

## **ABOUT OUR CHURCH**

### **Vision Statement**

As we proclaim Jesus, the Christ, as head of the Church and the manifested Word of God, our goal is to teach the word of God with simplicity and understanding so that it may be applied to our everyday lives in a practical manner; thereby being transformed into people of excellence changing our immediate world and all those with whom we come into contact, ultimately producing believers who excel in life.

**Mission:** Producing believers who excel in life.

**Motto:** "Living and Walking in the Spirit of Excellence"

**Campus Life:** Providing a God Experience

- A. The Core (heart) of the God Experience: To pursue Christian Excellence and uphold the Lord's command to "honor one another above yourselves."  
Romans 12:10

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

True Divine Baptist Church encourages all volunteers and members to provide input and suggestions concerning both the ministry area in which they serve as well as the overall operation and ministry programs of the church. Your input and suggestions will receive the timeliest attention and action.

This open-door policy is important in increasing the quality of the church's ministries, as well as for correcting problems that may exist in processes or relationships within areas of ministry. The church welcomes all input by volunteers, who should feel the freedom to voice any comments or concerns without fear of retribution or reprisal. We know it can seem difficult to initiate such conversations, but Jesus told us directly (see, for example, Matthew 18:15) that we should take the initiative to resolve such things.

### **TDBC Campus Addresses**

True Divine Baptist Church 4601 Troy Hwy, Montgomery, Alabama 36116

True Divine Baptist Church 4525 Virginia Loop Road, Montgomery, Alabama 36116

### **Hours of Operation**

**Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

**Phone: Church** (334) 286-4008 **Daycare** (334) 288-4558

## ARTICLE XXII

### SEAL

The Board of Directors shall provide a corporate seal, which shall be as set forth below.



## The Covenant

"Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, toward its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance ; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ , and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word." And now unto Him, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, Power and Glory forever. Amen.

## ARTICLES OF FAITH

### **I. THE SCRIPTURES**

*We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.*

**References:** 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 2:12

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### **II. THE TRUE GOD**

*We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, infinite in holiness and all other perfections to whom we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. He is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.*

**References:** John 4:24; Psalms 147:5; Exodus 15:11

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### **III. THE FALL OF MAN**

*We believe that man was created by the special act of God, as recorded in Genesis. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). He was created in the state of holiness under the law of his Maker, but through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and in bondage to sin, are under condemnation, and as soon as he is capable of moral action, becomes an actual transgressor.*

**References:** Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3:6,24; Romans 5:19

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#### **IV. THE WAY OF SALVATION**

*We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatory office of the Son of God, who by the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary and took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by His personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by His death. Being risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in his person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a compassionate and all sufficient Savior.*

**References:** Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16; Philippians 2:6-7; Isaiah 42:2

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#### **V. JUSTIFICATION**

*We believe that justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ. This blessing is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but through the redemption that is in and through Jesus Christ. It brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other needed blessing.*

**References:** John 1:16; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1-2

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#### **VI. THE FREENESS OF SALVATION**

*We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the duty of all to accept them by penitent and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner except his own voluntary refusal to accept Jesus Christ as Teacher, Savior, and Lord.*

**References:** Isaiah 55:1; Romans 16:25-26; John 5:40

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#### **VII. THE GRACE IN REGENERATION**

*We believe that regeneration or the new birth is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, whereby we become partakers of the divine nature and a holy disposition is given, leading to the love and practice of righteousness. It is a work of God's free grace conditioned upon faith in Christ and made manifest by the fruit that we bring forth to the*

*glory of God.*

**References:** John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:8

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### **VIII. REPENTANCE AND FAITH**

*We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, and supplication of mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.*

**References:** Mark 1:15; John 16:8; Luke 18:13

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### **IX. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE**

*We believe that election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners. It is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man and in no way interferes with the salvation of any individual. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree.*

**References:** 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Exodus 33:18-19

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### **X. SANCTIFICATION**

*We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, especially the Word of God, self examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.*

**References:** 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Proverbs 4:18; 1 John 2:29

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## **XI. THE PERSERVERANCE OF SAINTS**

*We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

**References:** John 8:17; 1 John 2:19; Romans 8:28

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## **XII. THE HARMONY OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL**

*We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is a holy, just, and good; and that inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.*

**References:** Romans 3:31; Romans 7:12; Romans 8:2-4

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## **XIII. A GOSPEL CHURCH**

*We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gift, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; that its only Scripture officers are bishops or pastors, and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the epistles of Timothy and Titus.*

**References:** I Corinthians 1:1-13; Acts 2:41-42; Matthew 28:20

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#### **XIV. THE BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

*We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior with its effect in the death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ—preceded always by solemn self-examination.*

**References:** Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:4; Matthew 28:19

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#### **XV. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH**

*We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations; by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for the rest that remaineth for the people of God.*

**References:** Acts 20:7; Exodus 20:8; Revelation 1:10

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#### **XVI. CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

*We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of kings of the earth.*

**References:** Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29

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#### **XVII. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE WICKED**

*We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. Those only who are justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are truly righteous in His sight. Those who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and are under condemnation. This distinction between the righteous and the wicked holds in and after death, and will be made manifest at the judgment when final and everlasting awards are made to all men.*

**References:** Romans 1:17; Malachi 3:18; 1 John 2:29

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## **XVIII. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

*We believe that Christianity is the religion of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is therefore a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. An adequate system of school is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. The cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is coordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with this the liberal support of the churches.*

**References:** Proverb 10:14; John 8:32; 2 Timothy 2:15

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## **XIX. SOCIAL SERVICE**

*We believe that every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ regnant in his own life and in human society; to oppose in the Spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice; to provide for the orphaned, the aged, the helpless, and the sick; to seek to bring industry, government and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love; to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love with compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. All means and methods used in social service for the amelioration of society and the establishment of righteous among men must finally depend on the regeneration of the individual by saving grace of God in Christ Jesus.*

**References:** Matthew 25:35-36; James 1:27; Acts 11:29

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## **XX. STEWARDSHIP**

*We believe that God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. We have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in our possessions. We are therefore under obligation to serve Him with our time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to us to use for the glory of God and helping others. Christians should cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately and liberally contribute of their means to advancing the Redeemer's cause on earth.*

**References:** 1 Peter 4:10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Matthew 16:24

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## **XXI. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS**

*We believe that it is the duty of every Christian man and woman, and the duty of every church of Christ to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods sanctioned by the Gospel of Christ.*

**References:** Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 8:30-35

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## **XXII. THE RESURRECTION**

*We believe that the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus rose from the dead. His grave was emptied to its contents. He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection in many convincing manifestations. He now exists in His glorified body at God's right hand. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. The bodies of the righteous will confirm to the glorious spiritual body of Jesus.*

**References:** Matthew 28:1-6; Luke 24:1-7; Mark 16:1-7

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## **XXIII. THE RETURN OF THE LORD**

*We believe that the New Testament teaches in many places that visible and personal return of Jesus to this earth. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you in heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The time is coming is not revealed. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angles in heaven, but may Father only" (Matt. 24:36). It is the duty of all believers to live in readiness for His coming and by diligence in good works to make manifest to all men the reality and power to their hope in Christ.*

**References:** Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11-16; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12

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#### **XXIV. THE WORLD TO COME**

*We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be judged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven and hell, on principles of righteousness.*

**References:** 1 Peter 4:7; Acts 24:15; Matthew 25:31-46

#### **XXV. HUMAN SEXUALITY**

*We believe that the only sexual relationship acceptable to God is that within the lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual commitment to marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that all other forms of sexuality, including any attempt to alter one's gender by either surgery or appearance, are perversions of God's created order and are clearly forbidden in Scripture. (LEVITICUS 18:22, 20:13; ROMANS 1:18-26; 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11; 1 TIMOTHY 1:10)*

# True Divine Baptist Church

## Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality

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### **Introduction**

This is a policy statement on the beliefs of True Divine Baptist Church regarding religious beliefs concerning marriage and human sexuality and our policies based upon the necessary application of our faith to life and practice.

### **What We Believe About Marriage and Human Sexuality**

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. This idea is supported by the account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Genesis 1:26-28 provides that God created man in His own image, both male and female. The passage implies that a unity of one man and one woman is in some way necessary to fully represent the image of God in mankind.

Genesis chapter 2 provides a more detailed account in which God created the first man, Adam, and decided that it was not good for him to be alone. (Genesis 2:18). God indicated that He would make "a suitable helper for him." God brought all of the animals to Adam, but none of them was a suitable helper for him, so God then created Eve, the first woman, from part of Adam himself. God did not create a second man to be Adam's helpmate, or an assortment of multiple women, but rather one woman. Together they were man and wife and had "no shame" or sin in their union with each other. (Genesis 2:15-25).

Jesus Christ reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament when He said, as recorded in Matthew 19:4-6, "Haven't you read, he replied, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not merely a human institution, but is a special divine metaphor that is supposed to illustrate the union of Christ and the church. For this reason also, only a union between a man and a woman can be a proper marriage because a union between two men, two women, or one man and multiple women or any collection of people could not properly illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 condemns a variety of lifestyles including those associated with adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality. The Bible condemns all forms of sexual immorality and encourages Christians to flee from it because of its destructive effects, and because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians 3:16 & 6:12-20).

