

CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION PROCESS¹

Matthew 18:15-17

[One of the most vital, yet overlooked, aspects of a church's life and ministry is the discipline and restoration of fellow believers overtaken in sin. The following is presented in two complete versions, the first version lists all verse references but does not print out the verse (see pages 1-3). The second includes the text with all verse references (see pages 4-11).]

You demonstrate biblical love when you take steps to restore a fellow-believer overtaken in sin. This not only encourages a fallen believer to return to his/her first love of Jesus Christ, but it also gives others involved in the restoration process on-going opportunities to examine the depth of their love to the Lord (based on Galatians 6:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, Matthew 7:1-5, John 14:15, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, Colossians 3:12-13, Hebrews 10:23-25, Revelation 2:4-5).

I. INITIAL STEPS TO TAKE IN RESTORING A FELLOW BELIEVER WHO HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN IN SIN

- A. Remember that the biblical restoration process is for fellow-believers who sin in direct violation of God's Word. The restoration/discipline process is not to be used for you to "reprove" others who have different preferences or opinions than yourself. In matters of preference or opinions, God's Word directs you to regard others as more important than yourself (Philippians 2:3-4) and not to judge another (Romans 14:10-13).
- B. You, along with every believer, are able to admonish (reprove, counsel, instruct) others (including leaders) in the body of Christ who may sin (Romans 15:14). Remember that your adequacy is from God (2 Corinthians 3:5-6) and that His Spirit and His Word provide sufficient resources for you to respond obediently in this, as well as any other, area of spiritual life.
- C. In order to admonish a sinning believer, you are to use only God's Word and not your own "common sense" or the "wisdom" of any other (based on Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:49-50, 92, 104; Proverbs 6:23; Isaiah 55:8-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12). In your obedient attempt to restore a fallen brother, you are to:
 1. Privately point out to him the sins that he needs to forsake (the "put-offs") and direct him to the portions of God's Word that show him his deeds are sin (based on Romans 6:1-2, Colossians 3:5-8).
 2. Be ready to teach him God's plan for restoration, which involves repentance, confession, reconciliation, and beginning again to live in a manner which pleases the Lord (the "put-ons") (based on Romans 12:18; Colossians 1:9-12, 3:10-24; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 2:4-5). Biblical counseling from mature believers is often needed at this point to help in the complete restoration of a fallen fellow-believer (based on Proverbs 11:14, 15:22; Galatians 6:1).
- D. Regardless of a fellow-believer's response to you or to his sin, you are to do the following:
 1. Examine (judge) yourself in a biblical manner before approaching another believer about his sin(s) and take appropriate biblical steps to overcome any and all sins in your own life to please God and avoid being a hypocrite (based on Matthew 7:1-5, 1 Corinthians 11:31, Galatians 6:3-5).
 2. Before God, forgive the sin(s) of your brother in your heart (Matthew 18:35, Mark 11:26) and be ready, at all times, to grant forgiveness when your brother repents (Luke 17:3-4).
 3. Seek faithfully to win your brother back to a right relationship with the Lord and with the rest of the body of Christ (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1-2) as you continually examine yourself by God's Word (Matthew 7:1-5).
 4. Remain in a spirit of gentleness in your dealings with your brother who has sinned. Look to yourself to be alert to any temptation while you are trying to restore your brother (based on Galatians 6:1-2, James 4:7,

¹This material is excerpted from the Biblical Counseling Foundation's 480 page in-depth discipleship manual entitled, *Self-Confrontation* (1991 edition). For further information on this and other biblical counseling/in-depth discipleship training materials, please write or call: Biblical Counseling Foundation, 42-600 Cook Street, Suite 100, Palm Desert, California, USA 92211-5143. Phone: (760) 773-2667. Fax: (760) 340-3778. For Orders Only: (877) 933-9333. E-mail correspondence: admin@bcfministries.org. E-mail orders: orders@bcfministries.org.

