

# HILLVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH

## CONSTITUTION

### PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

### I. NAME

This body shall be known as the Hillview Baptist Church of Franklin, located at 1642 Lewisburg Pike, Franklin, Tennessee 37064.

### II. PURPOSE, VISION, and VALUES

The **PURPOSE** of Hillview Baptist Church is to:

- Love God
- Build Faithful Disciples
- Share the Hope of Christ

#### VISION STATEMENT

Knowing that our Master will soon come again, we desire to invest our God-given talents where they will get the greatest return for God's kingdom harvest.

As Christ's servants, we will work together to reach each community through innovative evangelism, equipping believers through the teaching of God's Word and serving each other with compassionate involvement.

#### CORE VALUES

- We value persistence in following God's call in the good and tough times.
- We value the Bible as the Word of God and our guide for the living of life.
- We value the acceptance and love we have for each other in the way that Christ loves us.
- We value godly leaders and all members who humbly surrender their agendas and desires in order to seek God's will.
- We value that each of us must use our talents and gifts for the body of Christ to be healthy.
- We value earnest, focused prayer.

### **III. STATEMENT OF BASIC BELIEFS**

We affirm the Holy Bible as the inspired word of God and the basis of our beliefs. This church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of “The Baptist Faith and Message” as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 (See Attachment). We voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ, personally committed to sharing the good news of salvation to lost mankind.

### **IV. CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

"The Chief Shepherd"- The Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 23:8-11; 1 Peter 5:4)

The Lord Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of this congregation. All church leadership and membership must bow to His leadership of His church. He communicates His will for the church through His Word, the Bible. He gives additional guidance by means of the specific leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells in the heart of each believer. He also shepherds the flock through leaders of the church to whom He has given specific gifts.

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. Persons duly received by the members shall constitute the membership.

All internal groups created and empowered by the church shall report to and be accountable only to the church, unless otherwise specified by church action.

This church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation that are common among Southern Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical, this church will cooperate with and support the Nashville Baptist Association, the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

# HILLVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH

## BYLAWS

In order to conduct ourselves in orderly fashion, we adopt the following bylaws. These provisions provide structure to our organization and should enhance our ability to fulfill our Purpose, which is to Love God, Build faithful disciples, and Share the hope of Christ. Never should the structure be exalted over the purpose.

### I. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

#### 1. GENERAL.

In accordance to the dictates of scripture, the membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership. Any person may offer himself as a candidate for membership in this church. Candidacy is conditioned on:

- By public profession of faith and baptism according to the policies of this church;
- By receipt of a letter of recommendation from another church of like faith and order;
- By a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism in a church of like faith and order when no letter is obtainable.

#### 2. MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

All candidates for membership shall first attend membership class. This membership class shall: confirm each person's biblical qualification for church membership, have a comprehensive presentation of ministry teams, and assist each person to identify their spiritual gifts so as to assimilate each person into their God-directed ministry within the church.

After completion of the membership class, the church leadership will present each person for approval of full church membership at any regular church service. The church will then vote to affirm each person's membership."

#### 3. MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

As the Lord has led His followers to join the ministry of this church, each member has a responsibility to the Lord to serve Him faithfully. As Jesus Himself stated in Matthew 20:26-28 *"It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* Each church member has a ministry service that the Lord will lead each to as we seek His

activity. Our service to the Lord will compliment and follow our purpose and process for ministry.

**A. Love God** - Our Lord God desires an intimate relationship with His people. This relationship is first and foremost a love relationship. To this end, we are moved and motivated to express our love of God according to what the Bible states. In Matthew 22:37 Jesus stated the greatest commandment is to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* He proceeded to state the second greatest commandment is to *"love your neighbor as yourself."* These two responsibilities as believers demonstrate our desire to obediently give God our all. Giving God our all will be demonstrated in our love of God and others. This love will be seen in our worshipping God in our attitudes, actions, and thoughts.

**B. Build Faithful Disciples** - As a follower of Jesus Christ, we are commanded by our Lord to "make disciples". In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus stated that we should *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* This whole idea of building faithful disciples must be rooted building a mentoring relationship as Jesus modeled for us and teaching the precepts of His Word to His followers. The Apostle Paul understood this mentoring process as he wrote to his spiritual son, Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, *"And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."* Our responsibility is to invest ourselves in the study of the Word of God and invest our life knowledge and experience into other followers of Jesus also.

