



**CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES  
FOR  
MOUNTAIN VIEW COMMUNITY CHURCH**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The subject matter of this document is difficult to address. There are intense emotions and potentially large consequences when policies of church discipline and restoration are implemented. Before such policies and procedures are implemented there must be careful research, a course of study that spans the breadth of the Scriptures, constant prayer, a sharpening of understanding between the brethren, and, above all, a humble spirit that seeks the Lord's glory and will in the writing process. It is hoped that the presence of these qualities results in a product that balances truth and grace just as our Lord Jesus did during His time here on earth. Above all the aforementioned qualities, there must be a core attitude of love that emanates from the heart so that every aspect of the discipline and restoration process has the best interests of the Lord, the church, and the individual believer in mind at all times (1 Peter 4:8).

Church discipline and restoration are consistent with the purposes of the Church—revealing God's holiness and glory (Ephesians 3:10), bringing believers toward maturity (Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:13), and protecting the reputation of the Lord and His Kingdom as they are portrayed by His church (1 Corinthians 11:22). Church discipline and restoration are to be viewed as a part of the maturation process as it ministers to those within the body of Christ who are dominated by or are struggling with an area of sin so that they may experience healing and growth.

It should be noted here that church discipline at Mountain View Community Church (MVCC) applies to church members and those willing to voluntarily place themselves under MVCC's discipline process for the purposes of restoration. All references to believers in this document assume membership or voluntary submission on the part of the person under discipline and restoration.

**PART I - CHURCH DISCIPLINE:**  
**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR**  
**MOUNTAIN VIEW COMMUNITY CHURCH**

***James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. NIV***

The purpose of this section is to provide clarity and guidelines for the disciplining of believers, by the church, for those who have fallen into sin. This statement itself requires some clarification. The following definitions will help to further define the nature and scope of this section of this document:

Initial Definitions of Terms as They Pertain to This Section of The Document:

**“Believers”** – Refers to any person who professes to have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 5:14; 1 Tim 4:12). It signifies those who have exercised saving faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ and who, as a result, have obtained a position as being a part of God's family "in Christ" (Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:3; etc.). As for determining who is a believer and who is not, it should be noted that it is not the position of the Church or any individual to judge another individual's salvation status, instead the Church must operate on the basis of the confession of the individual (Romans 10:9-10).

**“Discipline”** - To train by instruction and through consequences (1 Corinthians 9:27). The biblical concept of discipline has both a positive side (instruction, knowledge, and training) and a negative aspect (correction, punishment, and rebuke). Those who refuse to submit to God's positive discipline by obeying His laws will experience God's negative discipline. Chastisement is another term often used in conjunction with discipline. Chastisement is the administration of punishment for the purposes of restoration. It usually refers to punishment administered for the purposes of: education, instruction, and training (Job 4:3; Psalms 6:7); corrective guidance (II Timothy 2:25); and, discipline, in the sense of corrective punishment (Proverbs 22:15; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19).

**“Sin”** – Can be defined as “lawlessness” (1 John 3:4) or transgression of God's will, either by omitting to do what God's word (law) requires or by committing what it forbids. The transgression can occur in thought (1 John 3:15), word (Matthew 5:22), or deed (Romans 1:32).<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, however, the type of sin referred to is of a type that is deemed by the Church to be egregious (serious in action and potential consequences), public (openly affecting others in the Body of Christ to some degree), and rebellious (a transgression willfully and knowingly committed, and without repentance) as judged by the shepherds of the Church.

