



Westwood Church Discipline Guidelines 2017

Definition

Church discipline is the means by which church members strive for holiness by encouragement, counsel, admonition, and rebuke. (Gal. 6:1; Ps. 141:5) This discipline is an exercise of the authority given to the church and its members by Jesus Christ to instruct, guide and protect all members while encouraging purity and unity in the church. (Mt. 18; 1 John 1:7) It is always to be administered with tenderness, fidelity, and love. (Col. 3:14) The ultimate purpose of discipline is to restore relationships, and bring people back into a right relationship with God and others in the unity of the faith. (James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:13) Church discipline, along with every other Christian action, is an opportunity to glorify God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

Policy

(Westwood By-Laws call for Church Discipline of members when necessary)

According to Article VI Section 6 of the Westwood By Laws states:

It shall be the practice of this Church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The Senior Pastor, other members of the Church staff, and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the Church, the Senior Pastor and the deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accord with Matthew 18. If it becomes necessary for the Church to take action to exclude a member, this process is completed by action of the Church Council (upon recommendation of the Senior Pastor and the Deacon Church Unity Team) and the person may be declared no longer in the membership of the Church. This action shall be reported to the Church and reflected in the membership records of the Church. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance. Once such proceeding has commenced, a member's decision to remove themselves from the rolls of the Church shall not deprive the Church Council of biblical jurisdiction to take appropriate Church disciplinary action for the members sinful actions committed during their membership in the Church in accordance with Holy Scripture.

Dismissed members may be restored by the Church Council in the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8, when their life-styles are judged to be in accordance with the membership covenant. Restoration of Church membership shall require the vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the Church Council.

Why?

(Why practice church discipline?)

- Church discipline is one necessary tool provided by scripture that covenant church members should utilize as they strive for holiness and unity in the faith, and as they walk together in a manner worthy of the gospel. (Eph. 4:13 & 25; Phil. 1:27; Heb. 12:10)
- As a covenant church member (Article IV Westwood By Laws) we strive for holiness and unity by:
 - Guiding and protecting each other from harmful effects of sin and preserving the witness and reputation of Christ.
 - Restoring each other through a spirit of gentleness with encouragement and forgiveness. (Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2: 6-7)
 - Providing wise counsel and affirmation when we fall into sin. (2 Cor. 2: 7-8; 1 Cor. 4:21; Rom. 12:16; Proverbs 19:20; Proverbs 12:1; Eph. 5:15)
 - Admonishing one another to live righteously. (1 Thess. 2:11-12; Rom. 15:1; Titus 2:12)
 - Providing rebuke to each other when needed, speaking truth in love, so we will become mature believers. (Ps. 141:5; Eph. 4:15)
- It is through proper discipline that a wayward member is restored into a right relationship with God and others in the unity of faith. (James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 4:13; I John 1:7)
- In the unfortunate circumstance that a brother or sister refuses to be reconciled to God, and to the covenant fellowship of the church, the Bible gives a clear command to walk through a process that could eventually lead to removing the member from the fellowship for the good of the body, and the glory of God. (Isa. 42:8; Exod. 34:14; Matt. 18: 15-18; 1 Cor. 5:6-13)

When?

(When to practice church discipline?)

- Church Discipline does not apply to someone for areas on which the Bible has no clear commandments. Examples could include but are not limited to, drinking alcoholic beverages is not grounds for discipline; drunkenness is. Watching movies is not grounds for discipline; watching pornographic movies is. Scripture contains many lists of sins. (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:25-5:6; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:2-5; etc.)
- We may summarize these as:
3 main areas of danger of considering the “when” of church discipline: Fidelity of doctrine, purity of life, unity of fellowship