Romans 1:18-32 makes it clear that it is not only sinful to engage in homosexual unions, but also to approve of such sins in others or encourage their practice. As a result, in order to maintain our consistent Christian witness, we cannot sanction, approve, or promote in any way adultery, fornication (a sexual relationship between an unmarried man and woman; i.e. "living together"), pornography, pedophilia, polyamory, polygamy, bestiality, or homosexual unions. This is made clear also by countless other verses throughout the Old Testament as well as by these and other passages in the New Testament.

Our church follows what the Bible reveals as the "sure foundation" of the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matthew 7:24-29 and I Corinthians 14:37). The church is called to teach and practice these teachings and is not at liberty to depart from them for a different authority if it is to authentically bear the name "Christian." Though we strive to live peaceably with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, in instances involving matters as foundational as marriage we must ultimately obey God rather than man if the two come into conflict (Acts 4:18-22).

Sexual activities outside of marriage, including but not limited to fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia, polyamory and bestiality are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the church. Lewd conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation or distribution or viewing of pornography are incompatible with God's intention.

### **Our Faith Based Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality**

As a result of these above described religious beliefs and our belief in the need for a practice of fidelity to these beliefs, it is our policy that the facilities of this church may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports or allows a same-sex union or a polygamist or any union which, in the judgment of the Board of Directors, in some way constitutes child abuse. It is also the policy of the church that no pastor or member of the church staff shall officiate at any ceremony designed to solemnize, promote, create, or approve of such a union. Nor may any member of the church enter into such a union without being subject to church discipline.

A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this Policy Statement.

## **TRUE DIVINE POLICY REGARDING SEXUALITY**

Recognizing that we all struggle with sin, True Divine Baptist Church will provide an environment that welcomes people who struggle with sexual sin. We will seek to love all people in Jesus' name, pointing them towards Christ's power to forgive and heal. While the Bible teaches that those who engage in sexual sin, sin against their own body we also recognize that sexual sin is not characterized in Scripture as being more severe than other forms of sin. We will seek God to discern ways that we can directly and indirectly minister and share God's love with those who struggle with every kind of sin. We also recognize that there is a difference between temptation and behavior and while temptation is sometimes unavoidable we are responsible for our behavior.

### **Church Practices Derived from This Policy**

#### **Clergy**

1. Ordained clergy or licensed ministers<sup>1</sup> employed by the church shall affirm the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this church.
2. Only ordained or duly licensed clergy approved by this church shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.
3. Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal and/or loss of ordination for violating this statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality or by officiating at a marriage ceremony that violates the letter or the spirit of this policy.

#### **Applicants for weddings performed by church staff:**

1. Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a member of the clergy employed or clergy or judiciary approved by the church or to use the church facilities for their wedding shall affirm the statement of faith regarding marriage and human sexuality and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
2. Applicants shall participate in premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by this church or other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of the church have the appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling. All pastoral staff, counselors or other persons providing premarital counseling shall affirm the statement of faith of this church on marriage and human sexuality.

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<sup>1</sup> Clergy as used in this document means ordained clergy and licensed ministers.

### **Use of Facilities:**

1. Any marriage performed on church premises shall be officiated by an ordained or duly licensed member of the clergy. Any officiant not employed by the True Divine Baptist Church shall serve at the discretion of the pastor or Board of Directors.
2. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this church and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
3. Clergy and staff assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, in his or her discretion, decline to provide church facilities for, and/or decline to officiate at a ceremony when in his or her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.

### **Membership, Leadership, Staff and Volunteers:**

1. Every minister, board member, or employee, hired by the church shall affirm their agreement with True Divine's statement on marriage and human sexuality and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
2. The Board of Directors will be asked to affirm their agreement with this policy on marriage and human sexuality and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
3. Church leaders, teachers and members are expected to teach and live in a manner that is consistent with this policy.
4. Any and all volunteers whose life style and moral values do not agree with this policy will not be allowed to participate in any church volunteer roles or positions. Volunteers will be held to the same standards outlined in this policy.

## **Volunteer Workers Code of Conduct**

### **Human Sexuality**

1. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, pornography, any sexual behavior outside of the marriage union between a man (husband) and a woman (wife) are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Gen. 2:24; Gen. 19:5, 13; Gen. 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1: 26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4)

2. We believe that the term “marriage” has only one, legitimate meaning, and that is marriage sanctioned by God, which joins one man and one woman in a single, covenantal union, as delineated by Scripture. (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23)

In addition to the initial guidelines given to all workers at their registration to serve as a volunteer worker which include the following:

**Volunteer Workers are required to...**

1. Attend all Workers meetings and if you must be absent to send an email ahead of time to your ministry leader.
2. Attend and Complete the New Members Orientation and New membership Classes.
3. Be Baptized by immersion
4. To give financially into local through offerings, tithes, sowing, first fruit.
5. Adhere to the Workers Code of Conduct
6. Commit to serve for one year

The Church has prepared this Workers Code of Conduct so that all workers will understand the proper way to conduct themselves as Christians whether in Church or anywhere else. It also reflects our mode of discipline for workers who fail to heed to the code of conduct.

We must keep in mind that the public and private conduct of volunteer workers can inspire and motivate people, but it can also scandalize and undermine the Church and the people's faith. Therefore, volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their calling as a worker. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry.

As volunteer workers in the Church, workers are expected to conduct themselves according to Biblical standards. This Code of Conduct establishes a set of ethical standards for Church Volunteer Workers.

It is the responsibility of each volunteer worker to adhere to this Code of Conduct, as disregard or violation of the code will result in disciplinary action by the appropriate authority up to and including suspension, termination or dismissal from serving as a Volunteer Church Worker.

Eph 5:1-4

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

**All Volunteer Workers are expected to:**

**Be Committed to Christ and to the Church:**

- Be Born Again and Baptized in the Holy Spirit
- Committed to Bible Study, Prayer and Worship
- Embrace the teachings of Jesus and work to promote the Gospel.
- Exhibit a deep commitment to the Church and exemplary Christian Character.
- Show a commitment not only to the Church, but also to the community in which the Church is located.

**Posses Integrity & Commitment to Ministry:**

- Conduct oneself in an honest and open manner, free from deception or corruption.
- Handle the responsibilities of one's department/ministry in a conscientious fashion.
- Responsibility to set high moral standards and to lead by example.

- Have Respect for Others and for those in Positions of Authority.
- Respect the dignity and worth of each member of the Church.
- Respect each individual as a creation of God without regard to economic status, age or ethnic/cultural background.
- Respect the constituted authority in the Church
- Be Courteous to everyone and show concern for people in need especially, people who are new to the Church!

**Focus on their Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Intellectual & Ministry Well-Being:**

- Attend to one's own Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Intellectual & Ministry well-being and seek for help when in need.
- Participate in training, seminars and workshops that are relevant to one's current department/ministry.
- Addresses one's own spiritual needs in order to remain focused in faith and in ministry.
- Along with others in ministry, provides mutual support and affirmation in ministry and, at the same time, holds each other accountable for his or her own physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

**Other areas of focus for workers conduct are as follows...**

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Volunteer Workers are to avoid all forms of sexual relations with anyone who is not their wedded spouse. Anyone who finds themselves involved in or a victim of any form of these sexual scenarios which include but are not limited to:

- Suggestive sexual comments, remarks, jokes or innuendos
- Recipient of sexual material in printed form or transmitted via the internet or email
- Inappropriate hugging or touching of private areas of the body

- Forceful sexual abuse or rape
- Any form of sexual harassment!

Should please report themselves or the party(ies) involved immediately to their Head of Department, Minister-In-Charge or to any of the pastors in the Church.

Volunteer workers should on no occasion be found to be co-habiting with someone of the opposite sex that is not their spouse or someone of the same sex that they may have declared as their partner.

### **DEFRAUDING PEOPLE AND OTHER MISCONDUCT**

Volunteer Workers should under no circumstances be found to be cheating or defrauding members of the Church, fellow volunteers, government/business agencies, employers/employees, or anyone in general. Workers who enter into any form of agreement with another person(s) should make sure that it is in clear written terms and that the terms are kept (It may be necessary to involve a 3rd party in matters of agreements). Under no circumstances should volunteers be found owing money without repaying or offering to perform a service without honoring their commitment. Leviticus 19:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:6

### **LACK OF COMMITMENT TO ASSIGNED DEPARTMENT OR DUTIES**

Any worker who does not participate in their departmental or ministry activities or duties may after several warnings be suspended from that department or dismissed entirely.

Failure to attend worker's meetings without a proper excuse can also lead to suspension or dismissal if more than 2 meetings have been missed!

### **COURTSHIP & MARRIAGE**

Single people (i.e. unmarried, single mothers/fathers, divorced and widow(er)) should seek proper counsel before embarking on a courtship relationship. If and when such

decide to marry, proper notification must be given to the Church, regardless of where the marriage is taking place.

Married people are expected to maintain their marriage vows to each other, divorce is not an option except in cases of infidelity, abuse of any kind, and abandonment. As workers, it is expected that you will first live out the Christian life in your home as well as in the Church!

## **CONCLUSION**

If any worker should be reported or discovered to have been involved in any of the misconducts mentioned in this code of conduct (directly or indirectly). If after careful investigation and meeting with the individual(s) concerned they are found indeed to have committed such acts. Depending on the offence, the Church will follow up with a letter indicating the level of disciplinary action to be taken which may include some or all of the following:

- An open rebuke in the presence of disciplinary counsel.
- A series of counseling sessions for the worker to attend.
- The worker will continue to attend workers meeting, but may not serve in any department for a period of time.
- Based on their repentance or change of heart and/or attitude, they may be restored, but if no repentance or change of heart or attitude is shown they could be dismissed from serving as a volunteer worker.