### The Origins and Basis for Discipline

The concept of church discipline originates with the fact that the Lord Himself disciplines His people (Hebrews 12:6). The Lord has delegated the discipline of the church family to the Church itself (I Corinthians 5:12-13; II Corinthians 2:6). Discipline is further based on the character of God (1 Peter 1:16; Hebrews 12:11). In The pattern of God's holiness, His desire for the Church to be holy is an important reason for the necessity of church discipline. A failure to exercise discipline in the church evidences a lack of awareness of and concern for the holiness of God, His Church, and His people. Church discipline is to be patterned after the commands of Scripture (1 Corinthians 4:6). There are numerous passages of Scripture that both command and present us God's directives on the how, why, when, and where of church discipline. Failure to exercise this responsibility demonstrates a lack of obedience (I Corinthians 5:1-13; Matthew 18:17-18; Titus 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; I Timothy 5:20; Galatians 6:1). Another reason for the necessity of church discipline is the testimony of the Church in the world (I Peter 4:13-19). The world observes the behavior and life of the Church and its members. When the Church or its members act no differently than the world, its credibility is lost (1 Peter 2:11-18; 3:8-16; 4:1-4).

### The Purposes of Church Discipline

Discipline brings glory to God and extends the influence of its members into the world. It restores, heals, and builds up believers struggling with sin (Matthew 18:15; II Thessalonians 3:14-15; Hebrews 12:10-13; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:20). It produces a healthy faith, one sound in doctrine (Titus 1:13; 1 Timothy 1:19-20). It sets an example for the rest of the body and promotes godly fear (I Timothy 5:20). It protects the church against the destructive consequences that occur when churches fail to carry out church discipline. A church that fails to exercise discipline experiences loss of purity (1 Corinthians 5:6-7), loss of progress (Revelation 2:5 and 3:16), and loss of purpose (1 Peter 1:14-16; 2:9-15).

### The Spirit of Church Discipline

All disciplinary action is to be administered by those in the church who are spiritual, walking by the Holy Spirit, and growing in the Lord (Galatians 6:1). Discipline must be done in a spirit of humility, gentleness and patience, with circumspect attitudes so that those who are administering the discipline are not tempted as well (Galatians 6:1-2; II Timothy 2:24-25). Discipline must be administered without favoritism or partiality (I Timothy 5:21).

Those who continue to live rebelliously in sin are to be admonished, warned, and appealed to in love (I Thessalonians 5:14-15; I Timothy 5:1-2; Ephesians 4:15; II Timothy 4:2). Admonishing is the responsibility of every believer in the Body of Christ (Colossians 3:16). The purpose of admonishment is to indicate to the

offender that their sin has dishonored the Lord and has resulted in disruption in the unity or witness of the Body of Christ. A primary goal of admonishment or church discipline is the restoration and reconciliation of a member of God's family to fellowship (II Thessalonians 3:14-15, I Corinthians 5:5) and ministry.

### Reasons for Church Discipline

Great care must be exercised in the administration of church discipline. Scripture, not opinion or positions on debatable matters, must be the guide for determining sin. Discipline should be administered only when a professed believer's conduct is unmistakably out of line with the prescribed behaviors of Scripture and is therefore, negatively impacting the testimony and unity of the church (II Thessalonians 3:6-15). Scripture instructs us to administer discipline when there are difficulties between members (Matthew 18:15-20), when a divisive or factious person is causing divisions in the church (Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-11), when a person falls into immoral conduct (e.g., incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, swindling, gossip or those who spread dissension) (I Corinthians 5:1, 11; II Thessalonians 3:10-15), and when a person is spreading false teaching (I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 2:17-18).

### The Procedures for Church Discipline

**Matthew 18:15-20 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." NIV**

1. Step One - Any believer who becomes aware of the need for admonishment in another believer's life must first seek private correction and/or reconciliation with the offender (Matthew 18:15). Admonishing requires preparation. The believer who is considering admonishing another must bring the matter before the Lord in prayer before the confrontation takes place in order to seek wisdom and ascertain whether they have pure motives and heart in the matter (James 1:5; Matthew 7:1-5; Galatians 6:1-2). Those who would seek to admonish another must make sure that the offense calls for discipline (Romans 14:1-4). Gossip and/or talking to others about the person is unbiblical. Until the sinning believer has been sought out and talked to privately one should refrain

from talking to others concerning the situation (Matthew 18:16). The offending person must be guarded and protected from rumors and possible gossip (Proverbs 11:13). There may be times when one might seek out godly counsel concerning a situation (to discern if admonishment is indeed in order) without revealing names or specifics. The caution against gossip, however, remains a priority.

