SINS THAT SHOULD BE DISCIPLINED BY THE CHURCH

1. IRRESOLVABLE DISPUTES BETWEEN MEMBERS.

- if thy brother shall tresspass against thee ... " (Matthew 18:15)
- Types of tresspasses: covetousness, swindling (See I Corinthians 5:11.)
- Procedure: go to offender, take two or three witnesses, then tell it to the church. (See Matthew 18:15-17.)
- Do not keep company with a reviler. (See I Corinthians 5:11.)

2. PERSISTENT TEACHING OF FALSE DOCTRINES.

- "... by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers... Whose mouths
 must be stopped..." (Fitus 1:9-11)
- "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10-11).
- "... earnestly contend for the faith... For there are certain men crept in unawares....
 These are spots in your feasts..." (Jude 1).
- "... Mark them which cause divisions... contrary to the doctrine..., and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).
- "... What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?... come out from among them and be ye separate..." (II Corinthians 6:14-18).
- "Preach the word . . . reprove, rebuke, exhort . . ." (II Timothy 4:2-4).
- Do not keep company with an idolater. (See I Corinthians 5:11.)
- Paul delivered two over to Satan for blasphemous teachings. (See I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 2:17-18.)

3. CONTINUING IMMORALITY AND DISORDERLINESS.

- "... Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).
- "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (I Timothy 5:20).
- Reject a heretic—because he has a moral twist and knows it. (See Titus 3:10.)
- "... We command you... withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly..." (II Thessalonians 3:6).
- Do not keep company with a brother who is a fornicator or a drunkard. (See I Corinthians 5:11.)
- Paul purposed to discipline a disorderly church leader. (See III John 1:9-10.)

ECORNERS TO CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Restoration of a

(Church Discipline)

Fallen Brother



Greenwich Baptist Church

P.O. BOX 52 GREENWICH, NEW JERSEY 08323

THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINE

"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11).

God requires the local Church to carry out discipline for specific sins: These are listed in the back of the booklet under "Sins That Should Be Disciplined By The Local Church". od warns that if the local Church fails to humbly seek to restore an erring brother through loving discipline that other members of the fellowship will be encouraged to sin. The little leaven of one erring brother will spread like yeast in bread to other members of the fellowship. "...know ye not, that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6). It is absolutely expedient that discipline be carried out properly so that "...others may also fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). It is only by the fear of the Lord that men depart from evil.

THE SPIRIT OF DISCIPLINE

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ". Galatians 6:1,2

THE FIRST RESPONSE of the Church, especially the leaders, to a brother in need of discipline is given in 1 Cor. 5:1,2: "It is reported commonly [that there isl fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you". There should be no hint of a prideful attitude but rather there should be a call to mourning. Not only has the good name of the erring brother been damaged, but also the good name of the Church, and most of all great occasion for blasphemy has been given towards the name of our blessed Saviour (2 Samuel 12:14 Proverbs 22:1). Jesus instructed us that before Satan can destroy the goods of a house he must first bind the strong man of that house (Matthew 12:24-30). Before Satan can bring destruction to the members within the Church he must first bind the leadership of the Church. Therefore, the first order of business is for the leaders of the Church to humble themselves in the sight of the Lord with fasting and prayer. They should ask the Lord to reveal in their own life any hypocrisy or secret sins. Only then can any restorative healing take place. The beam in the eyes of the leadership must first be removed before the spinter in the eye of the erring brother is removed (Matthew 7:1-5). It is imperative that the spiritual leaders have a clear conscience through the confession of sin before they can properly restore an erring brother (James 5:16-20).

THE SECOND RESPONSE of the Church should be to make sure that those who carry out the steps of Matthew 18 have the right attitude of spirit. In Galatians 6:1 God instructs the spiritual members of the Church to seek restoration of a brother in the "...spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

THE PRIMARY PURPOSES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. TO MATURE A BODY OF BELIEVERS.

unto maturity-"be no more children" (See Ephesians 4:12-16; I Corinthians 3:1.)

- 2. TO PROVE THAT THE LEADERS LOVE AND CARE.
 - "... that our care for you... might appear..." (II Corinthians 7:12)
- 3. TO INTENSIFY SELF-EXAMINATION IN THE CHURCH.

"... what carefulness... what clearing... what fear..." (Il Corinthians 7:11)

- 4. TO AFFIRM OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S AUTHORITY.
 - "... whether ye be obedient in all things" (If Corinthians 2:9)
- 5. TO PURIFY THE SPIRIT AND MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH.
 - "... A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (I Corinthians 5:6).
- 8. TO DESTROY FLESHLY LUSTS IN A BELIEVER.
 - "... deliver... unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh..." (I Corinthians 5:5)
- 7. TO CONFIRM INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE ANOTHER.
 - "... Exhort one another daily ... lest any of you be hardened" (Hebrews 3:13).
- 8. TO DENY SATAN ANY ADVANTAGE IN THE CHURCH.

