

# Grace Community Church

## Church Discipline and Restoration Policy

Approved by elders: 08-21-24

### **I. We believe...**

- a. Church discipline occurs with the goal and for the purpose of repentance and restoration.
- b. Church discipline ends and restoration begins at the point of repentance.
- c. Restoration can be eventually allowed to the repentant person in most situations.
- d. The active elder board will be fully informed in cases of unrepentance.
- e. The authority to carry out church discipline (beyond Mt. 18:15) rests with the elders.

### **II. Grounds for Elder involvement in church discipline:**

- a. Sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1-13)
- b. Unresolved major personal conflicts (Matt. 18:15-20)
- c. Divisiveness and Gossiping (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10; 3Jn 10; 2Cor 12:20-13:2,10;)
- d. False teaching (Gal 1:8,9; 1Tim 1:20; 6:3-5; 2 Jn 9-11; Rev 2:14-16).
- e. Grave illegalities (Rom 13:1).
- f. Gross neglect of responsibilities within the family (1Tim 5:8).
- g. Separation and/or divorce on non-biblical grounds (Mt 5:32).

### **III. Levels of Church Discipline:**

(Note: These five Scriptural levels of church discipline are not meant to be seen as exhaustive regarding the various things that can be done to turn a person from sin. Constant prayer and the Holy Spirit must guide us to what might bring about true repentance.)

#### **A. Level One: *one on one***

Those who have firsthand knowledge of the sin in the body of Christ, must reprove them privately (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15; Luke 17:3). If they listen to you and repent, you have won them over.

#### **B. Level Two: *two or three witnesses***

If they continue, reprove them with two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matt 18:16). This could happen several times (2Cor 12:20-13:2,10). As long as there is movement, continue confrontation at this level. If they repent, you have won them. If they persist in unrepentance and they are involved in a FAMILY group, contact the pastoral staff over discipleship ministries, who will determine if this needs to move forward to the elder board. If the elders are needed, at least two elders will investigate the matter and will recommend and (if approved by the active board) carry out biblical confrontation with the full weight and authority of the entire active board (Mt. 18:18).

#### **C. Level Three: *reprove before the church***

If they are still unrepentant, warn them of their pending excommunication (Mt 18:17-18; 1Cor 5:1,5,7,13). After prayer, the active elder board will revoke their right and privilege to the Lord's table and will reprove them before the church. \* (Mt 18:17-18; 1Tim 5:20; 1Cor 5:2).

\* When this admonition was written in Scripture, the communities being addressed were much smaller than the typical American church today. They were house churches where everyone would have known each other, and unrepentant sin would easily ripple through the entire community. Therefore, the entire community would need to be notified of the reproof. Today, reproving one person before a congregation of 400+ doesn't make sense, because 90% of the people would not know them. Reproof would be more effective in the context of their FAMILY group or ministry teams where they are known and involved. Reproof before the entire church would likely cause more confusion than it would bring help. An exception in this case would be if this person were in leadership at a high level in the church, such as staff or elder, or if their persistent sin made them a danger to the greater congregation.

**D. Level Four: *excommunication***

If they continue, the elders will excommunicate/disfellowship them (Mt. 18:17; 1Cor. 5:1-5, 2Thess 3:14-15, 1Tim 1:20).). A copy of the statement that will be published to the congregation\* will be given to them (2Thess 3:14-15). After prayer, the active elder board will proceed to remove their name from the covenantor rolls (Mt 18:17-18; 1Tim 5:20; 1Cor 5:2) and will inform the covenantors of this action.

**E. Level Five: *turn away from them***

If they continue, turn away from them (Rom 16:17-19; 2Thess. 3:6) and do not associate with them (Mt 18:17-18, 1Cor 5:7,9-13; 1Tim 1:20). Turn them over to Satan (1Cor 5:5). If they go to another church, the elders are obligated to inform the other church.