2. Step Two – It is good for the believer who seeks to admonish to express their genuine appreciation for the other person to demonstrate that they are genuinely concerned about the other person's welfare. Only after genuine concern and love has been established does one bring up the matter of concern. In some situations, the sin is apparent and there is no question, but those admonishing must allow for the possibility that they have misjudged or have wrong information. It is imperative to listen to the other person's side of the story and seek the facts in the interest of truth and fairness (Proverbs 18:15, 19:2). If it is clear that the person is in error and they fail to respond with repentance, let them know that, according to the instructions of Scripture (Matthew 18:16), the next step in the process is to have others from the church hear both sides of the issue and discern whether further action is necessary.
3. Step Three - If the one-to-one conversation did not have a satisfactory result and, in the view of the believer called to give admonishment, sin persists, one or two other impartial parties (Matthew 18:16) will be called upon to discern the correct course of action after hearing both sides of the issue (either exoneration or a second call to repentance). These two "witnesses", in the view of MVCC, should be as Elder or Deacon, qualified individuals (1 Timothy 3:1-9, Titus 1:5-9) who will therefore be able to render mature, biblical, and wise decisions regarding the matter. The witnesses will practice the same concepts as outlined in step two above in assessing the situation. If the witnesses determine that repentance is indeed called for, they too, out of love will call the offending believer to repentance and offer to help them in the process of restoration (see part two of this document for the restoration process). This second call to repentance comes with a warning that there are further steps to pursue out of love and concern for the individual's restoration (Titus 2:15; 3:10).
4. Step Four - If the witnesses have come to the conclusion that a call to repentance is called for, and the offending believer chooses not to repent, and it is agreed that sin persists, the matter is to be taken to the church body for further deliberation and final discernment (again exoneration or a third call to repentance) (Matthew 18:17). At MVCC, representatives of the body (the ruling body or Pastoral staff as appropriate) are called upon to pronounce the judgment of the church body. If the presence of sin is affirmed by the representatives of MVCC, then church discipline is to follow. Since the offending party refuses to

repent, church discipline may consist of; removal from leadership, and/or ministry, and/or fellowship with the church. The offending believer at this point becomes a potential candidate for restoration in the future.

5. Step Five – Having diligently performed the previous four steps, an individual who has been deemed to be in rebellious sin must be disciplined by the Church. This discipline, as noted above, may come in several forms. Such cases require that the Church be informed (Matthew 18:17). At MVCC, informing the Church consists of informing the ruling body, entering the discipline in the church record, and if deemed appropriate by the church leadership, public disclosure to the congregation in a manner that “speaks the truth in love.” Should the individual later repent and seek restoration, that too, requires the informing of the church ruling body, an entering into the record of the individual's repentance and the beginning of the restoration process. At the time the restoration of the individual is deemed complete, a third informing of the ruling body, entering into the record and if appropriate, public disclosure is in order. This should be done with great joy and grace since this is the goal of all church discipline and restoration (II Corinthians 2:6-11).

#### What is Entailed in Church Discipline?

When church discipline is considered there are many questions and practical implications to be considered. At MVCC, church discipline is limited, but powerful. Removal from ministry and fellowship seems to be the scope of discipline the Lord has conferred upon the Church when disciplining a member of the Body. The practical nature of that discipline is defined below:

- ❑ **Removal from Church Leadership** – If those given the authority and responsibility of making a final decision on the matter of discipline so decide, then the individual will be relieved of ministry leadership and commensurate responsibilities (I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 3:10). Ministry leadership is defined as: “A ministry position in which an individual has authority over other members of the Body of Christ.” This includes team leadership, teaching positions, and leadership positions which are involved in decision-making within any ministry in the Church.
- ❑ **Removal from Ministry Positions** - If those given the authority and responsibility of making a final decision on the matter of discipline so decide, then the individual will be relieved from positions of ministry service and commensurate responsibilities (I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 3:10). Ministry positions are defined as: “A position in which an individual offers service of any sort to the church and others in a way officially affirmed and defined by the church.” This

includes team membership, membership on service boards or committees, and any other positions which are involved serving the Body of Christ.

