

Church discipline is the most difficult and necessary function of the local church, and its importance cannot be exaggerated.

“**The decline of church discipline** is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church. No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members with minimal moral accountability to God, much less to each other.” Al Mohler

***Romans 12:1-2** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

- Our worldview is either being molded by culture or by Christ! **Philippians 2:5**

See full article: **Kicked Out of Church - How God Brought Me Home** by Scarlett Clay Modal

The Big Picture of Biblical Church Discipline:

1. Biblical church discipline expresses concern, compassion, and genuine love.
2. Biblical church discipline occurs in various stages or levels, and most of it occurs privately, while some becomes formal or public.
3. Biblical church discipline is designed to bring the sinning member back into proper fellowship with Christ and the church; it's *not* punitive, it's restorative!
4. Biblical church discipline leads to dismissal of membership due to sins that are *not* repented of. Formal or public discipline is from un-repented of sins.
5. Members who have been dismissed (excommunicated) are invited to return to membership if and when they repent. Formal Church discipline can be stopped and reversed and often is.
6. The leaven principle, which is clearly taught in Scripture, informs us that sinful behavior that is *not* confronted always influences others within the church to sin.
7. Biblical church discipline communicates that there should be a very clear distinction between those who claim to know Christ and those who do not. Jesus has expectations on those he purchased at salvation.
8. Biblical church discipline is to call a member to repent of their sins for the purpose of restoration. Repentance means to have a change of mind.
(*Repentance is the focus of discipline, but it is not the end; it is a means to get the believer into proper relationship with Jesus Christ.*)
9. Biblical church discipline calls the congregation to a personal evaluation of their walk with Christ.
10. Biblical church discipline is foremost about honoring God.

There are many Biblical examples of public discipline. **1 Timothy 5:19-20, Titus 3:9-11, Romans 16:17-18, Philippians 4:2, 3 John 9-11**

Leaven* in the New Testament referred to the negative influence that accompanies false teaching or a sinful lifestyle. **Matthew 16:6-12, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, Galatians 5:9

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 *I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, (greedy) or an idolater, or a reviler, (abusive) or a drunkard, or an extortioner (swindler) —not even to eat with such a person. ¹²For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? ¹³But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”*

- Church discipline is serious business, and the sinning member who refuses to repent and the membership should be aware of it.
- Church discipline communicates that normal relationships between the disciplined member and the congregation are hindered in a great way.
- Some members want to live in disobedience and still expect their relationship with the church body to remain the same; they want to live according to their agenda without consequences. A God-honoring congregation does not allow this to happen without some form of discipline.

Matthew 18:15-20

This passage teaches that (1) private discipline is the responsibility of every member, and (2) the public or formal discipline is for the congregation at large.

All levels of discipline call for the involvement of the church body and *not* just the pastors.

Step 1: Go alone and confront the sinning believer in private.

Step 2: If they don't respond to repentance take 1-2 fellow believers with you.

Step 3: If they ignore the 2-3 believers, then take him or her to the congregation.

Step 4: If they do *not* respond to the congregation, then remove them from membership.

Matthew 18:15-20 *“Moreover 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. ¹⁶But 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.’ ¹⁷And 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. ¹⁸“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

- Keep it private and personal.
- Engage help from other believers.
- Seek help from the congregation.
- Treat him or her as a non-believer.

Church Discipline is *not* for those members who struggle and fight to resist sin in spite of failure from time to time. **Discipline is for those who claim to know Christ and yet "serve" sin.** Those who have no interest in repentance or little if any desire to please Christ are to be treated as non-believers.

Biblical Church Discipline by its very nature is designed to lead one to evaluate his or her own words, actions, and motives. It drives one to prayer, realizing we do not have the wisdom or courage to go through church discipline in our own strength.

Five Purposes of Church Discipline:

1. To glorify God through our obedience.
2. To demonstrate genuine love to our erring brothers and sisters in Christ for the purpose of restoration.
3. To warn our erring brother or sister of the deception and destruction of sin.
4. To protect the congregation (leaven principle).
5. To present a good witness to those who do not know Jesus Christ.