1 Peter 5:8), remembering at all times that discipline is sorrowful (Hebrews 12:11).

5. Speak words that edify, according to the need of the moment, in order for your words to provide grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6). Do not gossip about another's sins (relating information to anyone not biblically involved in the restoration process) (based on Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 15:1-3; Proverbs 16:28, 17:9, 20:19; 1 Peter 4:8).

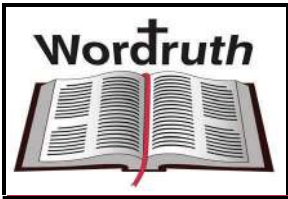
E. When your brother repents at any time in the restoration process, you (and all others who may be involved) are to:

1. Openly grant full (complete, total) forgiveness from your heart (Matthew 18:35, Luke 17:3-4) and continue to speak graciously (Colossians 4:6).
2. Provide biblical instruction (which usually involves the help, support, and counsel of other believers) to help him overcome the immediate sin(s) in his life and help him develop a biblical pattern of living (based on Proverbs 11:14, 15:22; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
3. Help him to be restored to full fellowship and useful service in the body of Christ, as far as is biblically possible (based on 1 Corinthians 12:24-27, Ephesians 4:16, Hebrews 10:23-25, 1 Peter 4:10).
4. Continue to judge yourself in a biblical manner (Matthew 7:1-5).

II. CONTINUING STEPS TO TAKE WHEN A FELLOW-BELIEVER REFUSES TO REPENT

- A. If a fellow-believer refuses to repent after you have urged him to do so (Matthew 18:15), you are to bring one or two others with you to witness his persistent refusal to repent (Matthew 18:16).
 1. It is essential that the witnesses be mature believers who understand the biblical principles associated with the restoration process (*see I. C. above*). The witnesses are to have a reputation for impartiality so that none of the witnesses are perceived as "taking up one side of the argument" (based on Leviticus 19:15, Proverbs 24:23, 1 Timothy 5:21).
 2. To prepare for possible further steps of restoration/discipline that may involve many others in the church, it is advisable that one witness be a church leader who could institute the next step in the restoration/discipline process (based on Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-7).
 3. Each witness should review and follow the above guidelines under: **I. Initial steps to take in restoring a brother who has sinned.**
- B. If a professing believer's persistent unrepentance must be brought before the church (i.e., the known believers, not simply those attending a public meeting where both believers and non-believers might be present), all steps in the biblical restoration process should be reviewed (based on Matthew 7:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, James 4:17). Then, these believers, under the supervision of church leaders, are to encourage the one in sin to repent (based on Matthew 18:17, Galatians 6:1, Hebrews 13:17, James 5:19-20).
- C. To withdraw fellowship from an unrepentant professing believer (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Titus 3:10-11), remember the following:
 1. To withdraw from fellowship (keeping aloof) does not mean to self-righteously avoid or ignore the unrepentant person. Conversations with an unrepentant believer may occur in the course of everyday living. However, communication should only consist of admonishing him to put off the old sinful pattern and to return to the Lord and be obedient to God's Word (based on Romans 6:1-2, Colossians 3:3-14, Revelation 2:4-5).
 2. To "take special note" of an unrepentant person means to note that those involved in the restoration process (which could include an entire church family) must make a prayerful effort to restore that individual. It does not mean to gossip about the person who is choosing to remain unrepentant (based on Proverbs 17:9).
- D. If an unrepentant professing believer must be treated as one who does not belong to the family of God (Matthew 18:17), remember the following:
 1. You and the others involved in the restoration/discipline process are not to unlovingly ignore the unrepentant person, but you are to avoid speaking with him freely in unhindered fellowship as you would with other fellow-believers.