# Church Discipline for Its Members

## What is Church Discipline?

### **A GRACE DISTINCTIVE**

On occasion a Christian will wander away from the fellowship of other believers and find himself ensnared by sin through ignorance or willful disobedience. It then becomes necessary for the church, and particularly its shepherds, to actively seek the repentance and restoration of that Christian. As shepherds of the flock, the elders love the sheep and are also held accountable by God for their spiritual welfare, including that of the wandering sheep. As in Jesus' parable in [Luke 15:3-8](#), it is a time of joy, both in heaven and within the church, when the wandering Christian truly repents.

One means by which the church seeks to lovingly restore wandering believers is the process of church discipline. In Matthew 18, the Lord explains to His disciples how to respond when a fellow believer sins. The principles He sets forth must guide the body of Christ as she seeks to implement discipline in the church today.

### **The Purpose of Discipline**

The purpose of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of fallen members and the consequent strengthening of the church and glorifying of the Lord. When a sinning believer is rebuked and he turns from his sin and is forgiven, he is won back to fellowship with the body and with its head, Jesus Christ.

The goal of church discipline, then, is not to throw people out of the church or to feed the self-righteous pride of those who administer the discipline. It is not to embarrass people or to exercise authority and power in some unbiblical manner. The purpose is to restore a sinning believer to holiness and bring him back into a pure relationship within the assembly.

In [Matthew 18:15](#), Jesus says, “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” The Greek word translated “won” was originally used of accumulating wealth in the sense of monetary commodities. Here it refers to the gaining back of something of value that is lost, namely, an erring brother. When a brother or sister strays, a valuable treasure is lost, and the church should not be content until he or she is restored. The body of Christ is in the business of recovery ([Gal. 6:1](#)), and such is the purpose of church discipline.

### **The Process of Discipline**

In [Matthew 18:15-17](#), Jesus sets forth the four step process of church discipline: (1) tell him his sin alone; (2) take some witnesses; (3) tell the church; and (4) treat him as an outsider.

**Step One ([Matt. 18:15](#))**. The process of church discipline begins on an individual level. Jesus said, “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private” (v. 15a). Here, an individual believer is to go to a sinning brother privately and confront him in a spirit of humility and gentleness. This confrontation involves clearly exposing his sin so that he is aware of it and calling him to repentance. If the sinning brother repents in response to the private confrontation, that brother is forgiven and restored (v. 15b).

**Step Two ([Matt. 18:16](#))**. If the sinning brother refuses to listen to the one who has rebuked him privately, the next step in the discipline process is to take one or two more believers along to confront him again (v. 16a). The purpose of taking other believers is so that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed” (v. 16b). In other words, the witnesses are present not only to confirm that the sin was committed but, in addition, to confirm that the sinning brother was properly rebuked and that he has or has not repented.

***The purpose of church discipline is the spiritual restoration of fallen members and the consequent strengthening of the church and glorifying of the Lord.***

The presence of additional witnesses is as much a protection for the one being approached as it is for the one approaching. After all, a biased person could erroneously say, “Well, I tried to confront him, but he’s impenitent.” It would be presumptuous to think that one person could

make that ultimate determination, especially if he was the one who had been sinned against. The witnesses need to confirm whether there is a heart of repentance or one of indifference or rejection. Such a report provides the basis for further action because the situation has been verified beyond the report of one individual.

At this point, it should be hoped that the one or two who are brought along to confront the sinner will not have to become public witnesses against him before the rest of the church. Ideally, their added rebuke will be sufficient to induce a change of heart in the offending brother that the initial rebuke did not cause. If this change of heart does occur, that brother is forgiven and restored, and the matter is dropped.

***Step Three*** ([Matt. 18:17a](#)). If the sinning brother refuses to listen and respond to the confrontation of the witnesses after a period of time, those witnesses are then to tell it to the church (v. 17a). This is most appropriately done by bringing the matter to the attention of the elders, who in turn oversee its communication to the assembly as a whole.

How long should the witnesses continue to call the person to repentance before telling the church? The elders at Grace Community Church avoid carrying out the third or fourth stage of church discipline until they are absolutely certain that the erring believer has truly sinned, or is continuing to sin, and that he has refused to repent when appropriately confronted. The elders will routinely send a letter by registered mail warning the individual that the third (or fourth) step of discipline will be taken if they have not received word of repentance by a specific date. When this date has passed, the person's sin and refusal to repent are made known publicly, either before the entire assembly during a Communion service or through a fellowship group in which the person is known.

It has been the custom at Grace Community Church, upon enacting this third step, to clearly indicate to the congregation that they are to pursue the person aggressively and plead with him to repent before the fourth step becomes necessary. That crucial and potent procedure often draws the sinner to repentance and obedience. If repentance does take place, the sinning believer is forgiven and restored.

***Step Four*** ([Matt. 18:17b](#)). The fourth and final step in the process of church discipline is ostracism. If a sinning believer refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be ostracized from the fellowship. Jesus said, "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer" (v. 17b). The term

“Gentile” was primarily used of non-Jews who held to their traditional paganism and had no part in the covenant, worship, or social life of the Jews. On the other hand, a “tax-gatherer” was an outcast from the Jews by choice, having become a traitor to his own people. Jesus’ use of these terms doesn’t mean that the church is to treat these people badly. It simply means that when a professing believer refuses to repent, the church is to treat him as if he were outside of the fellowship. They are not to let him associate and participate in the blessings and benefits of the Christian assembly.

When a man in the Corinthian church refused to forsake an incestuous relationship with his stepmother, the apostle Paul commanded that the man be removed from their midst ([1 Cor. 5:13](#)). The believers there were not even to share a meal with him ([1 Cor. 5:11](#)), for dining with someone was symbolic of a hospitable and cordial fellowship. The one who is persistently unrepentant is to be totally ostracized from the fellowship of the church and treated like an outcast, not a brother.

As far as the welfare of the church is concerned, the purpose of putting the brother out is to protect the purity of the fellowship ([1 Cor. 5:6](#)), to warn the assembly of the seriousness of sin ([1 Tim. 5:20](#)), and to give a testimony of righteousness to a watching world. But as far as the welfare of the brother himself is concerned, the purpose of the ostracism is not to punish but to awaken, and it must therefore be done in humble love and never in a spirit of self-righteous superiority ([2 Thess. 3:15](#)).

When a church has done everything it can to bring a sinning member back to purity of life but is unsuccessful, that individual is to be left to his sin and his shame. If he is truly a Christian, God will not cast him away, but He may allow him to sink still deeper before he becomes desperate enough to turn from his sin.

The command not to have fellowship or even social contact with the unrepentant brother does not exclude all contact. When there is an opportunity to admonish him and try to call him back, the opportunity should be taken. In fact, such opportunities should be sought. But the contact should be for the purpose of admonishment and restoration and no other.

# Church Discipline for Leaders and Volunteers

## Leaders: Pastor, Deacons, Ministers, Department Leaders

How does the Bible say that church elders are held accountable? How do you confront elders in the church?

1 Timothy 5:19-21 gives us the answers. In this passage, God prescribes a system precisely for these circumstances. The apostle Paul issues direct commands for how the church must deal with an elder who is caught in sin. He says,

"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality."

The following are nine ways that 1 Timothy 5:19-21 shows how church elders are to be held accountable.

### 1. Personal responsibility

Paul makes it clear that church members have a very specific role. Every church member has the divinely appointed right and responsibility to bring a charge against a church elder when it is necessary. It is remarkable that woven into the very relational and sociological fabric of the local church is the assumption that at no time should elders be above the evaluation of the people they serve. Every person in the pew has this responsibility.

Many church members are not aware that the Bible explains that they have this role in dealing with sin in their elder's lives. As a result, in our modern church environment, this is one of the most ignored aspects of local church life. This is especially unfortunate since church members are intimately connected to one another as family. This connection in Christ obligates them. There are several levels of this relational obligation.

One of the most obvious of these relational obligations is that, as brothers and sisters we are called to fulfill over 50 "one anothers" in Scripture. As family members, we are accessible enough to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15, 25-26; Luke 17:3-4; Galatians 4:16; Matthew 5:23-24; Colossians 3:13). However, it must be performed in an orderly and biblically prescribed manner.

### 2. A stricter judgment

It is immediately evident from 1 Timothy 5:20 that the Lord has designed His church to have a very specific set of rules for dealing with church elders when they sin. These procedural commands are obviously focused on elders, not the wider church. Eldership carries with it greater risks for a greater number of people, and therefore they are subjected to a "stricter judgment," (James 3:1). James makes it clear that those who teach the Word of God are under a magnifying glass of a higher power. In this

sense, church elders are treated differently, and even more severely, than those in the general congregation. With greater responsibility comes greater accountability, and greater vulnerability to public rebuke.

### **3. Multiple witnesses**

Holding church elders accountable requires two or three witnesses, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses." Notice how the Lord has commanded that there be a careful process that includes the following elements. First there must be a personal witness. Then in order to bring an accusation, that person is obligated to bring a minimum of one other witness. This language implies a vigilant examination and verification process.