**C. Share the Hope of Christ** - Ephesians 2:1-10 tells us who we once were without Christ, what God did for us, how God did it, why God did it, and what we are now...*"for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* Now, as a believer in Christ, we have a new life, a new hope, and a new way of living. As we come to understand how great the love of God is for us, we are so moved to share that same hope with others. Followers of Jesus learn from His example to build relationships with the hopeless of our world and lead them to "love God". We are created by God for "His" good works that we would become the instrument God uses to lead others to love God, build faithful disciples, and share the hope of Christ.

#### 4. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

- A. Death of the member;
- B. Transfer to another Baptist church, letter of recommendation to be issued;
- C. Exclusion by action of this church ;
- D. Erasure upon request or proof of membership in a church of another denomination;
- E. After inactivity for at least on-year, unless serving/living outside of our area.

## 5. DISCIPLINE

It shall be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure shall be taken to assist any troubled member. The pastors and deacons are available for counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another shall be guided by a concern of redemption rather than punishment. The Church's beliefs, process and detailed information regarding Discipline is located in the Operations Manual under the title, "Church Discipline. In summation, if a member demonstrates the need for discipline, the pastor and deacons shall take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem proceeding as follows:

- A. After a member has been privately approached by an individual, the pastor and one or two deacons shall personally and privately contact the member for the purpose of bringing the member to repentance.
- B. After reasonable time, if the offending member persists in their behavior, upon consensus the Pastor and deacons may proceed to declare the person to be no longer in the membership of the church. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance.

The church may restore to membership and full fellowship any person previously excluded upon the recommendation of the Pastor/Diacons who attest of the excluded person's repentance.

## II. OFFICERS

### 1. GENERAL

Following Christ's example and dictates, Officers of the Church are servants of the body and should always serve with humility; demonstrating their love for God in their love of others and taking all measures to insure the Church fulfills its purpose.

*"We value godly leaders and all members who humbly surrender their agendas and desires in order to seek God's will."*

*"We value that each of us must use our talents and gifts for the body of Christ to be healthy."*

The officers of this church shall be the Pastor, the Associate Pastors, the Directors, the Deacons, the Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Trustees.

Every active member of the church is eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for elective offices in the church. All Officers should have a clear understanding of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9) and their faithfulness should already be proven (1 Tim. 3:10).

## 2. PASTORS

A. Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The Pastor will lead the congregation, the organizations, and the church staff to perform their tasks. The Pastor is leader of pastoral ministries in the church. As such, he works with the deacons and the church ministerial staff to lead the church in the achievement of its Purpose: To Love God; Build faithful disciples; and to Share the hope of Christ. The pastor is an ex officio member of all committees and teams.

- i. Calling the Lead Pastor. The church shall appoint a Pastor Search Committee. The committee shall present its recommendations as a nomination at a business meeting called for this purpose only of which two weeks written notice has been sent to each active member. The vote shall be by controlled secret ballot. An affirmative vote shall be by three-fourths active members present. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his or the church's request.
- ii. Resignation. The Pastor should first notify the Deacons of his intent to resign his office as Pastor. The Deacons shall work with the Pastor to organize proper notification to the Church and a reasonable transition process.
- iii. Dismissal. If, after following the steps under church discipline, the deacon body and the personnel committee deem it necessary to recommend the dismissal of the pastor, the following steps shall be taken:
  1. The deacon body and the personnel committee shall recommend to the congregation the dismissal of the pastor. The pastor shall be notified in writing of this recommendation and shall have the opportunity to speak to the congregation at this time.
  2. A special called business meeting shall be verbally announced on the following Sunday morning for the next Sunday, with the vote to be taken immediately following the morning service. The vote shall be by controlled secret ballot, with the pastor being dismissed by a three-fourths

vote of active church members present. The pastor shall not be present during the actual voting. The deacon body and the personnel committee shall, at this time, recommend his severance pay, to be rendered within 30 days.

- B. Associate Pastor. At the Lord's direction, the church may call other Pastoral staff to assist in our ministry.
- i. Calling Associate Pastors. A job description and job compensation shall be agreed upon by the church prior to actually calling an Associate Pastor. The job description then shall be added to the church operation manual. The Personnel Committee serves as the Search committee for Associate Pastors along with the Lead Pastor and a Deacon representative. This group will present its recommendations as a nomination at a business meeting called for this purpose only of which two weeks written notice has been sent to each active member. The vote shall be by controlled secret ballot. An affirmative vote shall be by three-fourths active members present.
  - ii. Resignation. The Associate Pastor should first notify the Lead Pastor of his intent to resign his office. The Deacons shall work with the Lead Pastor to organize proper notification to the Church and a reasonable transition process.
  - iii. Dismissal of Associate Pastors. The termination of an Associate Pastor will be a coordinative effort between the Pastor, Deacons, and the Personnel Committee in the form of a recommendation. The vote shall be made by controlled secret ballot with the three-fourths vote of active members present carrying.