2. An unrepentant person may choose to attend church functions (as unbelievers do); but, like an unbeliever, he may not minister, should not take communion, or otherwise pretend that he has no problem with which he must deal.
 3. Believers in the church must continue to admonish him. However, the reality of his salvation must now be brought up for him to consider, since he is persistently choosing (just like an unbeliever) not to be obedient to the Word of God (1 John 2:3-6, 3:6-9) and is living like one who has no supernatural power to overcome sin (Romans 8:5-8).
- E. At all times, remember that discipline is sorrowful (Hebrews 12:11), not only for the one being disciplined; but God the Father and the Holy Spirit are also grieved by the sin of the individual (based on Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32; Ephesians 4:30).
- F. Believers who choose not to be diligent and faithful in the complete process of restoration/discipline toward sin in another believer's life face the corrective discipline of the Lord because:
1. They are sinning in their own lives by failing to obey God's Word, which states that believers are to restore a brother caught in sin (based on Galatians 6:1-2; James 4:17).
 2. They are sinning as a group by minimizing sin in the body of Christ and choosing not to deal with it (based on 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; James 4:17).



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Galatians 6:1-2, Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15, We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.

Matthew 7:1-5, Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

John 14:15, If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails . . .

Colossians 3:12-13, So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Hebrews 10:23-25, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Revelation 2:4-5, But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

I. INITIAL STEPS TO TAKE IN RESTORING A FELLOW BELIEVER WHO HAS BEEN OVERTAKEN IN SIN

A. Remember that the biblical restoration process is for fellow-believers who sin in direct violation of God's Word. The restoration/discipline process is not to be used for you to "reprove" others who have different preferences or opinions than yourself. In matters of preference or opinions, God's Word directs you to regard others as more important than yourself (Philippians 2:3-4) and not to judge another (Romans 14:10-13).

Philippians 2:3-4, Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Romans 14:10-13, But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with

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contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.” ¹² So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.

- B. You, along with every believer, are able to admonish (reprove, counsel, instruct) others (including leaders) in the body of Christ who may sin (Romans 15:14). Remember that your adequacy is from God (2 Corinthians 3:5-6) and that His Spirit and His Word provide sufficient resources for you to respond obediently in this, as well as any other, area of spiritual life.

Romans 15:14, And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6, Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶ who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- C. In order to admonish a sinning believer, you are to use only God's Word and not your own “common sense” or the “wisdom” of any other (based on Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:49-50, 92, 104; Proverbs 6:23; Isaiah 55:8-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12).

Psalm 19:7-11, The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. ¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 119:49-50, Remember the word to Your servant, In which You have made me hope. ⁵⁰ This is my comfort in my affliction, That Your word has revived me.

Psalm 119:92 & 104, If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction. . . . From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

Proverbs 6:23, For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life.

Isaiah 55:8-11, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD . ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17, All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12, For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

In your obedient attempt to restore a fallen brother, you are to:

1. Privately point out to him the sins that he needs to forsake (the “put-offs”) and direct him to the portions of God's Word that show him his deeds are sin (based on Romans 6:1-2, Colossians 3:5-8).

Romans 6:1-2, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Colossians 3:5-8, Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. ⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.

2. Be ready to teach him God’s plan for restoration, which involves repentance, confession, reconciliation, and beginning again to live in a manner which pleases the Lord (the “put-ons”) [based on Romans 12:18; Colossians 1:9-12, 3:10-24; James 5:16; 11:9; Revelation 2:4-5]. Biblical counseling from mature believers

is often needed at this point to help in the complete restoration of a fallen fellow-believer (based on Proverbs 11:14, 15:22; Galatians 6:1).

Romans 12:18, If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Colossians 1:9-12, For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Colossians 3:10-24, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—¹¹ a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.²⁰ Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.²¹ Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.²² Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

James 5:16, Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Revelation 2:4-5, But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

Proverbs 11:14, Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory.

Proverbs 15:22, Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.

Galatians 6:1, Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

D. Regardless of a fellow-believer's response to you or to his sin, you are to do the following:

1. Examine (judge) yourself in a biblical manner before approaching another believer about his sin(s) and take appropriate biblical steps to overcome any and all sins in your own life to please God and avoid being a hypocrite (based on Matthew 7:1-5, 1 Corinthians 11:31, Galatians 6:3-5).