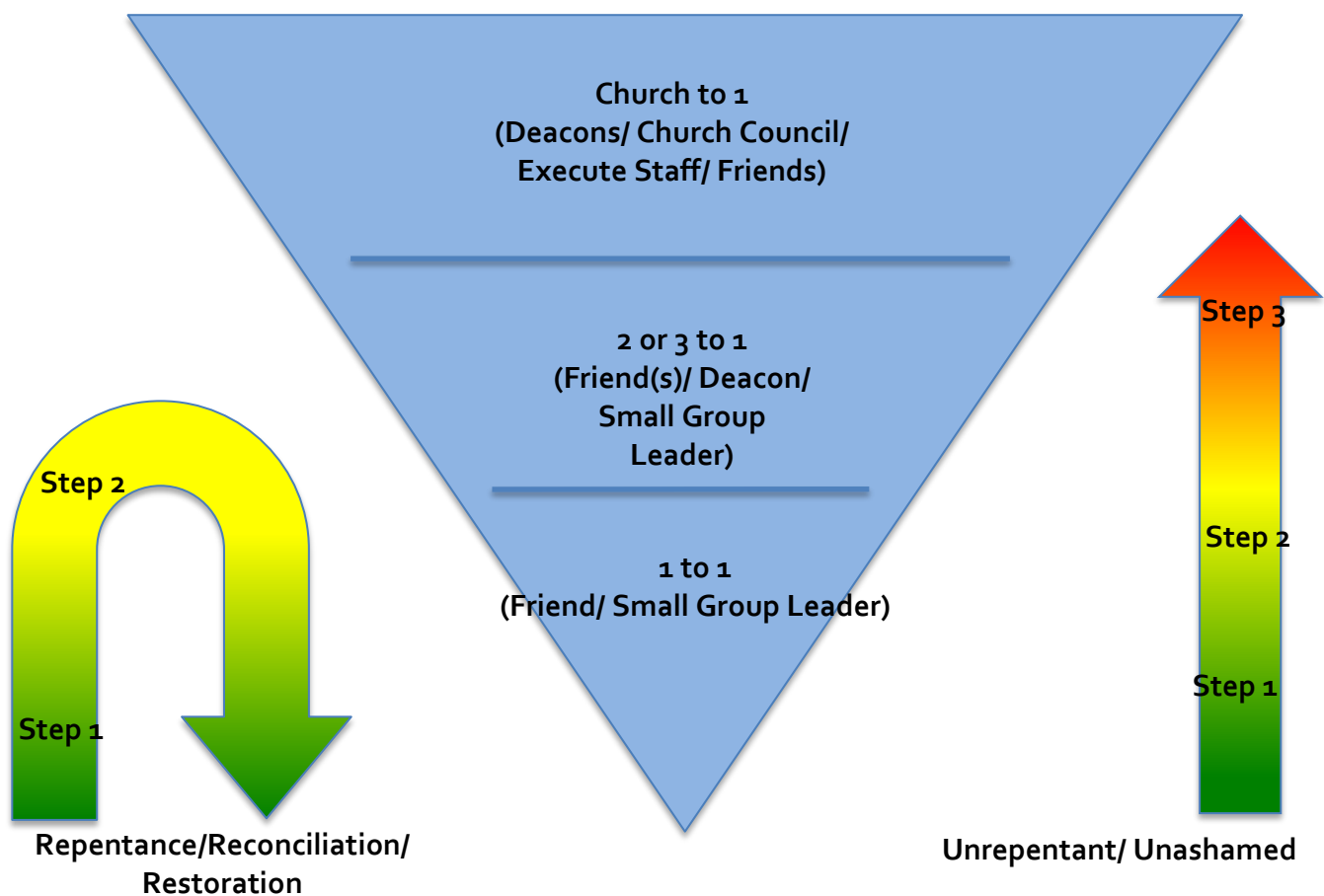
Fidelity of Doctrine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ False teaching on major doctrines. (Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Tim. 1:20; 6:3-5; 2 John 9-11) (Refer to Article III Section 1 of Westwood By-Laws)○ When misleading others in regards to Biblical key doctrines according to the Baptist Faith and Message.
Purity of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Violations of God’s moral commandments. (1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5) (Refer to Article III Section 2 of Westwood By-Laws)○ When the behavior is publically dishonoring to God.
Unity of Fellowship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Causing divisiveness in the church. (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10; 3 John 9-10).○ Disorderly conduct, unjust financial gain, and unwilling to provide for their family. (2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:8 add scriptures). (Article IV Westwood Member Covenant)○ Unresolved relational sins, such as gossip, slander, anger, and abusive speech. (Matt. 18:15-20; Eph. 4:25-31; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:8).○ When the behavior is damaging to relationships – hurting other people.

How?/Who?

(How do we practice church discipline?)

- “Jesus said, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence 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, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector”. (Matthew 18:15-17) What this implies is that Christians are to be members of churches where they are held accountable to walk in a way that pleases the Lord. If there were no relationship of accountability, it would be meaningless to “tell it to the church,” because the offending person would simply say, “That church has no jurisdiction over me.” The same thing is implied in 1 Cor. 5. A man in the church is living in blatant immorality and is proudly unrepentant. (v. 2) Paul writes, “Let him who has done this be removed from among you”. (v. 2) He goes on to say, “When you are assembled . . . you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”. (vv. 4-5)
- For the protection of the individual and the church, ideally the person with firsthand knowledge should be the one to initiate the steps in an effort to keep the smallest number of people involved.

Admonition/Reconciliation/Discipline According to Matthew 18



Note: The goal of discipline is godliness and restoration to the church. The “how” should always assume “winning your brother” and be done with gentleness, compassion, and respect.

How?	
1 to 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives knowledge of sin • Prays for person and parties involved • Private meeting with accused • Is instructed in God's Word • Admonishes his brother or sister - 1 to 1 with love, gentleness, and respect • Follow up with the accused and continue to pray • Determine if there is repentance and step 2 is needed
(2 or 3) to 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prays • Informs the Deacon unity team • Sets up meeting with a member of unity team and another brother (optional) • Emphasize seriousness of the sin and the sincere plea to be reconciled • Possibly meets multiple times • Admonishes their brother - 2 or 3 to 1 • Document the discussion • Determine if there is repentance and step 3 is needed • Informs Executive Staff
Church to 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prays • Admonishes, informs, and warns of possible excommunication • Final plea/ Warning is made to the accused • Determine if there is repentance • Deacon unity and senior pastor recommends excommunication to the council • Admonishes their brother - church to 1 • Excommunication • Formal letter is issued to the accused about excommunication • Shared publicly with the church

Additional Considerations

- In the case of division in the church, public scandal, or criminal prosecution the process must be done quickly and will begin with Step 2.
- When a person is excommunicated, church council will determine how the individuals involved will be handled.
- If a person has been excommunicated, Westwood will share with any church requesting their letter that they were not in good standing and formal action was taken to remove them from Westwood membership.

Addendum 1 for Documenting Process

In the event that the process enters step 2 of the discipline process, the parties involved need to begin documenting meetings, testimonies, and conversations in the event that the process progresses.

Step 1 Meeting(s):

Date:

Step 2 Meeting(s):

Date:

Attendees:

Step 3 Meeting(s):

Date:

Attendees:

References:

- "Guidelines for Church Discipline", <http://peacemaker.net/project/guidelines-for-church-discipline-formal/>, 2015
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- Piper, John "How the Saints Minister" Bethlehem Baptist, Minneapolis, 27 May 1984
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- Mohler Jr., R. Albert, "Three Areas Requiring Church Discipline", From *The Disappearance of Church Discipline—How Can We Recover?* Free Grace Broadcaster – Issue 222 2012
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