### 3. DEACONS

In Acts 6, the Church was instructed to carefully select from among themselves, men who are well-attested, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. In accordance with this example, the Church must enter into a time a prayer and thoughtful deliberation when selecting Deacons. As the candidates must be well-attested, they cannot be a new believer, and they must have lived out their Christian faith before the local body for a reasonable period of time. Candidates must demonstrate a growing faith, as they continue to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The Pastor and Deacons will secure nominations for Deacon from the body then pray and examine the candidates prior to submitting their recommendations to the Church. The church shall elect deacons by recommendation of the deacon body by controlled secret ballot at a regular business meeting of the church or at a special-called business meeting for that purpose.

A. Qualifications. In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice in the New Testament, (Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 4:8-16), deacons are to be servants of the church. Their task is to serve with the pastor and ministerial staff in performing the pastoral ministry tasks of leading the church in the achievement of its Purpose.

B. Term. Deacons shall serve on a rotation basis. Each year, the assigned term of office of one-third of the number of deacons shall expire, and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the deacons such numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a deacon to fill the unexpired term.

The Deacons will elect a Chairman. The Chairman of the Deacons is an ex officio member of all committees and teams.

#### 4. CHURCH CLERK

The church shall elect annually a clerk as its clerical officer. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided. The clerk shall be responsible for keeping a record of names and status of members, and shall keep a record of baptisms. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written official reports, and give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary as indicated in the bylaws. The clerk shall be responsible for preparing the annual letter of the church to the association.

At such a time as the Church employs an Administrative Assistant who is capable to fulfill the duties of the clerk, the church will delegate the duties to the church secretary and the position of Clerk will cease.

All church records are church property and shall be kept in the church office when an office is maintained.

Selection Process for Church Clerk, Trustees, Finance Committee, Personnel Committee, and Ministry Team Leaders. Recognizing that the previously mentioned positions are leadership positions and servants of the Church, the selection process for these positions are similar to the selection process for Deacons.

Prior to filling these positions, the Church must enter into a time of prayer and thoughtful deliberation. The candidates must be well-attested; they cannot be a new believer, and they must have lived out their Christian faith before the local body for a reasonable period of time. Candidates must demonstrate a growing faith, as they continue to produce the fruit of the Spirit. The Pastor and Deacons will secure nominations for these positions from the body then pray and examine the candidates prior to submitting their recommendations to the Church. The

church shall elect these positions by recommendation of the deacon body by controlled secret ballot at a regular business meeting of the church or at a special-called business meeting for that purpose.

#### 5. CHURCH TREASURER

The Church shall elect annually a Church Treasurer as its financial officer. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to receive, preserve, and pay out, upon receipt of vouchers approved and signed by authorized person(s), all money or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. It shall be the duty of the treasurer in cooperation with the Finance Committee to provide financial statements. The treasurer's report and records may be audited annually, or as needed, by the Finance Committee or public accountant. The treasurer will be bonded, with the church paying for the bond.

Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the church, the records shall be delivered by the treasurer to the church clerk, who shall keep and preserve the account as a part of the permanent records of the church.

The Finance Committee will work with the Pastor and Deacons in selecting and recommending a member to serve as Church Treasurer. The Pastor and Deacons will pray and examine the candidates prior to submitting their recommendations to the Church. The church shall elect the Treasurer by recommendation of the deacon body by controlled secret ballot at a regular business meeting of the church or at a special-called business meeting for that purpose.

#### 6. TRUSTEES

The church shall elect three trustees to serve as legal officers for the church. Trustees shall serve three-year terms on a rotation basis. Each year, the assigned term of office of one-third of the number of trustees shall expire, and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the Trustees such numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a Trustee to fill the unexpired term. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote of the Church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any church property. When the signatures of the directors of the corporation are required, the Trustees shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase or rental of property, or other legal documents related to church approved matters. The selection process for Trustees follows the process outlined for Church Officers detailed under "Church Clerk.

#### 7. DIRECTORS

As the Lord Leads, the Church may call individuals to be directors of certain areas of ministry. Directors will lead and be responsible for specific ministries and can consist of, but shall not

be limited to, Directors in the areas of discipleship, music, youth, children, missions, or any combination thereof.