This procedure is designed to protect the elder from trivial, false or evil accusations. It also protects him from accusations based on rumors, gossip or internet slander. It is part of the territory: Church elders are often targets of criticism since they are all imperfect in their life and doctrine, and the best of men can be picked apart. Furthermore, elders are often subjected to unrighteous criticism because the standard to which they are held is often higher than any elder is able to meet. It is common for church members to fall into merciless criticism, because elders are sinners and have weaknesses and inadequacies.

However, the process commanded by God in 1 Timothy 5 protects elders from unnecessary accusations by immature, unnecessarily offended or envious parties.

The requirement Paul outlines here is obviously only for flagrant, public, or scandalous sins. If the sins are private and lesser in nature, then the rebuke should be less severe and spoken in private between brothers. However, if a public rebuke for serious sin is to be delivered, it must be upon the testimony of two or three witnesses. These witnesses are evaluated and if found to be truthful then the rebuke is required. The foundation for Paul's command is found in Deuteronomy 19:15, where Moses communicates the law of witnesses: "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established."

Thus, Paul establishes a careful and orderly environment where hard evidence is gathered (not rumors), and testimony is examined.

### **4. Partiality avoided**

Paul makes it clear that there must not be any partiality, "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality." Partiality has many faces. Sometimes it expresses itself when there is a very gifted elder and because of his charisma, persuasiveness and position, people actually hold him to a lower standard when they should be holding him to a higher one. It may be manifested in a desire to continue seeing the benefit of his life. We may think that he has done so much good, and that it will all be lost. Sometimes partiality is promoted by thinking that "Many people will be hurt so I will not say anything." Or, "It will be so hard on his family, it's better to keep it quiet." Some people may even fear reprisal, rejection, or a forever broken relationship.

They often feel that the worst thing that can happen is that their relationship with the elder is broken. This kind of partiality often occurs when church members have a low view of sin, a high view of themselves and an unhealthy affection for outward appearance. They feel that it would be too damaging to expose the sin, when in fact the worst thing that could happen is to be disobedient to the Word of God so that the sin continues to grow in the darkness, without confrontation. Partiality is one of the great dangers to the proper fulfilling of Paul's commands because it is one of the sins in the church that facilitates elders who continue in their sin.

## **5. Accountability for what happened**

Paul is advocating accountability for the sin, in the phrase, "Those who are sinning rebuke..." This phrase presents an exegetical challenge. As William Mounce observes, "What appears initially to be a straightforward verse actually has many exegetical problems."<sup>1</sup> There are some who maintain that an elder should only be rebuked if he persists in the sin. The use of the present active participle "sinning" (tous hamartanontas) is used to advance this view. This Greek participle does, in fact, indicate continuing action. In other words, the argument is this: an elder must be rebuked only when he continues in a particular sin (or sins); but if he has stopped that sin there is no need for rebuke. While this interpretation is possible, it appears to be at odds with the purpose of the command. Further, this interpretation renders a rebuke, an extremely rare occurrence when an elder sins. It makes the command nearly pointless for its lack of usefulness, and almost unemployable as a command except in the most rare cases. In the case of sins of a financial or moral nature, for instance, the very act of getting caught almost always brings these sins to an immediate stop.

For example, if an elder is caught embezzling funds from his church, the ability to embezzle is taken away the moment he is found out. He is therefore no longer continuing in his sin. Does this mean that he should not be rebuked? Or if a man is caught in adultery, he usually stops. Does this mean there is no need to rebuke him? To maintain that rebuke is only in order when the sin persists renders Paul's command almost irrelevant. In order to avoid a rebuke, all an elder has to do is to stop the sin for a while. In his commentary on 1 Timothy 5:20, George Knight explains it this way: "Although the note of persistence may be intended by Paul, the more probable understanding is that the accusation is found to be true and the present tense is used to designate present guilt (TEV and NEB: "those who commit sins"). It is the committing of sin that is at issue"<sup>2</sup> (emphasis added). In order for there to be a public rebuke, there must be the act of biblically defined sin regarding morality or doctrine. The elder must truly be guilty of the sin. The issue is not if he is continuing in the sin, or whether he is sorrowful over the sin, but rather that he is guilty of sinning. In doing so he is no longer above reproach, as Paul requires (1 Timothy 3:2).

What if the man says he repents: does he then escape the rebuke? This passage gives no indication that repentance suspends rebuke. In fact, there is no mention of repentance in the text. Paul's instructions are very clear. The purpose of this rebuke is not to produce repentance in the elder-important as that may be-but to cause all "to fear." The issue here is not excommunication (whether that happens or not). The issue is the public exposure and reproof of one who holds a high office. No one gets a pass in Christ's churches when it comes to sin, especially not its elders. While true repentance is a critical matter in the elder's

relationship with the Lord and His church, it is important to remember - the explicitly stated purpose of the rebuke is not repentance, but the causing of fear.

There is also a practical reality that must be considered. In almost every case, when men are caught in serious sin, they confess to what can be proven and profess to be repentant. Most often, they weep and sorrow for their sin. They will almost always ask to be forgiven, apologize, and go to great lengths to communicate how profoundly they regret their sin. As a pastor I have been witness to many tearful confessions, only to find out later that there was no true repentance as evidenced by a changed life (see 2 Co. 7:11; Psa. 51). If repentance suspends the need for rebuke, then the command would be very rarely put into practice. It would mean that the command to rebuke would only be applicable if the elder was wanton, belligerent and willfully continuing in public sin. But if he was living an immoral life or embezzling, even in the recent past, and was found out, and stopped, the sin would be covered up.

This is most likely why Paul does not figure repentance in to the equation of rebuke when an elder is guilty. This perspective is carried out every day in our courts of law. Because many of our laws here in America are based on the Bible, we use this same principle applied in the civil realm. When someone steals, they are held accountable regardless of their repentance. This is the same treatment Paul is prescribing for an elder.

However, if the elder is hard hearted and/or willfully continuing in his sin, then he is a candidate for excommunication, a discipline far more severe when compared to a simple rebuke. Paul's point then is this: when an elder's sin is discovered and verified by witnesses, he must be publicly rebuked in order to produce in the hearts of his fellow elder(s) and his congregation, a holy fear of sinning against Christ (which may or may not bring the sinning elder to repentance).

## **6. A rebuke**

If the accusation brought by multiple witnesses establishes that the sin is real, a rebuke is required. The investigation process must reveal that the sin was not trivial. It must verify that the accusation was for serious sin, not the result of pickiness, harshness, personal vendetta, envy, or a critical spirit in the hearts of the accusers.

The rebuke is designed to expose and bring the sin to light. The word that Paul uses here speaks of exposing, convicting, disapproving or punishing.<sup>3</sup> The rebuke should be delivered according to wisdom. It should be measured according to the severity of the sin and the disposition of the offender. There could be a simple public rebuke, or temporary removal, or even excommunication depending on the many factors involved. The punishment should be delivered according to wisdom.

## **7. A public rebuke**

The rebuke is to be delivered before the whole congregation, "...in the presence of all." There is the tendency in many situations like this to try to protect people from hearing. Sometimes, in an attempt to express sympathy or to act out of a sense of misplaced kindness, there is a private meeting for the

church members only, or a subset of the church. It is difficult to see how these approaches are appropriate applications of the scriptural language. The Bible says that the rebuke takes place "in the presence of all." I understand this to mean the entire congregation, and not before the elders only, as some maintain. Matthew Henry explains it this way, "Those that sin before all rebuke before all, that the plaster may be as wide as the wound, and that those who are in danger of sinning by the example of their fall may take warning by the rebuke given them for it, that others also may fear."<sup>4</sup> If an elder has a national or international presence it may be necessary for the rebuke to go beyond the local congregation to cover the reach of his ministry. Therefore, Paul's use of the term "all" should be defined by the scope of influence, with the rebuke extending across the full range of the elder's influence. It follows that if a local church elder is also a national leader, it is up to the local church to deliver a national rebuke.

### **8. The courage to cause fear**

In today's church environment, church elders and members often prefer a positive, upbeat church life; free from guilt, repentance or fear. In contrast to this, Paul's stated purpose of the rebuke is so that "the rest also may fear." Paul uses very strong language to communicate this. The word he uses to communicate the desired result indicates "alarm" and "fright." Paul desires that there be a fear of sin in the congregation. The good that comes from an elder's rebuke is that it causes all to search their own hearts and lives for ongoing sin. In this sense, the elder's rebuke is also their rebuke. It heightens godly fear of sin and restrains wickedness (Psalm 97:10-12; Isaiah 55:7; Jude 23; Luke 12:13; Ephesians 4:22; Hebrews 12:1; 2 Thess 2:12; 1 John 1:9; James 4:17).

In order for congregations to have the courage to obey the Lord in this, there must be an understanding in the congregation that this kind of fear is actually a good thing and that it accomplishes godly purposes. Fear causes repentance, and fleeing from sin. Turning from sin ultimately brings about the well-being and happiness of the believer and the whole church, for a holy church is a happy church. It is in this spirit that James Denney writes, "The judgment of the Church is the instrument of God's love, and the moment it is accepted in the sinful soul it begins to work as a redemptive force."<sup>5</sup> The question is, do you or does your church have the courage to cause fear?