- ❑ **Removal from Fellowship** - If those given the authority and responsibility of making a final decision on the matter of discipline so deem, then the individual will be relieved of fellowship and commensurate privileges (I Corinthians 5:1-13). These privileges include but are not limited to the following: 1) Official membership at MVCC; 2) Voting privileges at MVCC; 3) Sanctioned taking of communion at MVCC (I Corinthians 5:11); 4) Loss of building use privileges at MVCC; and 5) Attendance at official MVCC functions (worship services and other church functions) if the ruling body so decides for safety or other reasons (I Corinthians 5:12).

#### Conclusion to Part I: Church Discipline

It is an earnest prayer that those who enter into this ministry (a serious and weighty process) would be filled with God's Spirit, wisdom, and discernment. One of God's greatest desires is to maintain the purity and holiness of His church. Church discipline is a difficult but necessary, part of that call to purity. Like a parent disciplining their child, church discipline hurts the hearts of those disciplining, as well as those being disciplined. Such hurt is a good indicator that discipline is being administered in love as it should be. May the Lord be pleased with MVCC's effort to fulfill His purpose in this matter.

**PART II - CHURCH RESTORATION**  
**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR**  
**MOUNTAIN VIEW COMMUNITY CHURCH**

***Galatians 6:1-2 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ. NIV***

The purpose of this section is to provide clarity and guidelines for the restoration of those who have fallen out of fellowship with God, the Church (in particular MVCC), and other believers, due to sin. The previous statement requires some clarification in and of itself. The following definitions will help to further define the nature and scope of this document:

Initial Definitions of Terms as They Pertain to This Section of This Document:

**“Fallen out of fellowship”** – This refers to the removal, or potential removal, of an individual from the leadership, ministry, and/or membership of MVCC. Though we recognize that all believers sin and, as a result, their fellowship with God and other believers is strained (1 John 1:5-10; Matthew 6:14-15), falling out of fellowship in this paper refers to the believer's relationship to the corporate Body of Christ here at MVCC.

**“Sin”** – Can be defined as “lawlessness” (1 John 3:4) or transgression of God's will, either by omitting to do what God's law requires or by committing what it forbids. The transgression can occur in thought (1 John 3:15), word (Matthew 5:22), or deed (Romans 1:32).<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this document, however, the type of sin referred to is sin, deemed by the church to be egregious (serious in action and potential consequences), public (affecting others openly in the Body of Christ to some degree), and rebellious (a transgression willfully and knowingly committed) as judged by the shepherds of the church.

**“Restoration”** – From Galatians 6:1 we learn that to restore one who has fallen is to mend what is broken so that they are equipped and strengthened for useful service. This concept includes the idea of returning one to right ethical standing, and repairing damage done so that, if possible, they are returned to original standing.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this document, therefore, the aim or goal of restoration is to bring the believer back into fellowship with the Body of Christ, restoring them to fellowship, ministry, and leadership as warranted by the process such as is appropriate and practical given individual circumstances.

**“Ministry”** – Service rendered to God through the appointment and sanctioning of MVCC.

**“Leadership”** - Service rendered to God through the appointment and sanctioning of MVCC in which the believer has authority and responsibility for the execution of a ministry venture of the Church.