"lest Satan should get an advantage of us . . ." (Il Corinthians 2:11)

- 2. TO PROTECT SCRIPTURE FROM PERVERSION AND ERROR.
 - "... deceivers ... whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:10-11)
- 10. TO RESTORE REPENTANT BELIEVERS.
 - "... forgive him, and comfort him ... confirm your love ..." (II Corinthians 2:7-10)
- 11. TO CUT EMOTIONAL TIES WITH UNREPENTANT CHRISTIANS.
 - "... not to keep company . . ." (I Corinthians 5:11) (See also I Samuel 16:1.)

CONCLUSION THE STEPS OF DISCIPLINE

The Church must be committed to God's instructions of restoration. The procedure should be the same for an erring Pastor, deacon, long standing Church member or new Church member. There should be no respect of persons! If there are those who react, they should be reminded that the steps of Matthew 18 are a part of our Church Covenant, Doctrinal Statement and Bylaws which govern the affairs of the Church. Every member who joins our Church is required to read these documents and to give their affirmation that they will endeavor to abide by the stated convictions of our Church.

If a member of the Church has not attended for a year, his membership will be automatically removed unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as being shut in due to illness, given to missionary service etc. The good name of the Church is thereby protected by such a policy and the principles of Matthew 18 can be carried out most effectively. Those who are not actively involved in the fellowship of the Church and those who no longer are listed among the membership of the Church are no longer under the same watchcare of the Church as given to us in Hebrews 13:7, 17.

This matter of Church Discipline and Restoration is a very delicate matter and must be prayerfully considered by all members of the Church and faithfully carried out. We must all be reminded that when discipline is properly enforced in the family or the Church that it is proof of genuine love for the erring brother (Hebrews 12:1-15 Proverbs 13:24). May God give each of us the grace to apply Proverbs 27: 5,6 "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, the kisses of an enemy are deceitful"

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20).

Quotations used in this paper were taken from "Shepherdology -- A Master Plan for Church Leadership", John Macarthur, published by The Master's Fellowship, Panorama City, Ca.

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"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear [thee, then] take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell [it] unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:15-18).

- # 1 The sin of the erring brother should be "common" knowledge (1 Cor. 5:1). This means that a thorough investigation of the facts has been made and that the charges against this brother are not gossip or hearsay. Proceeding without this caution opens the door for Satan to produce divisive results.
- # 2 The erring brother should be lovingly confronted in private. (Matt. 18:15). This first step of restoration should be taken by any Christian who has knowledge of the erring brother's sin. "Discipline is not just for Church officials; its for everyone, including those who lead in the Church. Galatians 6:1 tells us exactly who should do it: ... Those who are walking in the Spirit, who are obeying the Word, and who are in the fellowship should restore the fallen brother" (John Macarthur -- page 208). Every effort should be made within the Church that there is no talebearing going on. Those who sow discord among the brethren will suffer great judgment (Prov. 6:16-19). The discussion of these matters should be restricted to as few people as possible. Only those directly involved should be discussing the matter. If a member of the Church has a concern that a situation is not being properly handled, he should appeal to the Pastor and Deacons rather than others in the Church.
- # 3 If the erring brother refuses to humble himself or herself through this first attempt, then a second attempt is to be made. This time the brother who first confronted the erring brother should take with him one or two others (Matt. 18:16). This should include in most cases the Pastor and one of the Deacons. If the erring brother refuses to have this meeting or shows no signs of repentance, then the matter is to be taken to the Church.
- # 4 It is absolutely vital that the Church be informed after these two attempts have been made (Matt. 18:17). The only way other members in the Church can be responsibly follow God's instructions in 1st Corinthians 5:9-13 is for them to be knowledgable that the steps of Matthew 18 have been taken and an erring brother still refuses to turn from his sin. John Macarthur explains how this is handled in his Church. "We are to tell the whole assembly when a sinning believer fails to respond to the confrontation of the witnesses. In our church that may or may not involve a public proclamation. Sometimes the leaders disseminate word through the fellowship or study groups in which the person is known. Other times it may be announced at a Communion Service" (page 211).

FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS OF CHURCH ACTION

(Note: The use of the term "brother" in the following guidelines includes any professing Christian whether it be a male or female.)

When this matter comes to the Church, the FIRST RECOMMENDATION of the deacon board should be the removal of the erring brother's membership. The exact wording of the presentation to the Church should be done in the following manner: "According to our bylaws, Church covenant and doctrinal statement, the deacons have taken the steps of Matthew 18 in seeking to restore (Name of unrepentant brother) into proper fellowship with our Church. He or she has shown no evidence of a repentant spirit. Therefore, it is our recommendation that (Name of unrepentant brother)'s membership be removed and that each member prayerfully seek to have the proper relationship of restoration with (Name of unrepentant brother) in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5:11, 2nd Thessalonians 3:6, Titus 3:10, 3 John 1:9-10, Romans 16:17, Ephesians 5:11 and 1 Timothy 5:20." According to Matthew 18:17, the unrepentant brother is now to be related to as a "heathen man" (unsaved man) and a "publican", rather than as a brother. Jesus' use of these terms "...doesn't mean that we treat these people badly. The gospels show us clearly that He loved heathens and tax collectors. It simply means that when a professing brother or sister refuses to repent, we are to treat them as if they were outside our fellowship. We are not to let them associate and participate in the blessings and the benefits of the Christian assembly" (John M.- page 212).

