

White Mountain Bible Church

Church Discipline Policy & Procedures

I. PURPOSE

To establish a policy for church discipline that strives to bring about repentance in sinning believers and restores them to fellowship with Jesus Christ in a manner consistent with Scripture.

II. POLICY

White Mountain Bible Church will handle all forms of church discipline in a Biblical, consistent, loving manner following the procedures identified below. Church discipline applies to church members and to nonmembers who identify with White Mountain Bible Church.

III. DEFINITIONS (Definition of “discipline” and the Biblical support)

- A. **ADMONISHMENT** - To express warning or disapproval to, especially gently, earnestly and solicitously and to give friendly earnest advice or encouragement to (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Titus 3:10-11).
- B. **REBUKE** - To express sharp, strong disapproval in order to bring about conviction of sin with the ultimate goal of confession (Matthew 18:15; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9,11,13; Titus 2:15).
- C. **EXCLUSION FROM FELLOWSHIP** - Excluding the offender from all privileges of membership or privileges enjoyed by non-member believers who identify themselves with the local church. Exclusion from fellowship also requires the avoidance of intimate fellowship with the offender (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13; Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14). This could also involve exclusion from communion (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

IV. PROCEDURES

It is important in cases of church discipline to keep the information in the smallest possible circle of knowledge while carrying out this procedure. If the offending believer repents, confesses and make appropriate restitution, that is the end of the issue. Remember, the ultimate goal of church discipline is restoration. The following steps should be followed for church discipline:

- A. **Step One (Matthew 18:15)** - If a person has firsthand knowledge that a believer is involved in sin, that person should go to that individual and show him his fault in private. This will normally be done by a lay member of the church as opposed to the pastor or other church leader. It could involve a church leader if the leader was personally offended or if it was a situation brought to the church’s attention by an outsider and the allegations are capable of being independently verified. Before proceeding to the next step, allow for the passage of sufficient time for repentance. If the person continues in sin and/or unrepentance, proceed to Step Two.
- B. **Step Two (Matthew 18:16)** - The offended person should then take one or two witnesses with him so that every fact may be confirmed. These witnesses need not have first hand knowledge of the offense; their purpose is not to offer proof to the offender that he has sinned. Rather, their purpose is to witness the justness of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint is presented as well as to

encourage the process of reconciliation. The witnesses should be godly, wise and gracious people who can help to create an atmosphere in which both the offender and the offended can see themselves as others see them and thus enhance the prospect of repentance and restoration. Before proceeding to the next step, allow of the passage of sufficient time for repentance to be seen.

- C. Step Three (Matthew 18:17a) - If the person continues in sin/unrepentance, “tell it to the church” so responsible, burdened and spiritual people (Galatians 6:1) may seek to restore him as well. Before telling it to the whole church, it is appropriate to seek to resolve the matter through a smaller, representative group (as specified by a Pastor or Elder) such as the elder board or subcommittee of elders and pastors, or a committee that has responsibility for the area of ministry in which the offending person is involved. In a case where a church leader is involved in sin or the sin is of a public nature, it may also be necessary to notify the congregation. In either event the matter must first be brought to the Elders who shall conduct a thorough and impartial inquiry. The alleged offender shall be told of the allegations and given an opportunity to respond. Only if the Elders are fully satisfied as to the truthfulness and accuracy of the allegations and if it has not been satisfactorily resolved shall the matter be “told to the church,” which means it will be told to the membership.

If the sin is private in nature, only the person’s name and the general type of sin (e.g. immorality) should be disclosed. If the sin is public in nature, those details which are necessary for appropriate response shall be disclosed to the Board and the Pastoral Staff (the congregation in appropriate cases) and they shall be asked to pray for the offender’s repentance and restoration. Before proceeding to the next step, allow for the passage of sufficient time for repentance.