#### Situations Leading Up to the Restoration Process

Before restoration can be considered, several sets of circumstances must have occurred. Though each of these circumstances warrants individual treatment, the scope of this section of this document only allows for cursory explanation (for further explanation of church discipline see part one of this document). The first of these circumstances is the discovery and confrontation of sin that results in falling from fellowship and subsequent church discipline. Key passages of scripture regarding this situation are Matthew 18:15-20, Galatians 6:1-5, and James 5:19-20. Since these passages contain key principles, they are listed here in the body of the document.

***Matthew 18:15-20 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." NIV***

From this passage we observe the pattern and process for confronting sin as spoken by our Lord Himself. Initially, a one-to-one meeting with the hope of resolving the issue is ideal. If that attempt fails and sin persists, one or two other impartial parties are brought together to discern the correct course of action (either exoneration or a second call to repentance). If that fails and it is agreed that sin persists, the matter is to be taken to the church body for further deliberation and final discernment (again exoneration or a third call to repentance). At First Baptist Church representatives (ruling body or Pastoral staff as appropriate) are called to pronounce the judgment of the church. If the presence of sin is affirmed, then church discipline is to follow. Since the offending party refuses to repent, church discipline may consist of removal from leadership, and/or ministry, and/or fellowship with the church. The offending believer then becomes a potential candidate for restoration in the future.

***Galatians 6:1-5 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5 for each one should carry his own load. NIV***

In the preceding passage several principles should be noted as it pertains to the discipline process. The first is that only those who are clearly in sin are candidates for restoration. The caution that must be taken is that sin worthy of church discipline must be unequivocal in nature. The sin must be definable, scripturally justified, and agreed upon by those who are spiritually mature and discerning. Furthermore, those spiritual individuals must have a circumspect perspective of their own spiritual standing and a humility that qualifies them to be appropriately discerning and suited to the situation at hand.

***James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. NIV***

This passage brings with it the clear charge to confront sin in the Body of Christ. Too often, sin is not confronted to the detriment of the Body (see I Corinthians 5:1-13). The effects of ignoring sin in the Body of Christ are serious, loss of unity, loss of purity, diminishing of the Church's holiness, and bringing shame to the person of Christ are among some of the ramifications. A second principle that can be construed from this passage is the goal of confronting sin; namely, restoration (the covering or healing of sin). If the goal of confronting sin is anything other than for these reasons, the confronters are in sin themselves.

These passages lead up to the beginning of the restoration process. The purpose of the following sections is to provide scriptural guidelines and principles for effecting the restoration of a fallen believer.

### The Responsibilities and Characteristics of Each Party in the Restoration Process

For the fallen believer seeking restoration:

- ❑ Humility – Scripture indicates that most, if not all, sin has pride as its root (see Proverbs 11:2, 16:18, 29:23). The biblical antidote to the disease of pride that leads to sin is humility (I Peter 5:5). It is the ongoing demonstration of humility (in word, deed and attitude) by the fallen believer that will help his restoration team discern where the believer is in the process of restoration.

- ❑ Submission and obedience – Submission and obedience to God and spiritual leadership are essential for the fallen to pursue restoration (Hebrews 13:17, Proverbs 5:12-14). This characteristic is closely related to humility. The willingness of the fallen believer to submit demonstrates the commitment and genuineness of the fallen's heart to turn from sin and follow the Lord.
- ❑ Transparency – The fallen must be willing to be transparent regarding their thoughts, attitudes, and daily lives in the restoration process (Ephesians 4:22-25). Accountability is only effective if all parties involved are willing to be open and honest in the restoration process.
- ❑ Patience – The passing of time is crucial in this process so that the heart of the believer seeking restoration may be discerned (Luke 7:35, Matthew 7:16-20). People can be expert at deceiving others for a short period, but the test of time reveals a person's true heart condition. The fallen believer who is humble and submissive will understand the need for time to pass before full or final restoration can occur. That person will agree that reputation, character, and prudence in the restoration process will require a significant period of time to be established (more on time periods later).
- ❑ Prayer – The fallen believer seeking restoration will be committed to prayer (as every believer should be). Prayer aids the believer in developing and maintaining each of the four character qualities mentioned above (James 5:13, Colossians 4:2, Philippians 4:6-7, Romans 12:12), and is an indispensable part of the restoration process.