- A. Calling Directors. A job description shall be agreed upon by the church prior to actually calling a Director. If applicable, compensation will also be agreed upon by the church before actually calling a Director. The job description then shall be added to the church operation manual. The Personnel Committee serves as the Search committee for Directors along with the Lead Pastor and a Deacon representative. This group will present its recommendations as a nomination at a business meeting called for this purpose only of which two weeks written notice has been sent to each active member. The vote shall be by controlled secret ballot. An affirmative vote shall be by three-fourths active members present.
- B. Resignation. The Director should first notify the Lead Pastor of his intent to resign his office. The Deacons shall work with the Lead Pastor to organize proper notification to the Church and a reasonable transition process.
- C. Dismissal of Directors. The termination of an Associate Pastor will be a coordinative effort between the Pastor, Deacons, and the Personnel Committee in the form of a recommendation. The vote shall be made by controlled secret ballot with the three-fourths vote of active members present carrying.

### **III. FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Finance Committee shall be responsible for determining the yearly budget (January through December) and having it approved by the church by the December business meeting. The committee is also responsible for overseeing the finances of the church, seeking financial sources as needed by the church and being good stewards of the Lord's money. The church shall elect three or more Committee members. Members shall serve three-year terms on a rotation basis. Each year, the assigned term of office of one-third of the number of members shall expire, and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the Committee such numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a Committee Member to fill the unexpired term. The Committee will elect a Chairman and a Co-Chair. The selection process for Finance Committee follows the process outlined under "Church Clerk".

### **IV. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for the hiring and dismissal of paid personnel of the church. They are also responsible for formatting the job descriptions, salaries, benefits, and other compensation for personnel. They shall sign agreements with personnel as needed. Works

with staff/area they are supporting, selection/election process and terms of service. The Personnel Committee will develop personnel policies to be included in the Operations Manual. The church shall elect three or more Committee members. Members shall serve three-year terms on a rotation basis. Each year, the assigned term of office of one-third of the number of members shall expire, and election shall be held to fill vacancies and to add to the Committee such numbers as the church size warrants. In case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, the church may elect a Committee Member to fill the unexpired term. The Committee will elect a Chairman and a Co-Chair. The selection process for Personnel Committee follows the process outlined for Church Officers detailed under “Church Clerk”.

## **V. ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

Administrative Staff shall be called and employed as the church determines the need for their services. The Personnel committee working in conjunction with Pastor, deacons and Ministry leaders that will be supported by the position shall have the authority to employ and to terminate the service of Administrative Staff.

## **VI. MINISTRY TEAMS**

All members are encouraged to find their place of service in the body as we seek to fulfill our Purpose. Ministry Teams are open to all Church members and range in function from building and grounds to worship. The teams will be self governed with decisions made by consensus.

Teams are accountable for establishing any policies or procedures needed for their area of service.

Each team will have a Team Leader serving as a facilitator. Team Leaders are elected annually; the selection of Team Leaders follows the process outlined for Church Officers detailed under “Church Clerk”.

## **VII. BUSINESS PROCESSES**

### **1. FISCAL YEAR**

The church fiscal year shall be from January 1 through December 31.

### **2. BUSINESS MEETINGS**

A. Eligibility to Vote. Every active member of the church 16 years and up is entitled to vote in all elections on all questions submitted to the church in conference, provided the member is present.

i. Active Membership. Members will be transferred to an inactive status or watch care membership after two months of non-participation in any regular church worship service with the following exceptions:

- Absences due to prolong illness of self or a family member they are directly caring for.
- Away from home due to service to country, provided they are in attendance when home at a regular service time.
- Working away from home, provided they are in attendance when home at a regular service time.

ii. Reinstating Active Membership Status. To become an active member, he or she must attend six regular worship services within 60 days

B. Moderator. The pastor shall serve as moderator of the church. In the absence of the pastor or at the Pastor's discretion, the chairman of deacons shall preside. In the absence of both, the clerk shall call the church to order and preside for the election of an acting moderator.

C. Quorum. The quorum consists of those members who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called.

D. Regular Business Meetings. The Church shall hold regular quarterly business meetings. A notice of at least one week will be given regarding the date, time and place of the business meeting. The quarterly meetings should occur in the months of February, May, August, and November.

E. Special Business Meeting. The church may conduct special called business meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A one week notice, including the subject, date, time, and place, must be given for the special called business meeting, unless otherwise specified.

## **VIII. CHURCH OPERATIONS MANUAL**

A church operations manual shall include church policies and procedures. The contents of the Operations Manual will be provided by individuals, teams and committees and will be subject to review and approval by the Pastor, and Deacons. The purpose of the Operations Manual will be to facilitate efficient and proper use of our talents and resources, and to help maintain body unity as we focus on fulfilling our Purpose: To Love God; Build faithful disciples; and Share the hope of Christ.