Matthew 7:1-5, “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye?⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

1 Corinthians 11:31, But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

Galatians 6:3-5, For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.⁴ But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another.⁵ For each one will bear his own load.

2. Before God, forgive the sin(s) of your brother in your heart (Matthew 18:35, Mark 11:26) and be ready, at all times, to grant forgiveness when your brother repents (Luke 17:3-4).

Matthew 18:35, My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.

Mark 11:26, But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.

Luke 17:3-4, Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," forgive him.

3. Seek faithfully to win your brother back to a right relationship with the Lord and with the rest of the body of Christ (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1-2) as you continually examine yourself by God's Word (Matthew 7:1-5).

Matthew 18:15, If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

Galatians 6:1-2, Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Matthew 7:1-5 (printed above under I. D. 1.)

4. Remain in a spirit of gentleness in your dealings with your brother who has sinned. Look to yourself to be alert to any temptation while you are trying to restore your brother (based on Galatians 6:1-2, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8), remembering at all times that discipline is sorrowful (Hebrews 12:11).

Galatians 6:1-2 (printed above under I. D. 3.)

James 4:7, Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:8, Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

5. Speak words that edify, according to the need of the moment, in order for your words to provide grace to those who hear (Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 4:6). Do not gossip about another's sins (relating information to anyone not biblically involved in the restoration process) (based on Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 15:1-3; Proverbs 16:28, 17:9, 20:19; 1 Peter 4:8).

Ephesians 4:29, Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Colossians 4:6, Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Leviticus 19:16, You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD.

Psalm 15:1-3, O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? ² He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. ³ He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend.

Proverbs 16:28, A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends.

Proverbs 17:9, He who conceals a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.

Proverbs 20:19, He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip.

1 Peter 4:8, Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

- E. When your brother repents at any time in the restoration process, you (and all others who may be involved) are to:

1. Openly grant full (complete, total) forgiveness from your heart (Matthew 18:35, Luke 17:3-4) and continue to speak graciously (Colossians 4:6).

Matthew 18:35 (printed above under I. D. 2.)

Luke 17:3-4 (printed above under I. D. 2.)

Colossians 4:6 (printed above under I. D. 5.)

2. Provide biblical instruction (which usually involves the help, support, and counsel of other believers) to help him overcome the immediate sin(s) in his life and help him develop a biblical pattern of living (based on Proverbs 11:14, 15:22; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Proverbs 11:14 (printed above under I. C. 2.)

Proverbs 15:22 (printed above under I. C. 2.)

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (printed above under I. C.)

3. Help him to be restored to full fellowship and useful service in the body of Christ, as far as is biblically possible (based on 1 Corinthians 12:24-27, Ephesians 4:16, Hebrews 10:23-25, 1 Peter 4:10).

1 Corinthians 12:24b-27 . . . But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,²⁵ so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Ephesians 4:16, (Christ) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Hebrews 10:23-25, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1 Peter 4:10, As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

4. Continue to judge yourself in a biblical manner (Matthew 7:1-5).

Matthew 7:1-5, Do not judge so that you will not be judged.² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," and behold, the log is in your own eye?⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

II. CONTINUING STEPS TO TAKE WHEN A FELLOW-BELIEVER REFUSES TO REPENT

- A. If a fellow-believer refuses to repent after you have urged him to do so (Matthew 18:15), you are to bring one or two others with you to witness his persistent refusal to repent (Matthew 18:16).

Matthew 18:15-16, If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.¹⁶ But if he does not listen (to you), take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

1. It is essential that the witnesses be mature believers who understand the biblical principles associated with the restoration process (*see I. C. above*). The witnesses are to have a reputation for impartiality so that none of the witnesses are perceived as "taking up one side of the argument" (based on Leviticus 19:15, Proverbs 24:23, 1 Timothy 5:21).

Leviticus 19:15, You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.

Proverbs 24:23, These also are sayings of the wise. To show partiality in judgment is not good.