- The primary reason for church discipline is to glorify God through obedience to His commands.
- We must place the spiritual rescue of erring brothers and sisters above our own comfort. Diligent effort should be made to reclaim all members who spiritually fall.

Galatians 6:1

- Church discipline is redemptive in nature, not punitive.
- Far too many congregations tolerate sin in general as well as in their own membership.
- Past failure on the church's part in the matter of discipline should motivate us to demonstrate an accurate view of it, not a neglect of it.
- Though it may be misunderstood, it's very loving to graciously call sinning believers to repentance to help them restore proper fellowship with God.
- Church discipline provides a platform for the church to display genuine love.

To love someone is to want the very best for them. **The very best for anyone is to be in a right relationship with Jesus Christ.** The main goal of the church should be to encourage people to look to Jesus Christ and desire Him as their greatest treasure. *(1 John 1:8-2:2)*

Church Discipline on Divorce

"Because marriage is so important, so valuable, churches do well to offer pre-marital counseling, to perform weddings, and to build small groups for young married people. Because marriage is so important, churches must discipline any member who proceeds with an unbiblical divorce." Mark Dever

The Covenant of Marriage is sacred and needs to be protected by all means. The **Grace community is committed to the success of the marriages** among our membership, even when a couple may feel like giving up due to adverse circumstances.

The following information is *not* a study on what may be considered as a legitimate divorce; it's about the filing for divorce or divorcing without submitting to Biblical authority and how that relates to discipline.

Unbiblical divorce as it relates to a lack of submission to Biblical authority:

1. The leadership of Grace is *not* ignoring the problem(s) within the marriage, but we disagree with the solutions entertained by the member(s) when divorce is filed without any pastoral counsel.
2. Counseling/Discipleship is helping members see their problems and solutions in light of Scripture. (**Romans 12:1-2**)
3. Compassion is to be demonstrated throughout the appeals from the Grace family; we are to "speak the truth in love."
4. A troubled marriage creates a fog-like atmosphere that hinders sound reasoning, and that's why submission to the leadership of Grace is crucial. The feelings and emotions that accompany a marriage in conflict cannot be trusted.
5. Many times, divorce only trades off one set of problems for another, and can be even more difficult than the previous troubled marriage.
6. We must all remember the bigger purpose of marriage. We are called to honor God with our lives, and our marriages are a living example or picture of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church. (**Ephesians 5**)
7. The spiritual enemy delights in divorce because it distorts the picture of Jesus and His Church, and it brings discouragement and confusion to so many.
8. Divorce does more than break a covenant; it has a negative impact on family, friends, and the congregation. Divorce breaks people, *not* just a covenant.

For these reasons and more, the leadership of Grace must reach out with compassion to help every marriage that is facing the possibility of divorce. The Bible is clear that members are to submit to the biblical authority of the pastors. Notice that the word "biblical" is placed with the words "of the pastors." **We understand that Christ alone and Scripture alone is the final authority in our lives, not the leadership of any church.** However, Scripture is clear on submitting to the leaders when they are following Christ and attempting to help members honor Christ in their marriage. When the church is following God's Word, they have his full approval of the discipline process. (**Matthew 18:15-20**)

Hebrews 13:17 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.

When members are allowed to ignore or reject the invitation of pastors to help them see their current situation in light of Scripture, the door is open for other members to practice the same behavior. This rejection is no small offense and highlights the importance of honoring God through His structure of authority. **When a congregation allows members to divorce without addressing it, or when they ignore discipline, they diminish God's covenant of marriage.** Lack of action on the part of the church family encourages other couples that struggle in their marriage to seek divorce instead of seeking Biblical soul-care. It also communicates to future marriages that the covenant of membership and the covenant of marriage are not to be taken seriously. **Such confusion is avoided when loving discipline is in place.**

See the GBC Handbook or go to gbcmason.org for further details on church discipline.

Grace Baptist Church: Biblically Accurate | Culturally Relevant | Personally Sensitive
A Passion for God and a Compassion for others...

Commit, Build, and Protect Community: 1 John

Our prayer is that God would help each member of Grace to walk in Biblical love towards one another. This love is to be demonstrated through affectionate care and legitimate concern for the spiritual well-being of each member.