## **IX. AMENDMENTS/ADDITIONS/DELETIONS**

Changes in the constitution and bylaws may be made at any business meeting of the church provided each amendment shall have been presented in writing at a pervious business meeting. Copies of the proposed amendment shall have been furnished to each member present at the

earlier meeting. Amendments to the constitution and bylaws and church operations manual shall be by two-thirds vote of active church members present.

# **Hillview Baptist Church**

## **Church Operations Manual**

Do things right and orderly – promote the purpose of the body – more effectively serve the Lord.

Responsibilities of Leadership to lead

Ministry Stuff – Lead Pastor to Lead

Discipleship Stuff – Jimbo to the rescue

## Proposed Ministry Teams:

1. Children Ministry Team
2. Student Ministry Team
3. Missions Ministry Team
4. Building and Ground Ministry Team
5. Benevolence Ministry Team (including Flowers)
6. Worship Ministry Team
7. Fellowship Ministry Team (renamed from Recreation/Event/Kitchen)
8. Welcome Ministry Team (includes Guest services, greeters, ushers, and parking assistants)
9. Discipleship Ministry Team (includes education, discipleship, and assimilation)
10. Tech Ministry Team (includes audio/video production and website service)

Add in what Sissy has.

What else is there to accomplish? Sorry, been at it too long.

## Church Discipline

By:

[J. Hampton Keathley, III, Th.M.](#)

Though church discipline is a very difficult area of doctrine and one hard to practice, it nevertheless rests upon the divine authority of Scripture and is vital to the purity, power, progress, and purpose of the church. The responsibility and necessity for discipline is not an option for the church if it obeys the Word of God, but a church must be equally concerned that Scripture is carefully followed in the practice of church discipline. The following summary is suggested for study and as a guide for this very important area of doctrine.

## The Principle of Discipline Defined

R.C. Sproul writes, “The church is called not only to a ministry of reconciliation, but a ministry of nurture to those within her gates. Part of that nurture includes church discipline . . .”<sup>1</sup> The idea of

church discipline is totally consistent with the basic purposes of the church—evangelism and edification. Evangelism ministers to those without the church who are in bondage to sin to bring them to faith in Christ where the transformation process begins. The edification process is designed to build up believers so they can be conformed to the image and character of Christ. Church discipline as a part of the edification process ministers to those within the body of Christ who are dominated by some area of sin so they can experience liberation from its power through fellowship with Christ.

How then do we define church discipline? Carl Laney states, “Church discipline may be broadly defined as the confrontive and corrective measures taken by an individual, church leaders, or the congregation regarding a matter of sin in the life of a believer.”<sup>2</sup>

Discipline in the church is not punishment. It is discipline and discipline is designed to train and restore.

## **The Pattern and Basis for Discipline**

(1) The discipline of the church is first patterned after the fact that *the Lord Himself disciplines His children* ([Heb. 12:6](#)) and, as a father delegates part of the discipline of the children to the mother, so the Lord has delegated the discipline of the church family to the church itself ([1 Cor. 5:12-13](#); [2 Cor. 2:6](#)).

(2) Discipline is further based on *the holy character of God* ([1 Pet. 1:16](#); [Heb. 12:11](#)). The pattern of God’s holiness—His desire for the church to be holy, set apart unto Him—is an important reason for the necessity of church discipline. The church is therefore to clean out the leaven of malice and wickedness from its ranks ([1 Cor. 5:6-8](#)). A failure to exercise discipline in the church evidences a lack of awareness of and concern for the holiness of God.

(3) Church discipline is to be patterned after and based on *the divine commands of Scripture* ([1 Cor. 4:6](#)). We have numerous passages of Scripture which both command and give us God’s directives on the how, why, when, and where of church discipline. Again, a failure to exercise this responsibility demonstrates a lack of obedience and belief in the authority of the Bible ([1 Cor. 5:1-13](#); [Matt. 18:17-18](#); [Titus 3:10](#); [2 Thess. 3:6-15](#); [1 Tim. 5:20](#); [Gal. 6:1](#)).

(4) Another basis for the necessity of church discipline is *the testimony of the church in the world* ([1 Pet. 4:13-19](#)). The world observes the behavior and life of the church. When the church acts no differently than the world, it loses its credibility and authenticity ([1 Pet. 2:11-18](#); [3:8-16](#); [4:1-4](#)).

## **The Purposes of Church Discipline**

(1) To bring glory to God and enhance the testimony of the flock.

