where the Elders see the sin as destructive to the life of the body, the person will be asked to cease participation in the body. In other cases the person will be allowed to attend and participate in the body so long as they are not leading others into sin.



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Everyone inside the church body can come under restorative discipline, including the Elders. The process for restorative discipline for Elders should look similar to that of any other church member. The initial steps of self-evaluation, followed by confrontation are to be carried out as described above. If the individual is persistent or unrepentant in their sin, or the sin is too serious in nature, the matter should be brought before the entire Elder Team. Any sin or charge brought against an Elder should be brought forward by two or three witnesses. The matter will then be investigated by the entire Elder Team. The Elder Team is committed to dealing with sin inside of the church and every charge will be weighed carefully and in a loving manner, without showing partiality or favoritism. If the Elder is found to be guilty of the charges, they are to be dealt with publically so the rest of the congregation may take warning.
(1 Tim. 5:19-21)

The Bible gives a wide variety of disciplinary actions that are appropriate for the many issues that may surface in the life of a church living in a fallen world attacked by the enemy. Obviously, much love, prayer, and wisdom from God are required. The goal of discipline is always holy living that glorifies our Great God, and ultimately produces good in the lives of the individual as well as the Church. (Heb. 12:5-11)

Church Discipline
Dealing with Sinning Christians