- D. Step Four (Matthew 18:17b) - If the person continues in sin/unrepentance, “let him be to you as a pagan or a tax collector”; i.e. remove him from the church (1 Corinthians 5:5, 7,13,26), avoid intimate fellowship with him (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14) further admonish him in love as God directs (2 Thessalonians 3:15) and pray for repentance (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

If after the passage of sufficient time for repentance the offender continues to refuse to repent, the matter shall be brought before the full Board of Elders. The Board shall make such additional inquiry as it deems necessary. Upon concluding there has been a thorough and impartial inquiry and the allegations are true and the offender remains unrepentant, the Board shall exclude the offender from fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:5, 7, 13). If the offender is a Pastor this can include removal of ordination and/or licensing. The Board, through an Elder, shall communicate the fact of exclusion from fellowship to the congregation at an appropriate service. The congregation shall be requested to continue to pray for the repentance and restoration of the offender and to refrain from any intimate fellowship with him until he has been restored (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; Romans 16:17). He can be evangelized as if he were an unbeliever. If the offender repents, he shall be forgiven and restored to fellowship by the board of elders. If considered necessary, the Board may require the offender to go through a process designed to show that the offender’s repentance is sincere. If the offender is an elder or a pastor or if the sin was of a public nature, he must publicly acknowledge his sin because leaders are held to

a higher standard (1 Timothy 5:19-20). An offender who is a leader would also need to go through a process appropriate for the sin, to allow restoration of trust, credibility and reputation and a chance to serve and be proven prior to being restored to a position of leadership.

V. APPLICATION

The four steps outlined above are general in nature and may be altered as deemed necessary by the Board to deal appropriately with any specific situation.

ADDENDUM:

Biblical Basis for Applying Discipline to Members and Non-Member Attendees:

The Bible makes no distinction between members of a local church and non-member believers who identify with a local church. The reason for that is the first-century church simply did not practice the formality of bestowing membership upon a person. The term “brother” merely meant a believer but in the context of the various discipline passages would seem to imply that the believer was identified with the local body.

The purposes of discipline, as previously set forth, apply equally to members and non-member believers who identify with White Mountain Bible Church. Likewise, it seems likely that as far as those outside of White Mountain Bible Church are concerned there is no significant distinction between a member and an attendee who identifies himself with White Mountain Bible Church. Thus a non-member can bring disrepute upon the cause of Christ as easily as a member.

Practice of Church Discipline with Changed Membership or Non-attendance.

A person can still be disciplined if they stop attending White Mountain Bible Church, drop their membership, or join another church. Since the Bible considers the Church as one institution (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:4-6) and the church as a whole must exercise church discipline. White Mountain Bible Church reserves the right to contact and inform other churches regarding church discipline that it has taken on any person. This contact is for the purpose of helping the person grow, protecting others from the recurrence of sin, and continuing the Biblical Church Discipline process in the church universal.

What Types of Offenses Require Discipline?

Any person identifying himself with the local church should be disciplined for the following types of offenses:

1. Unruly behavior (1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-7).
2. Immorality (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).
3. Divisiveness, being factious, causing dissension, doctrinal error (Romans 16:17; Titus 1:9, 3:10-11)
4. Covetousness, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, dishonesty (1 Corinthians 5:11-13).
5. Refusal to repent from known sin (Matthew 18:15-17)

This list is not necessarily all-inclusive since several of the discipline texts use the word “sins” in a general sense (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1; Luke 17:3-4).

Appendix I:

Other scriptural verses that are used and will be applied when deemed necessary by the Board of Elders are:

Reference	Action	Type of Sin
2 Thessalonians	Stay away from brothers who are	unruly or idle; do not live according to teaching
1 Thessalonians	Warn those who are	unruly or idle
1 Corinthians 5:1-5	Put out of your fellowship; Hand this man over to Satan	Sexual immorality
1 Corinthians 5:9-12	Do not associate with or even eat with	Sexually immoral, greedy, idolater, slanderer, drunkard, swindler
Hebrews 12:16	See to it that no one is	Sexually immoral
Romans 16:17	Watch out for & stay away from	Those who cause divisions
Titus 3:10	Warn twice, then have nothing do to with	A divisive person
Luke 17:3	Rebuke	A brother who sins
Galatians 6:1	Restore	One who is caught in a sin
Leviticus 19:17	Rebuke your neighbor frankly	So you will not share in his guilt
1 Timothy 5:20	Publicly rebuke	This who sin (Elders/ Leaders) so others may take warning
Galatians 2:11-14	Paul publicly rebuked Peter	For hypocrisy