- (2) To restore, heal, and build up sinning believers ([Matt. 18:15](#); [2 Thess. 3:14-15](#); [Heb. 12:10-13](#); [Gal. 6:1-2](#); [Jam. 5:20](#)).
- (3) To produce a healthy faith, one sound in doctrine ([Tit. 1:13](#); [1 Tim. 1:19-20](#)).
- (4) To win a soul to Christ, if the sinning person is only a professing Christian ([2 Tim. 2:24-26](#)).
- (5) To silence false teachers and their influence in the church ([Tit. 1:10-11](#)).
- (6) To set an example for the rest of the body and promote godly fear ([1 Tim. 5:20](#)).
- (7) To protect the church against the destructive consequences that occur when churches fail to carry out church discipline. A church that fails to exercise discipline experiences four losses:

- **The Loss of Purity:** Church discipline is vital to the purity of the local body and its protection from moral decay and impure doctrinal influences. Why? Because a little leaven leavens the entire lump ([1 Cor. 5:6-7](#)). This is the “rotten apple” problem or the “snowball” effect.

An illustration of this is the Corinthian church which showed a lack of concern for purity. They neglected the responsibility to discipline and suffered as a result. Their insensitivity to one moral issue may have led to their compromise on other issues. Laney writes, “The Corinthians engaged in lawsuits, misused their liberty, profaned the Lord’s Supper, neglected the primacy of love, failed to regulate the use of their gifts, and questioned the resurrection.”<sup>3</sup> Failure in church discipline in Corinth could be compared to a snowball tumbling downhill.

- **The Loss of Power:** Sin in the life of the church grieves the person of the Holy Spirit and quenches His power. If sin remains unchecked by the loving application of church discipline in a body of believers, the Holy Spirit must abandon such a church to its own carnal resources. The unavoidable result will be the loss of the Lord’s blessing until the sin is dealt with.

The defeat of Israel because of the sin of Achan in [Joshua 7](#) illustrates the principle. This is just as true for the church today, especially when we know certain things exist but ignore them or simply look the other way because it is difficult to deal with or because it involves one of our friends and we do not want to risk causing problems in the relationship.

- **The Loss of Progress:** A church that refuses to practice church discipline will see its ministry decline. The church may want to grow and reach out and it may try all kinds of stop gap measures, promotional campaigns, and programs in an attempt to turn things around, but if there is sin in the camp, it will all be to no avail. See [Revelation 2:5](#) and 3:16 for illustrations of this principle.
- **The Loss of Purpose:** As His ambassadors to a lost and dying world, God has called the church to be a holy people, a people who, standing out as distinct from the world, proclaim the excellencies of the works of God in Christ ([1 Pet. 1:14-16](#); 2:9-15). If this is to occur, we must be different from the world and church discipline helps us to both remember and maintain that purpose. One of the recurring judgments against the church today as demonstrated in various

polls taken across the country is the fact there is little or no difference between the church and the secular world when it comes to attitudes, values, morals, and lifestyle. We have lost our sense of purpose.

## **The Practice of Church Discipline**

### ***The Manner***

The above goals or purposes automatically govern the spirit in which all disciplinary action is to be given. Thus:

(1) Discipline must be done by those who are spiritual, truly walking by the Holy Spirit and growing in the Lord ([Gal. 6:1](#)).

(2) Discipline must be done in a spirit of humility, gentleness and patience, looking to ourselves lest we too be tempted ([Gal. 6:1-2](#); [2 Tim. 2:24-25](#)).

(3) Discipline must be done without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality ([1 Tim. 5:21](#)).

(4) Those who walk disorderly are to be admonished, warned, and appealed to in love ([1 Thess. 5:14-15](#); [1 Tim. 5:1-2](#); [Eph. 4:15](#); [2 Tim. 4:2](#)). This admonishing, is not restricted to church leaders, but may be done by any person in the body with another if that person is Spirit controlled and spiritually minded (cf. [1 Thess. 5:14](#) with [Gal. 6:1](#)).

(5) If there is no response in repentance and obedience, then the sinning believer is to be rebuked publicly and members of the body are to withhold intimate fellowship through the process and procedure of group disapproval and social ostracism as prescribed in the next section, Procedures for Church Discipline below ([2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15](#); [Tit. 3:10](#); [1 Tim. 5:20](#)). This action has a two-fold objective:

- It is to indicate to the offender that his/her action has dishonored the Lord and has caused a rupture in the harmony of the body. The goal is always restoration and the person is still to be counted as a brother ([2 Thess. 3:14-15](#)).
- It is to create fear in the rest of the flock as a warning against sin ([1 Tim. 5:20](#)).