1 Timothy 5:21, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.

2. To prepare for possible further steps of restoration/discipline that may involve many others in the church, it

is advisable that one witness be a church leader who could institute the next step in the restoration/discipline process (based on Hebrews 13:17, 15:1-7).

Hebrews 13:17, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

1 Peter 5:1-7, Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.⁵ You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.⁶ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,⁷ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

3. Each witness should review and follow the above guidelines under: **I. Initial steps to take in restoring a brother who has sinned.**

B. If a professing believer's persistent unrepentance must be brought before the church (i.e., the known believers, not simply those attending a public meeting where both believers and non-believers might be present), all steps in the biblical restoration process should be reviewed (based on Matthew 7:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, James 4:17). Then, these believers, under the supervision of church leaders, are to encourage the one in sin to repent (based on Matthew 18:17, Galatians 6:1, Hebrews 13:17, James 5:19-20).

All passages in above paragraph have been printed earlier except for the following:

James 4:17, Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

James 5:19-20, My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

C. To withdraw fellowship from an unrepentant professing believer (1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Titus 3:10-11) . . .

1 Corinthians 5:11, But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15, Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. . . . If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Titus 3:10-11, Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,¹¹ knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

. . . remember the following:

1. To withdraw from fellowship (keeping aloof) does not mean to self-righteously avoid or ignore the unrepentant person. Conversations with an unrepentant believer may occur in the course of everyday living. However, communication should only consist of admonishing him to put off the old sinful pattern and to return to the Lord and be obedient to God's Word (based on Romans 6:1-2, Colossians 3:3-14, Revelation 2:4-5).

Romans 6:1-2, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Colossians 3:3-14, For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.⁶ For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—¹¹ a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and

uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.¹⁴ Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Revelation 2:4-5, But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

2. To “take special note” of an unrepentant person means to note that those involved in the restoration process (which could include an entire church family) must make a prayerful effort to restore that individual. It does not mean to gossip about the person who is choosing to remain unrepentant (based on Proverbs 17:9).

Proverbs 17:9, He who conceals a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.

D. If an unrepentant professing believer must be treated as one who does not belong to the family of God (Matthew 18:17), remember the following:

1. You and the others involved in the restoration/discipline process are not to unlovingly ignore the unrepentant person, but you are to avoid speaking with him freely in unhindered fellowship as you would with other fellow-believers.
2. An unrepentant person may choose to attend church functions (as unbelievers do); but, like an unbeliever, he may not minister, should not take communion, or otherwise pretend that he has no problem with which he must deal.
3. Believers in the church must continue to admonish him. However, the reality of his salvation must now be brought up for him to consider, since he is persistently choosing (just like an unbeliever) not to be obedient to the Word of God (1 John 2:3-6, 3:6-9) and is living like one who has no supernatural power to overcome sin (Romans 8:5-8).

1 John 2:3-6, By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.⁴ The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 John 3:6-9, No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.⁹ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Romans 8:5-8, For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

E. At all times, remember that discipline is sorrowful (Hebrews 12:11), not only for the one being disciplined; but God the Father and the Holy Spirit are also grieved by the sin of the individual (based on Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32; Ephesians 4:30).

Hebrews 12:11, All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32, “Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord GOD, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?” . . . “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,” declares the Lord GOD. “Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you.³¹ Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares the Lord GOD. “Therefore, repent and live.”

Ephesians 4:30, Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

F. Believers who choose not to be diligent and faithful in the complete process of restoration/discipline toward sin in another believer's life face the corrective discipline of the Lord because:

1. They are sinning in their own lives by failing to obey God's Word, which states that believers are to restore a brother caught in sin (based on Galatians 6:1-2; James 4:17).

Galatians 6:1-2, Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

James 4:17, Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

2. They are sinning as a group by minimizing sin in the body of Christ and choosing not to deal with it (based on 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; James 4:17).

1 Corinthians 5:1-13, It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. ² You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. ³ For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ (I have decided) to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (of dough) ?

⁷ Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are (in fact) unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. ⁹ I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I (did) not at all (mean) with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within (the church)? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

James 4:17 (printed above)