### **9. Trembling at the seriousness of the matter**

The requirement to rebuke must be regarded with utmost seriousness. The gravity of handling the matter properly is identified by an unusually sober warning, "I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality." It should startle us that nothing less than God, the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy angels are watching how churches deal with sin in their midst. These matters are spectacles to the heavenly hosts. This is why John Calvin underscored the seriousness of this issue, declaring that to ignore this is to "promote the entire dissolution of the church." He said, "As the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the church, so discipline forms ligaments which connect the members together, and keep each in its proper place. Whoever, therefore, either desires the abolition of all discipline, or obstructs its restoration, whether they act from design or inadvertency, they certainly promote the entire dissolution of the Church."<sup>6</sup> Baptist

theologian, John Dagg expressed this same sentiment in these words,, "When discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it."7

### **The blessings of obedience**

Undoubtedly, dealing with such things will always be heartrending. However, the pain should not keep us from faithfulness. Blessings always flow when Scripture is obeyed. It causes the power of gospel repentance to be known and seen. It causes sin to be purged in both elder and congregation. It diminishes love for the world and increases love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It heals. It warns. It restores. King David called it, "excellent oil." He was the direct beneficiary of a man who came and confronted him in his sin. He said, "Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it" (Psalm 141:5). Job made it clear that it causes happiness, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole" (Job 5:17-18).

While people may wonder how church elders are held accountable, it is a great comfort to know that the church is not left to figure it out on her own. God provides us with 1 Timothy 5:19-21, which describes an orderly and healing process for how a sinning elder is held accountable and set free by loving witnesses dedicated to his restoration and the purity of the church.

### **Practical questions**

Some very important questions must be considered: Is your church afraid to expose sin? Is there partiality? Are you personally reluctant to play your role for an elder trapped in sin? If so, the consequences can be terribly harmful for the purity of the church and the elder entrapped in sin. It easily blemishes the public reputation of the church as "pillar and ground of the truth." It can muffle the proclamation that God saves and sanctifies sinners. In the presence of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, it hides an important expression of the redemptive power of the gospel itself.

## **Church discipline for volunteers**

### **STEP 1: CONVICTION**

God made us with a conscience to guide our decision making through life and to make us feel convicted when we do wrong. God the Holy Spirit shines the light of grace on our sin, exposing it for what it is, calling us and helping us move to repentance. This is the convicting work the Bible frequently speaks of . He often does his convicting work through other Christians who love us enough to ask about junk they see in our lives.

We naturally avoid conviction because it hurts to feel the pain of guilt and the shame of our sin. But working through conviction takes us to the motivations behind the behavior, the sinful

desires of our flesh , and the corrupt passions that will continue to drive us until we identify them and put them to death . In Jesus we have been delivered from the Adamic heritage and the dominion of darkness so we are no longer under the authority of sin or the power of the devil. Romans 6:6 says, “We know that our old self [our membership in the family of Adam] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” Conviction is an essential step to exposing sin for what it is so we can be free from enslavement to sin.

## **STEP 2: CONFESSION**

As the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and renews our mind, we must then name our sin as God does and accept the truth that we have sinned. Confession means agreeing with God and telling the truth about who we are and what we have done. Confession includes naming our sin to Jesus and anyone else we have sinned against or is directly affected by our sin. James 5:16 teaches us it is best to confess the sin to faithful Christians who will pray for us and help us grow in holiness. We must do this without blaming anyone else for our sin, excusing it, minimizing it, or only partially confessing it. While conviction is a gift God gives to us, confession is our response, which then prepares us for a life of repentance, restitution, and reconciliation.

## **STEP 3: REPENTANCE**

The heart of repentance is changing your mind about who is god in your life. When we sin, we are worshiping someone or something else as a false god and functional savior. In repentance we turn from those false gods back to the true and living God of the Bible, who alone loved us enough to die for our sin and freedom. This means that a deep change of values occurs, and we change our mind about what we deem important. Then there will be a heart-sourced change of behavior. We must learn to repent continually by turning our face to Jesus and turning our back on sin. Repentance is not trying to manage our sin, but rather putting it to death before it puts us to death. Colossians 3:5 says it perfectly: “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”

It is important to note that false repentance takes many forms, none of which can be accepted as true repentance. Some forms of false repentance are explained below.

### **Mere Confession**

When God’s people confess their sins without truly repenting, they are agreeing that they are guilty of evil but are not living lives of repentant transformation. This is what often happens in

the psychobabble churches where everyone glories in how broken they are but neglect to live out the Spirit's power for new life.

### **Worldly Sorrow**

In 2 Corinthians 7:10 we are told, "Worldly grief produces death." This is because worldly sorrow feels bad for sin but does not understand that Jesus died for sin as our "man of sorrows" and "carried our sorrows" so that we can move from sorrow to salvation, forgiveness, new life, and joy marked by his salvation and not just our sin. People who exhibit mere worldly sorrow are left in the deadening hopelessness of their guilt and shame.

### **Self-Righteous Repentance**

Proud, self-righteous repentance occurs when we confess the sins of other people while neglecting our own manifestations of depravity. It can also happen when people repent of "acceptable sins" to deflect attention from deeper sins. Perhaps the most legendary example of this is spoken of in Luke 18:9–14, where Jesus delineates between the false repentance of the self-righteous Pharisee who confesses the sins of others rather than his own, and the true repentance of the humble tax collector.

### **Religious Repentance**

Religious repentance is the attempt to keep God happy or to get God to bless us. It is going through a ritual of confession but only to manipulate God to like us, not to work change in us. It is feeling sorry for getting caught in sin or feeling sorry for the consequences of sin, but not feeling sorry about the sin itself as a violation against God so severe that Jesus had to die for it.

This one may be the worst of all forms of false repentance. Religious repentance seeks in some way to pay God back by feeling really bad and wallowing in shame, guilt, and condemnation. It is void of the gospel truth that Jesus has taken our shame, guilt, and condemnation so that we are no longer under condemnation. Through the gospel we receive forgiveness, but in religious repentance we grossly seek to earn it by attempting to punish ourselves—often by denying ourselves the pleasure of gifts from God. Religious repentance falsely believes that if we do not punish ourselves for our sin, God will be angry and punish us. The gospel tells us that Jesus was already punished in our place for our sin and that God is just, so he will not demand further retribution by punishing us. Furthermore, religious repentance is rare because religious people

believe their righteousness before God resides in their good works and not solely in the cross of Jesus. As a result, religious repentance is filled with pride whereas the gospel brings humility, telling us that we truly are sinners, and joy, telling us that Jesus loves us and died to forgive our sins and take them away.

True repentance is among the greatest gifts given to us because of Jesus' work on the cross for our sins. In it we find our humility, joy, forgiveness, hope, redemption, perspective, identity, and future. Instead of going through killing shame or superficial ritual, true repentance looks deep into the new heart to discover the godly desires that are at the core of our being by virtue of regeneration and actively turns away from anything and everything that hinders our deepest regenerated desires to glorify God. If we pause and take time to think and pray, along with other grace-based believers, and do what will make us most deeply happy, then we will almost always do the right thing. From the base of these godly desires, we can enter into battle with the sinful desires that motivate the sin we are confessing and repenting of.

Through true repentance we will see the transformation of our lives, friendships, marriages, children, churches, cities, nations, and future offspring. Subsequently, it is wise for us not only to repent of sin to God when the Spirit prompts us, but also to humbly ask others we have sinned against to forgive us.

#### **STEP 4: RESTITUTION**

When we sin, we are also stealing from other people. This may include actual property or such things as trust, love, and intimacy. The Bible is clear that our redemption is a gift of grace from Jesus alone to be received by us through personal faith in him. The result of this gift of salvation is a new heart that loves Jesus, is humble, and leads to an ongoing life of good works—not so that Jesus will redeem us, but because he has. These good works will include our seeking to make restitution for all that we have done to damage others. Because we love people at a heart level, we want to restore what we took. Parts of the Bible, such as Exodus 22:1–17 and Numbers 5:5–10, speak of this kind of repayment, and men like the rich people in Nehemiah and Zacchaeus in the New Testament modeled it when they repaid the people they had stolen from. One man I know was physically violent with his daughter until he was converted, and as an act of restitution he has very intentionally pursued a loving relationship with her by frequently calling her, taking her out for meals, serving her, praying over her, and making new, loving memories in place of the love and joy he stole from her as a child.

## **STEP 5: RECONCILIATION**

Once the previous steps have been undertaken, the sin that separated people is forgiven and taken away by Jesus with the hope that they can be brought back together in loving and trusting relationship. No matter what, if we commit ourselves to the lifelong pursuit of the above gospel process, then reconciliation with others is possible in this life. However, trust, friendship, and relationship are restored only upon confession of sin and are the fruit of repentance. Confession and repentance involve (1) real acknowledgment of the offense; (2) remorse (beyond “I’m sorry I got caught”) for the pain it caused; (3) restitution where appropriate; and (4) renewal of character and lifestyle. Trust is always lessened or destroyed when sin is glossed over or “forgotten” without restoration. Such spiritual denial subverts forgiveness and reconciliation.

It almost goes without saying that this is a very difficult process. Even when all parties involved are working hard to ease the impact of sin, the bruising and pain sometimes make restoration impossible. If one or more fail to work through the process in good faith, restoration is impossible. But by God’s grace, even if it does not occur on earth, we have the promise that it will happen in heaven if those involved are Christians.

Sadly, while everyone sins, not everyone deals with it in this kind of manner, and the result is a need for church discipline.