(6) If there is still no response in repentance and obedience, the church is to apply the procedures of excommunication as directed in [Matthew 18:17](#).

Several examples of church discipline are found in Scripture. The Corinthian believers were to be “gathered together” in order to take action against the offending brother ([1 Cor. 5:4-5](#); [Rom. 16:17](#); [2 Thess. 3:6-15](#); [Phil. 3:17-19](#)).

This is defined by Paul as “punishment inflicted by the majority” ([2 Cor. 2:6](#)). As a protective measure, we also find that the whole church in Rome and in Thessalonica were to take action with regard to the unruly and schismatic, not just a few ([2 Thess. 3:6-15](#); [Rom. 16:17](#)).

(7) Finally, discipline in the name of our Lord always includes a readiness to forgive. The many or majority who discipline must also be ready and eager to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love to the sinning person ([2 Cor. 2:6-8](#)). (See Procedures for Church Discipline below.)

## ***Reasons for Church Discipline***

In church discipline we must exercise extreme care. Scripture does not warrant the exercise of discipline for an individual’s or a church’s taboos or pet peeves—the “dirty dozen” or the “nasty nine.” Scripture, not our opinions or dislikes, must be the guide for what is sin. Further, we must not become hypocritical or “speck inspectors.”

(1) General Causes: Disorderly conduct, conduct clearly out of line with the prescribed commands of Scripture and which negatively impacts the testimony and unity of the church ([2 Thess. 3:6-15](#)).

(2) Specific Causes:

- Difficulties between members ([Matt. 18:15-17](#)).
- Divisive or factious people causing divisions in the church ([Rom. 16:17-18](#); [Titus 3:9-11](#)).
- Immoral conduct; sins of the type mentioned in [1 Corinthians 5](#) such as incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, swindling, or idle busybodies who refuse to work and run around spreading dissension ([1 Cor. 5:1, 11](#); [2 Thess. 3:10-15](#)).
- False teaching; erroneous teaching and views which concern the fundamentals of the faith and not lesser differences of interpretation ([1 Tim. 1:20](#); [2 Tim. 2:17-18](#); also implied in [Rev. 2:14-16](#); [Phil. 3:2-3, 15-19](#); [Rom. 16:17-18](#)).

The key concerns that guide us in this are: (a) the holy character of God, (b) the testimony of the flock, (c) the effect upon the unity and purity of the flock, and (d) the edification and restoration of the individual.

## **Procedures for Church Discipline**

The scriptural procedure is clear and specific steps are prescribed as follows:

## **Cautions**

If you see the offense or you have accurate knowledge of the sin(s), please note these cautions:

- Be sure it is an offense which calls for discipline and not merely one of our pet peeves. Again, the Word must be our criterion.
- Remember how we too have sinned in the past and heed the warnings of [Galatians 6:1](#).
- Bring the matter before the Lord in prayer before the confrontation takes place ([1 Sam. 8:6](#)).
- Don't procrastinate. The longer the delay, the more difficult the condition can become. Remember the consequences listed above.
- Don't gossip or even talk to others about it in the sense of [Matthew 18:16](#) until you have talked to the sinning believer privately. We must guard and protect the person and the flock from rumors and a slanderous tongue ([Prov. 6:19b](#); 10:19; 11:13; 18:8, 21; 20:19).

## **First Step**

First, seek private correction and/or reconciliation with the offender ([Matt. 18:15](#)). In [Matthew 18:15](#) many manuscripts have "and if your brother sins *against you*, go and reprove him in private."

There has been no little debate as to whether the words "against you" are part of the original manuscripts. The words "against me" in verse 21 may have led a scribe or copyist to personalize the matter in verse 15. Or, one could argue the omission was deliberate in order to generalize the passage. While some important manuscript tradition lacks the words "against you," many feel there is good evidence for their originality. First, the words, "reprove him in private," and second, the question of Peter in verse 21 about forgiving a brother who sins "against me" suggests their inclusion.

Whether the words "against you" were in the original text or not, [Galatians 6:1](#) teaches that believers have a responsibility to confront sin in general in the life of other believers and not just when it is an offense against one's person. It would seem, then that there is a two-fold application:

- (1) When the problem involves one believer sinning against another, there are two problems that need to be taken care of: reconciliation and restoration ([Matt. 5:23-24](#)).
- (2) When the problem involves a believer overcome in or by some sin, as was the case in [Galatians 6:1](#), the need is restoration.

[Matthew 18:16-17](#) should not be limited to the problem of one believer sinning against another in view of [Galatians 6:1](#). So, the one offended or who recognizes the offense or sin is to go privately and try to rectify the problem.

