

## Statement on Church Discipline

Church discipline is plainly taught in the Scriptures. It is one of the primary means that the Lord has ordained for bringing about repentance and restoration in the lives of His erring children. When practiced according to Scripture, church discipline is an act of obedience that demonstrates our love for the Lord and our desire to have fellowship with Him by walking in the light of his truth<sup>1</sup>. Biblical church discipline also serves as a deterrent to sin<sup>2</sup>; preserves the unity<sup>3</sup>, purity<sup>4</sup>, and reputation<sup>5</sup> of Christ's church; and helps to clear the conscience<sup>6</sup> and reputation<sup>7</sup> of the repenting member. In practicing church discipline, each member of a church assumes the responsibility of lovingly watching over<sup>8</sup> the other members of the church for the purpose of encouraging holiness<sup>9</sup> and discouraging disorderly behavior in each member<sup>10</sup> and in the church as a whole<sup>11</sup>; and each member consents to being so watched over<sup>12</sup>. When other Biblical measures prove ineffective<sup>13</sup>, those members of the church who refuse to repent of sin and submit to the church<sup>14</sup> will be expelled from the church<sup>15</sup> and turned over to Satan<sup>16</sup>. When the disciplined member gives sufficient evidence of genuine repentance, the church is to heartily express forgiveness and receive the offender into fellowship again<sup>17</sup>. Each member of \_\_\_\_\_ Church agrees to submit to and participate in the discipline of the church.

Addenda:

1. Should a member become guilty of sin that the church deems scandalous, the church may excommunicate him immediately and without prior implementation of less drastic means of discipline, such as private exhortation or public rebuke. 1 Corinthians 5 records the command to immediately withdraw fellowship from a man who was guilty of scandalous sin. See also Galatians 2:11-16.
2. The decision as to whether or not it is necessary for a repenting member to confess his sin to the entire church rests with the pastors (also called elders and overseers) of the church; but the general principle is: the repentance ought to be as public as the sin is notorious. That is, publicly known sins are to be repented of publicly.
3. Unless providentially hindered, any member who willfully and habitually absents himself from the appointed meetings of the church will be liable to church discipline.
4. Any member who seeks a transfer of membership or any other removal of his name from the church roll while subject to any stage of church discipline will not have his name removed from the church roll without the consent of the pastors. The disciplinary process will continue to completion.
5. Each member of \_\_\_\_\_ Church agrees that he will not initiate or pursue legal action against the church, nor against the pastors, deacons, or church staff in connection with their performance of official duties. Any Christian considering legal action against another Christian is encouraged to heed 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:2,23 *He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.* 1 John 1:5,6 *This is the*

*message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*

<sup>2</sup> *1 Timothy 5:20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.*

<sup>3</sup> *Titus 3:10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.*

<sup>4</sup> *1 Corinthians 5:6,7 Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump.*

<sup>5</sup> *1 Corinthians 6:5,6 Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!*

<sup>6</sup> *1 John 1:7-10 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

<sup>7</sup> *2 Corinthians 2:6-7 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*

<sup>8</sup> *Hebrews 12:14-16 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.*

<sup>9</sup> *Hebrews 10:24,25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

<sup>10</sup> *Galatians 6:1,2 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

<sup>11</sup> *Acts 20:28-31 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves*

*will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch....*

<sup>12</sup>*Ephesians 5:21 Submitting to one another in the fear of God. Philippians 2:3,4 In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

<sup>13</sup>*Corrective measures that are less drastic than excommunication include those outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, namely, 1. Private attempts to restore the erring brother: If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother (v.15). 2. Restoration attempts made in the presence of one or more witnesses: But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established' (v.16). 3. Public rebuke from the church: And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector (v.17). The usefulness and responsibility of public rebuke from the church are also addressed in 1 Timothy 5:20, Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear; and in Titus 1:13, Therefore rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith.*

<sup>14</sup>*Hebrews 13:7,17 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you. . . . Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

<sup>15</sup>*1 Corinthians 5:12,13 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14,15 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Matthew 18:17 But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

<sup>16</sup>*1 Corinthians 5:5 Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

<sup>17</sup>*2 Corinthians 2:6-7 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.*

This policy was written by the Elders of North Pointe Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri and may be adapted for use in your local church.