## **STEP 1: WEIGH THE OFFENSE**

The first thing those who have been sinned against should consider is whether they should simply forgive the person(s) involved, overlook the sin, and let it go. Sometimes the issue is so minor and the sin so out of character, or there are extenuating circumstances such that granting some mercy is required. A woman I know, who was generally very respectful and loving toward her husband, became irritable and spoke harshly to him for a few days after the death of her father. He knew she was grieving, stressed out, and sleep deprived, so he continually prayed for her silently and showered her with loving affection. Within a few days she apologized to him for how she had treated him and was back to her old self. Indeed, God himself models “kindness [that] is meant to lead you to repentance .” Furthermore, Proverbs 19:11 says, “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.” People are not perfect. As sinners we need to be gracious, patient, and merciful with one another just as God is with us, or the church will spend all of its time doing nothing but having church discipline trials.

It is worth stressing, however, that we cannot simply overlook an offense if doing so is motivated by our cowardice, fear of conflict, and/or lack of concern for someone and their sanctification. In

the end, it is the glory of God, the reputation of Jesus, the well-being of the church, and the holiness of the individual that must outweigh any personal desires for a life of ease that avoids dealing with sin biblically. Sometimes God in his providential love for us allows us to be involved in dealing with another's sin as part of our sanctification and growth. It is good for us and for the sinner, the church, and the reputation of the gospel if we respond willingly to the task God has set before us.

## **STEP 2: CONSIDER THE CRIME**

Sometimes the offense or sin is also a criminal act. In such cases we need to call the police so that we are obeying the governing authorities and their laws as Scripture states. State governments specifically require churches to report any abuse against minors and seniors. Tragically, some Christians and churches rebel, believing they are exempt from government authority. They take the law into their own hands, trying to substitute church discipline for legal process and allow crimes to go unpunished.

Hanging on the wall in my church office is an old black-and-white photo of many young children posing together in front of their church building. I found the picture in a church building many years later, after the church had died and closed. Curious as to what had happened to all the children and why none had remained in the church when they became adults, I interviewed an elderly woman who had attended the church for nearly all of her life. She said that the pastor's brother had allegedly sexually abused some of the children in the church basement, but no one had contacted the police. He was not brought to justice in this life and the families left the church, thereby leading to its death. As a daddy to five children, I fight back tears every time I look at the faces of the kids in that picture and wish someone had called the police to investigate. There is simply no excuse for a church to cover up a crime by seeking to handle it internally rather than notifying the proper authorities. When this happens, it is often women and children who live in harm's way without legal protection and justice, which is a sin.

In addition to contacting the police and allowing them to investigate, a church can and should also do its own investigation and render its own verdict regarding the guilt or innocence of an alleged sinner and then impose its own consequences. Still, church discipline must never be done in isolation when a crime has possibly been committed because not only is the sinner part of the church, but they are also part of greater society and are subject to courts in both realms.

One issue that can complicate the ability of a church leader to notify the authorities if and when a crime has been committed is confidentiality. There is a widespread misunderstanding that the so-

called sanctity of the confessional exempts churches from the laws regarding reporting crimes. In fact, failure to report is a crime. While all pastors and counselors must respect people's confidentiality, they must also remember that there are limits to confidentiality. Specifically, it ends where crime begins. We are in no position to give legal counsel in criminal matters, but we encourage church leaders to hire reputable attorneys and have them check the law for specifics. After doing so, the church leaders may choose to include something on the issue in their church bylaws for legal protection. Ours state:

Members of Mars Hill Church are not guaranteed confidentiality regarding issues of church discipline, and understand that in submitting themselves to the authority of the church, issues of a sensitive or personal nature may become known to others. This includes, but is not limited to, notification of the authorities if a crime has been committed or if a real threat of someone being endangered exists, as well as other violations of scripture that may not result in physical danger.

Furthermore, we do not conduct biblical counseling with someone unless they sign a waiver relinquishing their right to confidentiality. If we refer people to an outside counselor, we likewise have them and their counselor sign a confidentiality waiver so that if we need to know about something, or if we need to notify the police, we can without legal recourse. Without this kind of foresight, sinners corner church leaders between a proverbial rock and a hard place, like the guy who early in my pastoral ministry told me he had cheated on his wife repeatedly and feared he had a venereal disease but did not want to tell her and expected me to cover for him under the guise of confidentiality. I just laughed loudly as I picked up my phone to call his wife while he threatened to sue me.

Paul also has some things to say regarding the involvement of secular courts in disputes between Christians. Ours is an incredibly litigious society. Things were not much different in Paul's day. Greece, home of the world's first democracy, had a bustling court system. Paul seeks to address how a Christian should relate to the secular court.

Paul says that disputes between believers should be decided within the church by appointed impartial people who love God and his justice. This refers to what we call civil law. Criminal matters, which cover such things as treason and murder, are not issues in which believers sue each other but are offenses against the law. Christians are welcome to pursue justice on civil matters if they believe they have been wronged and are to do so within the church if at all possible. A few clarifying points need to be made on this matter, as 1 Corinthians 6:1–11 has been subject to widespread misuse:

Paul is referring to disputes between believers, not to crimes.

Paul understands that some things needing judgment are not even considered improper outside of the church (e.g., fornication, adultery, gossip) because they are sins, not crimes.

Paul is not forbidding Christians and churches from disclosing a crime to secular authorities.

Paul is not forbidding a Christian from filing a suit against a non-Christian.

Paul is not saying that a Christian can never sue another Christian but rather that an effort must be made to resolve it outside of secular court.

Any Christian considering bringing a charge against another Christian must be careful not to harm the reputation of the gospel in the eyes of non-Christians. In some instances it may be preferable to suffer loss than to publicly harm the reputation of Jesus. In addition, Christians must never seek to use litigation as a way to accumulate wealth or power, although it can be used for the just collection of stolen wealth.

While justice is to be pursued in this life, the sad truth is that ultimate and perfect justice will not come until the day of judgment by Jesus at the end of time. On that day those who habitually practice sin will be exposed for what they are—unbelieving non-Christians who got their rewards on earth only to spend their eternity in hell locked outside of God's kingdom.

Because of Jesus we do not need to accept ourselves for who we are; rather, we can be transformed into someone else. Subsequently, true Christians are former perverts, homosexuals, adulterers, thieves, addicts, swindlers, and liars. Because of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, Christians can be so transformed that they do not need constant judgment from Christian and secular courts because they do not live a life of habitual sin.

### **STEP 3: ADMONISH**

If a sin seems too serious to overlook, we are to go to our brothers or sisters in private, discover the truth, and, if sin is present, appeal to them with a spirit of reconciliation to repent. In this we are trusting God the Holy Spirit to be faithful to convict their conscience of sin. In this step, those who have been offended must be careful not to ascribe guilt to others without faithfully seeking the truth about what was done or said. Hearsay and secondhand reports from one person do not qualify as a credible charge.

### **STEP 4: REPROVE**

If the one we have confronted does not respond to our repeated appeals, we are to go back again to the erring one with one or two other believers, so that they too can urge the sinning believer to turn back to God and serve as witnesses that we are making every effort to lovingly bring the sinner to repentance.

Philippians 4:2–3 gives a practical illustration of two people who have a personal dispute. There is no hint of immoral sin or doctrinal heresy. For some reason, they just do not get along and are causing tension in the church because of their differences. The apostle Paul deals with this by setting up a mediator to cause them to agree in the Lord and expects them to submit to the mediator. Sometimes there is sin that needs formal discipline, and sometimes there are hurt feelings and strained relationships that need mediation.

If the Christian persists in sin, we may seek the formal involvement of the church, initially from the elders, and, if necessary, the elders may inform and invite the prayers and assistance of the entire congregation. As a general rule, the lead pastor appoints a team to adjudicate each discipline case. At this point the member is formally placed under church discipline. At the discretion of the elders, the fact that a member is under discipline may be brought to the attention of the entire church or campus, and the member under discipline may be removed from any leadership roles and fellowship opportunities. To ensure there is no confusion or miscommunication, the member under discipline should be notified in writing of the disciplinary status and any applicable consequences. Furthermore, specific elders must be appointed to investigate the situation and work for repentance and reconciliation.

Mediation and arbitration may be used at this time to help reconcile two opposing parties. Mediation means bringing another person along to help resolve conflict and explore solutions if the conflict cannot be resolved through private peacemaking. Arbitrators can also be appointed to listen to both sides and render a binding decision about substantive issues. In all of this, it is imperative that both sides of the dispute agree to submit to the findings of the mediator or arbitrator if the process is to be a worthwhile use of time and energy.

#### **STEP 5: SEPARATE**

If these efforts do not bring a believer to repentance and reconciliation, or if a person refuses to be reconciled, Jesus commands us to treat that one as “a Gentile and a tax collector.” This means we no longer have normal, casual fellowship with the believer but instead use any encounters to bring the gospel of reconciliation to him and lovingly urge him to repent and turn back in obedience to God.

Not only must a church have biblically qualified leaders holding biblical offices, there must also be a clear understanding of various courts of leaders that make various decisions so as to avoid confusion and conflict. The offices represent the individual people and their roles, while the courts represent decision-making teams with a defined authority and responsibility. This point is incredibly important when it comes to the matter of church discipline. The elders and pastors in the church need to define who is officially on the court overseeing the investigation of a church member.