Please note these guidelines:

- (1) Begin by expressing your genuine appreciation for the person and their good qualities to show you are genuinely concerned about their welfare. Then and only then bring up the matter which is of concern.
- (2) In some situations the sin is apparent and there is no question, but we must allow for the possibility that we have misjudged or have wrong information. We must listen to the other person's side of the story and seek the facts in the interest of truth and fairness.
- (3) If the person fails to respond, warn them that, according to the instructions of Scripture ([Matt. 18:16](#)), you will have to get others as witnesses and return with them to deal with the problem.

## ***Second Step***

If the first step fails, take witnesses to strengthen the effect of the discipline, preferably spiritual leaders, so that if it has to be brought before the whole church it can be firmly proven and established ([Matt. 18:16-17](#); [1 Tim. 5:19](#)). The aid of church leadership should be sought if the problem involves an offense that is against the whole body or if it is a threat to the unity of the body.

These initial contacts, private and with witnesses, provide opportunity for loving admonition, correction, and forgiveness. On the other hand, if these first steps do not produce results, it constitutes a warning that further action will be taken and provides occasion for serious rebuke ([2 Tim. 4:2](#); [1 Thess. 5:12-13](#); [Titus 2:15](#); 3:10).

## ***Third Step***

If the second step fails, seek reconciliation and restoration through the whole body. If further action is necessary, it is to be taken before the whole church ([2 Thess. 3:14-15](#); [Matt. 18:17](#); [1 Tim. 5:20](#)).

This action appears to fall into two stages when we combine [2 Thessalonians 3:14](#) and [1 Corinthians 5:9-13](#) with [Matthew 18:17](#).

- (1) The body is to exercise group disapproval by way of social ostracism (refusal to have intimate fellowship).
- (2) If this doesn't work, the local body of believers is to exercise excommunication: removal from church membership, loss of voting privileges, and continuation of the loss of intimate fellowship. This must be approved of and done by the entire congregation ([2 Cor. 2:6](#)).

This is, in essence, the Lord carrying out discipline through the action of the entire body under the leadership of the elders or the spiritually mature ([1 Cor. 5:4](#)). Similar heavenly authority is seen in the ratification of this disciplinary action as spelled out in [Matthew 18:18-19](#).

# Procedures for Restoration

## **Forgiveness**

In keeping with the goal of restoration, the role of the church must change after there is repentance. This means accepting the person and forgetting the past ([2 Cor. 2:7a](#)).

But how do we know when repentance is genuine? What is our responsibility when the sinning party acknowledges their wrong and claims repentance? The following two passages answer this for us.

[Luke 3:8](#), when they “. . . bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance.”

[Acts 26:20](#), “. . . that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”

Genuine repentance will make itself evident by its deeds and attitudes. The repentant person will:

- (1) Freely acknowledge his sin ([1 Jn. 1:9](#); [Prov. 28:13a](#)).
- (2) Cease the activity for which he was disciplined or at least seek help if it's a case of life dominating patterns ([Prov. 28:13b](#); [Gal. 6:1f](#); [Jam. 5:19-20](#)).
- (3) Make restitution and/or ask for forgiveness from those hurt as it is applicable ([Phil. 18-19](#); [Matt. 5:23-24](#)).
- (4) He/she will demonstrate a genuine change of heart, a real concern and godly sorrow over his actions, not in order to be forgiven, but because of the harm caused to the glory of God and the hurt caused others ([2 Cor. 7:8-11](#); [Ps. 51:17](#)).
- (5) He/she will begin to manifest the fruit of the Spirit and a concern for the things of Christ ([Gal. 5:22f](#)).

## **Comfort**

This means reaching out to them, assuring them of your support, and encouraging, exhorting, and challenging them to move on ([2 Cor. 2:7b](#)).

## **Love**

This means including them, drawing them close, doing for them that which will aid their growth and complete recovery ([2 Cor. 2:8](#)). This would include encouraging them to get involved in ministry ([Luke 22:31-32](#)). For positions of leadership, there should be a time of testing to demonstrate their qualifications after the analogy of [1 Timothy 3:10](#).

For excellent and more complete studies on this subject, see (1) *A Guide to Church Discipline*, by Carl Laney, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1985, and (2) *Healing the Wounded, The Costly Love of Church Discipline*, by John White and Ken Blue, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985.

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1 R. C. Sproul, *In Search of Dignity*, Regal Books, 1983, p. 182.

2 Carl Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline*, Bethany House Publishers, p. 14.

3 Ibid., p. 20.