The SECOND RECOMMENDATION would be for each member of the Church to carry out God's command in 1 Cor. 5:11: "But now I have written unto you NOT TO KEEP COMPANY, IF ANY MAN THAT IS CALLED A BROTHER BE a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one NO, NOT TO EAT. If the erring brother is not a member, or he chooses to voluntarily remove his membership during the process of the steps of Matthew 18, then the wording of the presentation to the Church would be as follows: "According to our bylaws, Church covenant and doctrinal statement, the deacons have taken the steps of Matthew 18 in seeking to restore (Name of unrepentant brother) into proper fellowship with our Church. He or she has shown no evidence of a repentant spirit. Therefore, it is our recommendation that each member prayerfully seek to have the proper relationship of restoration with (Name of unrepentant brother) in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5:11, 2nd Thessalonians 3:6, Titus 3:10, 3 John 1:9-10, Rom. 16:17, Ephesians 5:11 and 1 Timothy 5:20".

If an erring brother withdraws his membership during the process of the steps of Matthew 18 then the matter should be taken to the Church informing the Church of the circumstances of the withdrawal. The exact wording of this presentation to the Church should be done in the following manner: "According to our bylaws, Church covenant and doctrinal statement, the deacons have taken the steps of Matthew 18 in seeking to restore (Name of unrepentant brother) into proper fellowship with our Church. During this process Name of unrepentant brother has chosen to remove his or her membership. It is our recommendation that the Church prayerfully seek to have the proper relationship with (Name of unrepentant brother) in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5:11, 2nd Thessalonians 3:6, Titus 3:10, 3 John 1:9-10, Romans 16:17, Ephesians 5:11 and 1 Timothy 5:20."

First, an unrepentant brother is to be forbidden to partake of the Lord's table. God makes it clear that Communion is only for those who are willing to examine themselves and confess and forsake any known sin. Those who refuse to do this are clearly violating God's command not to partake of communion "unworthily" (1 Cor. 11:23-34). God's instruction to "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13) can be carried out properly if the proper restrictions of communion are observed. No one is to be forbidden attendance to the Services of the Church; but participation in the Communion Service is to be restrictive!

Secondly, God is not telling us here to totally shun this erring brother. If he continues to come to Church or we occasionally see him in the normal daily affairs of life we are to cordially and lovingly greet him as we would an unsaved man. We are to be in constant prayer always looking for any sign of a humble and repentant spirit so that this brother can be restored into full fellowship of the Church. Failure to strive towards this goal and to immediately seize upon the erring brother's desire to reconcile his relationship to the Church gives Satan an advantage to bring destruction to the Church (2 Cor. 2:1-11). Although casual contact is to continue, any regular ongoing close intimate contact should be avoided. According to 2 Thessalonlans 3:6 we are to "...withdraw ourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...". 1 Corinthalns 5:11 gives instructions concerning eating with such a one. "Because sharing a meal with a brother is symbolic of a hospitable and cordial fellowship, it is not to be allowed under the circumstances. When you put a person out of the Church, you don't have him over for a meal. You don't treat him like a brother" (John Macarthur -- page 213).

The THIRD RECOMMENDATION is a matter of caution to the unrepentant brother. An erring brother who refuses the loving restorative discipline of the local Church should understand that he is subjecting himself to further disciplines warned of in God's Word! A brother in proper fellowship with a local Church is under the protective watchcare of that Church (Hebrews 13:7.17). But that spiritual covering of protection is removed from the professing believer's life when they refuse to respond to the discipline of the local Church. An unrepentant erring brother is now in the state of being openly exposed to the realm and power of Satan's destructive powers (1 Cor. 5:5 1 Timothy 1:20). If a brother hardens his heart and continues in this state it may result in the "...destruction of his flesh, that the spirit may be saved..." (1 Cor. 5:5). In 1st John 5 we are instructed by God in praying for a brother who has sinned a sin unto death (5:16-19). All sins produce spiritual death, but not all sins result in physical destruction of the body. According to this passage if a brother has sinned, we should pray for him, but if he has sinned a sin unto death. God restricts our praying for Him.

The FOURTH and FINAL RECOMMENDATION concerns the necessity of public confession on the part of a repentant brother. In the event that an erring brother desires reconcilation into proper fellowship with the Church, he or she should be willing to publicly acknowledge a change of heart. The deacons should work out with the repentant brother how this will be done.