In the early days of our church when we had fewer people and fewer elders, the entire council of elders acted together as a court on all cases of formal church discipline. In time, as the number of church members and the number of elders grew, it became impractical to continue doing so. Today we have thirty-two elders scattered among seven campuses, and the amount of work involved to bring them all up to speed on every discipline case among our 2,200 church members would require them to neglect all of their other pastoral duties. So, for our purposes, we have decided that a church discipline court is defined as two or more elders who follow the process articulated in this chapter. The reason we have chosen two elders is that the Bible uses that number as the minimum requirement for establishing the facts regarding church discipline cases. Practically, having at least two elders also ensures that one elder cannot wield too much power.

In convening a court, the elders involved first meet to confess their sins to one another, seeking to walk together in holiness before God. They also spend considerable time fasting, praying, and studying Scripture alone and together to make every effort to have their hearts and minds open to the leading of God the Holy Spirit. Together they discuss how they will practically work out the details laid forth in this chapter, including the distribution of the workload and a time line. The distribution of work includes but is not limited to determining which questions the elder court will ask the person being investigated, who else will be brought in as a witness, what documents (if any) will be allowed in as evidence, and what Scriptures most clearly speak to the sin being investigated. Once the process is laid out, the elders overseeing the investigation then proceed to follow the steps in this chapter.

If members of our church or those who regularly participate in church activities are found guilty, they may be dismissed from the church by the agreement of the elder court. The dismissal of a church member may be made known to all church members. If the offense is a publicly known matter, the executive elders (our senior team of elders) have the discretion to determine if the member's discipline should be made known to the entire church. The Bible does not support an

appeal process by the one being removed from fellowship unless true repentance is demonstrated, and so we do not practice it, in general. To do so could allow an unrepentant sinner to take months or even years of various elders' time and wreak absolute havoc in the church by continually fighting for a different verdict.

An offense may be serious enough to warrant the temporary, immediate removal of a member from the church body for the well-being of the church until a thorough investigation can be completed. Removal does not equate to guilt but allows an opportunity to investigate before other members are affected. If someone is accused of rape, for example, he will be removed from fellowship for the well-being of others in the church until his guilt or innocence can be determined.

Members who resign their membership while under discipline do not terminate the discipline process. It is expected that a member under discipline and the elders will walk together toward repentance until full reconciliation takes place. Until it does, the member may be notified that he or she is not to be present at church-sponsored functions for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others. If someone under discipline begins attending another church, we notify the leaders of that church that they are unrepentant and have been removed from fellowship in our church. We ask that they also deny that person fellowship in their church so that we can continue working to bring the sinning one to repentance in a holy fashion. Admittedly, this is not always the result, but we make every effort to work for repentance and reconciliation so that our conscience is clear before God, and so we can tell our people that we earnestly did all that we could.

### **TREATMENT OF AN UNREPENTANT BELIEVER**

Jesus instructed us to treat one who will not repent as “a Gentile and a tax collector .” Although rejection and disassociation may seem harsh, these responses are simply a means by which the individual in question may come to an acknowledgment of his or her sin and repent. The idea is not that we stop caring for them but that when they sin and refuse to repent, we treat them as if they were enemies of the gospel. We find this sort of response in 1 Timothy 1:20, Titus 3:10, and 1 Corinthians 5:1–7.

Paul admonished church members in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and 14 to withdraw from the brother that walks disobediently and to have nothing to do with him. First Corinthians 5:9–11 is the strongest of all these biblical admonitions, commanding us not to associate or share a meal with believers who are guilty of sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, revilement, drunkenness, or

swindling. Because sharing a meal is symbolic of 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. You don't treat him as an unbeliever. You treat him like an outcast.

Even though we don't have fellowship with unrepentant Christians, we do not regard them as personal enemies but as enemies of the gospel. When we see them, we warn them as brothers that they are acting like enemies. Until they repent, we cannot pretend to be in fellowship with them.

There is a sense in which you never really let the unrepentant sinner go. Though you don't associate with him, you keep calling him back. He is put out for the purity of the church but is always admonished to come back. Practically speaking, it is fine for you to see an unrepentant brother as long as your speech or actions do not dismiss the gravity of the sin or imply that reconciliation has been completed when he has not yet repented. He is a brother, but because of his persistence in sin, he is separating himself from the body.

In closing, the words of Romans 12:18 are important to remember. They instruct us to be at peace with everybody if we are given the chance. We are to be willing to forgive everybody of everything. As soon as the individual repents, we should welcome him or her back into the body of Christ with open arms as a demonstration of the gospel truth that where sin abounds, the grace of God much more abounds !

## **Sin: The Works of the Flesh**

### WORKS OF THE FLESH DEFINED

Galatians 5:19-21

1. Adultery (KJV) – voluntary sexual intercourse by a married person with another who is not his/her mate. Can also be an attitude of heart (Mt. 5:27-28; 2 Ptr. 2:14). This would involve any sexual relationship with another who is not one's marriage partner, including homosexuality.
2. Fornication – in our modern English usage is defined to mean illegal sexual intercourse involving unmarried persons, but, in the Greek language and in the Scriptures it refers to “every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse” (Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon, p. 699). It is used in the Bible as the broad term to refer to all illegal sexual activity and thus can refer to such acts by either married or unmarried persons.
3. Uncleaness – the practice of every kind of immorality; what ever is opposite to purity; viciousness in sexual sins such as lying with an animal as with a man or woman.
4. Lasciviousness – uncontrolled lust and excessive desires; vile unrestrained actions; filthy words or indecent bodily movements; to follow an inclination toward sensuality and indecent conduct.
5. Idolatry – worship of an image or the god represented by it. Colossians 3:5 defines idolatry as “covetousness,” which means greediness, a strong desire for possessions, often those things which belong to another. It is a worship of material things of life, but is also a worship of self since the things we desire are for ourselves, to make us happy.
6. Sorcery (witchcraft, KJV) – comes from a word which means “to use drugs.” It is used here in a bad sense referring to those who practice the magical arts and enchantments. In the Greek version of the Old Testament (Septuagint or LXX) it is used in company with a class of people of whom God does not approve (Isa. 47:8-15). Sorcery is classed with the astrologers, star-gazers, fortune tellers, spiritualists, etc. Such practices are thus forbidden to Christians.
7. Enmities (hatred, KJV) – hating, to have hostile feelings and actions toward another; strong dislike whether concealed or revealed; the opposite of love.

8. Strife (variance, KJV) – to quarrel or wrangle; to be contentious in disposition; to cause fighting and discord.
9. Jealousies (emulations, KJV) – envy with malice; a contentious rivalry; strife to excel at the expense of another; lowering another to raise up one’s own self.
10. Wraths – outbursts of anger or rage or hostile feelings.
11. Factions (strife, KJV) – disputes and outbreaks of selfishness; a self-seeking attitude which will, if necessary, cause division to get one’s own way.
12. Divisions (seditions, KJV) – willing to bring about divisions and dissensions of a contentious nature; such as leads to parties.
13. Parties (heresies, KJV) – a school or sect which follows an opinion or thought to the point of dividing from others who disagree; such as comes from divisions.
14. Envyings – pain felt by one and a disposition to do harm to others because of their happiness and good fortune; an attitude which would deprive others of their joys because we do not have the same.
15. Murders (KJV) – unlawful destruction of human life. This also can be an attitude of the heart (Mt. 5:21-22; 1 Jn. 3:15). It is anger and hatred allowed to grow which leads to the thought and the thought often to the act.
16. Drunkenness – intoxicating the mind so as to dull the senses and inhibitions. To intoxicate is to poison (from toxin). Anything which accomplishes the effect of dulling the senses and reasoning capacity of man would fall into this category. Drugs, alcohol, food, and figuratively speaking worldly things and desires. There are degrees of intoxication or drunkenness – but all degrees are wrong! Dr. Haven Emerson of Columbia University has said, “The higher qualities of the mind are the very first to be rubbed out by alcohol. The delicate capacities of intellectual decision and choice and discretion and will power are those faculties which are first dulled and then wiped out by alcohol because they are the least capable of withstanding its toxic (poisonous) affect.”

17. Revellings – to be festive in a riotous or noisy manner; generally used of feasts and drinking parties carried on into the late night; carousing; unseemly conduct.

18. Such like – Paul recognized that many things might be named that he did not specifically name and that other things might arise in the future which were not thought of when he wrote. These he included in “such like,” since the principles involved in these definitions would also apply to many specific things not mentioned by name.

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-23

It is not enough just to not show the works of the flesh. We must have the fruit of the spirit in our lives. The fruit of the spirit consists of qualities in our lives which produce good works. It takes time to plant a tree and for it to grow and produce fruit. First it produces a little, then more, and we prune the tree so that it will grow more good fruit. So it is with us. We must aim at perfection, to bear good fruit, but not be discouraged when we fall. Problems will come even to Christians. We will bear some bad fruit because we do not always follow the good influences of God’s Holy Spirit. We must prune the bad in order to bear the good. The fruit of the spirit is equal to the fruit of the word revealed by the spirit. (Luke 8:11-15; John 6:63; 1 Cor. 2:6-13; Heb. 2:3-4; 2 Ptr. 1:5-11) The fruit we bear reveals what is within. Fruit of the Spirit is in the singular. We must bear all of this fruit. John 15:1-6 is the same as the fruit of the Spirit. These qualities are not supernatural and fantastic, but moral and spiritual qualities of daily life. These demonstrate that we are different from the world. (Rom. 12:1-2) Fruit bearing is absolutely essential. We must have it. (Jn. 15:2-8)

1. Love – (1) Love for God is supreme and involves our complete surrender (Mark 12:29-30; 1 Jn. 5:3; Jn. 14:15). (2) Our love for fellow man. Quality of this love is shown in Romans 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13:4-7).

2. Joy – This is happiness in spite of difficulties because of our faith in the ultimate and final victory in Christ. Sorrows? Yes, but Joy in spite of these (Phil. 4:4; Jn. 15:11; 16:24; 1 Jn. 1:4).

3. Peace – “A felt absence of disturbance, felt presence of harmony in heart and in state toward God and man” (James MacGregor), (cf. Luke 1:79; 2:14) Christ preached peace (Acts 10:36;

Eph. 6:15). Christ is our peace and brings peace among us (Eph. 2:14,15). Christ brings peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Peace of God equals perfect peace (Phil. 4:7). As much as is in us we are to be at peace with all men

(Rom. 12:18; Jn. 15:18,19). Peace is also inner contentment, but it must be learned (Phil. 4:10-14). Be peacemakers (Mt. 5:9-12). Peace, but not at any price. Not peace which gives way to error

(James 3:17,18). We need to think of what an intolerable situation will lead to if we leave it alone for the sake of peace. We must oppose those things which will undermine the gospel of Christ.

4. Longsuffering – “Patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others” (Lightfoot).

“Forbearance in the presence 6. Goodness – The quality of moral life in a person. “Desire characterized by goodness or desire to be and do good.” It is an energetic principle which involves disposition of heart and actions in

life. You cannot be too good. Goodness is Godlike. 7. Faithfulness – Faith that God is and that He rewards those that seek him (Heb. 11:6). It is conviction that God is able to do what he promises (Rom. 4:20-21). It is surrender of life to God (Gal. 5:6). Faith which looks beyond the present to the future sees the reward and keeps the eye on the goal (2 Cor. 5:7). Faithfulness to Christ is loyalty, being trustworthy and reliable (Mt. 25:21-23; Lk. 12:42ff). Christ is our example of faithfulness (Heb. 2:17; 3:1-2; Rev. 1:5; 19:11). We as stewards must be faithful, for we will be called to account (Mt. 25:19). 8. Meekness – (1) Toward God --- not weakness or cowardice. Moses was (Numbers 12:3). Christ was (Mt. 11:29). “Gentle strength under control; not just self-control, but God control.” “Humble submission to divine will; quiet acceptance of the discipline of life as coming from God; submissive attitude of the soul toward God, has the root in a humble child-like faith....and obeys without complaining about it being God’s will.”

(2) Toward man – an expression of love not easily provoked; not quick tempered or vindictive, rather swayed by feeling of benevolence and love.of provocation” (Bales). “Self restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish” (Vine). Willingness to put up with some things from somebody (Mt. 18:21-35). Parental love shows a good example of longsuffering (Lk. 15:20).

5. Kindness – Goodness of heart and gentleness; to be friendly, loving, generous. A general attitude which expresses itself in practical action in life.

6. Goodness – The quality of moral life in a person. “Desire characterized by goodness or desire to be and do good.” It is an energetic principle which involves disposition of heart and actions in life. You cannot be too good. Goodness is Godlike.

7. Faithfulness – Faith that God is and that He rewards those that seek him (Heb. 11:6). It is conviction that God is able to do what he promises (Rom. 4:20-21). It is surrender of life to God (Gal. 5:6). Faith which looks beyond the present to the future sees the reward and keeps the eye on the goal (2 Cor. 5:7). Faithfulness to Christ is loyalty, being trustworthy and reliable (Mt. 25:21-23; Lk. 12:42ff). Christ is our example of faithfulness (Heb. 2:17; 3:1-2; Rev. 1:5; 19:11). We as stewards must be faithful, for we will be called to account (Mt. 25:19).

8. Meekness – (1) Toward God --- not weakness or cowardice. Moses was (Numbers 12:3). Christ was (Mt. 11:29). “Gentle strength under control; not just self-control, but God control.” “Humble submission to divine will; quiet acceptance of the discipline of life as coming from God; submissive attitude of the soul toward God, has the root in a humble child-like faith...and obeys without complaining about it being God’s will.” (2) Toward man – an expression of love not easily provoked; not quick tempered or vindictive, rather swayed by feeling of benevolence and love.

9. Self-control - One has command and mastery over life; complete opposite of intemperance. Extends to governing our entire lives and it is most fit to conclude the list of fruit of the spirit. Think of it! – self-control – doing what we know we ought to do. Athletes practice this to win a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible (1Cor. 9:25-27).

10. Against such there is no law -- The fruit generated by the Spirit through the word is not confined to just these nine items in Galatians 5:22-23. When Paul mentioned the works of the flesh in verses 19-21 he concluded with “and such like,” implying that there were other works of the flesh not named here that were of the same type or kind he did mention (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:25-31; Col. 3:5-9 et al.). Likewise, in his closing comments on the fruit of the Spirit he does not profess to have named them all, but says, “against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). “Such” is an adjective from the Greek *toiouton* meaning, “such, such as this, of such a kind, of this sort.” The Spirit’s fruit are those characteristics that the Christian demonstrates as a result of being led by the influence of the Holy Spirit as opposed to being led by the desires of the flesh (cf. 2 Pet. 1:2-8; Rom. 6:16-22; 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 16:13f; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 2:20; 5:22-23; 6:1-10; Eph. 3:16-4:1; 4:17-24, 32; 5:1-23; 6:1-18; Phil. et al.).

## **What's a Christian Worldview?**

### **by Del Tackett**

A recent nationwide survey completed by the Barna Research Group determined that only 4 percent of Americans had a "biblical" worldview. When George Barna, who has researched cultural trends and the Christian Church since 1984, looked at the "born-again" believers in America, the results were a dismal 9 percent.

Barna's survey also connected an individual's worldview with his or her moral beliefs and actions. Barna says, "Although most people own a Bible and know some of its content, our research found that most Americans have little idea how to integrate core biblical principles to form a unified and meaningful response to the challenges and opportunities of life."

#### **1. What's a worldview?**

A worldview is the framework from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world. "[It's] any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world and man's relations to God and the world," says David Noebel, author of *Understanding the Times*.

For example, a 2-year-old believes he's the center of his world, a secular humanist believes that the material world is all that exists, and a Buddhist believes he can be liberated from suffering by self-purification.

Someone with a biblical worldview believes his primary reason for existence is to love and serve God.

Whether conscious or subconscious, every person has some type of worldview. A personal worldview is a combination of all you believe to be true, and what you believe becomes the driving force behind every emotion, decision and action. Therefore, it affects your response to every area of life: from philosophy to science, theology and anthropology to economics, law, politics, art and social order — everything.

For example, let's suppose you have bought the idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder (secular relative truth) as opposed to beauty as defined by God's purity and creativity (absolute

truth). Then any art piece, no matter how vulgar or abstract, would be considered "art," a creation of beauty.

## **2. What's a biblical worldview?**

A biblical worldview is based on the infallible Word of God. When you believe the Bible is entirely true, then you allow it to be the foundation of everything you say and do. That means, for instance, you take seriously the mandate in Romans 13 to honor the governing authorities by researching the candidates and issues, making voting a priority.

Do you have a biblical worldview? Answer the following questions, based on claims found in the Bible and which George Barna used in his survey:

Do absolute moral truths exist?

Is absolute truth defined by the Bible?

Did Jesus Christ live a sinless life?

Is God the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe, and does He still rule it today?

Is salvation a gift from God that cannot be earned?

Is Satan real?

Does a Christian have a responsibility to share his or her faith in Christ with other people?

Is the Bible accurate in all of its teachings?

Did you answer yes to these? Only 9 percent of "born-again" believers did. But what's more important than your yes to these questions is whether your life shows it. Granted, we are all sinners and fall short, but most of our gut reactions will reflect what we deep-down, honest-to-goodness believe to be real and true.

## **3. How does a biblical worldview get diluted?**

Here is the big problem. Nonbiblical worldview ideas don't just sit in a book somewhere waiting for people to examine them. They bombard us constantly from television, film, music, newspapers, magazines, books and academia.

Because we live in a selfish, fallen world, these ideas seductively appeal to the desires of our flesh, and we often end up incorporating them into our personal worldview. Sadly, we often do this without even knowing it.

For example, most Christians would agree with 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and other Scriptures that command us to avoid sexual immorality, but how often do Christians fall into lust or premarital and extramarital sexual sin? Is it simply because they are weak when tempted, or did it begin much earlier, with the seductive lies from our sexualized society?

#### 4. Why does a biblical worldview matter?

If we don't really believe the truth of God and live it, then our witness will be confusing and misleading. Most of us go through life not recognizing that our personal worldviews have been deeply affected by the world. Through the media and other influences, the secularized American view of history, law, politics, science, God and man affects our thinking more than we realize. We then are taken "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

However, by diligently learning, applying and trusting God's truths in every area of our lives — whether it's watching a movie, communicating with our spouses, raising our children or working at the office — we can begin to develop a deep comprehensive faith that will stand against the unrelenting tide of our culture's nonbiblical ideas. If we capture and embrace more of God's worldview and trust it with unwavering faith, then we begin to make the right decisions and form the appropriate responses to questions on abortion, same-sex marriage, cloning, stem-cell research and even media choices. Because, in the end, it is our decisions and actions that reveal what we really believe.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

Our first priority in family ministry should be to introduce people to the author of family — He is the greatest hope for healthy, thriving families. We believe that parents should aspire to model for their children how to humbly follow the teachings and spirit of Jesus at home and in the community.