For the Church and the Church's designated restoration team members:

- ❑ Spiritually mature and equipped – The members of the restoration team must be mature in their faith (Galatians 6:1) and equipped to meet the unique needs of the situation at hand (I Peter 4:10). Each restoration team therefore is a specifically designed and designated group of believers who are mature and equipped to help in the specific circumstance addressed.
- ❑ Purposeful in objective – The Church must maintain God's perspective regarding restoration. It is not a battle of the wills. It is not an attempt to exact punishment or revenge. It is a firm, but gentle, process by which a fallen believer is brought back into fellowship with the Body of Christ through repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and eventual restoration in relationships and appropriate service to God (I Corinthians 5:4-5, II Corinthians 2:7-9, and Philemon 11).
- ❑ Committed to prayer – We are commanded to pray for those who seek healing (James 5:16, I John 5:16). Prayer provides the opportunity for self-examination (to insure the team members hearts are in line with God's), for God's will to be revealed (through his Holy Spirit who guides us- John 16:13), and for God's wisdom (which is crucial in dealing with difficult situations- James 1:5).

- ❑ To be of godly character and repute – Given the seriousness of the situations that will be involved in the restoration process, it seems prudent that the restoration team members be believers of overseer caliber. Such individuals should meet the criteria outlined in Scripture (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9), whether they are actual overseers in the church administration or not. The matters that will warrant the restoration process being addressed here will be difficult in several regards, including accountability, discernment, wisdom, and sound doctrine. These are just a few of the facets that will require maturity of faith and holiness.

These are the responsibilities, and characteristics of each party in the restoration process. In one sense, the restoration process becomes a covenant in which an individual and the church (through the restoration team) agree to walk together down a path of healing. This course of action results in a believer, who had rebelliously sinned, finding restoration to the Body of Christ. Both parties must agree to perform their roles and responsibilities if biblical restoration is to take place.

#### The Process of Biblical Restoration

1. Step one - An expressed desire to be restored by the fallen believer – This may occur when the believer has been confronted in regard to their sin or at a later time when they have been convicted by the Spirit to remedy their situation (rebellion). This desire on the part of the fallen believer would include several facets that demonstrate their heart in this situation. The first of these facets is a humility that admits to sin without excuse or attempted justification. The second is a clear expression of repentance - a desire to turn from their sin and turn to holiness. Finally, there is a commitment to the process of restoration, knowing that the process is long and difficult with no guaranty of results and no promise of removed consequences.
2. Step two - Assembly of a restoration **team** – This principle is drawn from Galatians 6:1, where those who are to restore are referred to in the plural.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the principle of the Body of Christ functioning as a unit, with each part fulfilling its role, should also be noted. Thus, a group of qualified and gifted individuals would be asked to come together as this individual's restoration team. Believers to be considered for the team should be willing to be committed to the process and to the individual seeking restoration. The believer seeking restoration does not have to know each member of the team personally, nor will they always desire some team members, but this process is for their restoration not for their comfort. This does not mean consideration is not given to personalities and commonality, for while a good fit is always desirable, it may not always be possible. The church is concerned with restoration which is seldom easy or pleasant.

3. Step three - Public Confession – James 5:16 calls on believers to “confess to one another”, again using the plural. This is not confession to God alone, this is confession before others. The public confession referred to here is the gathering of the restoration team and the confession of sin (again, without excuse or attempted justification), expression of repentance, and stated desire to be restored by the fallen believer. This confession serves several purposes:
  - a. It provides understanding to the restoration team regarding the nature and scope of the sin from which the believer is seeking restoration.
  - b. It demonstrates some of the qualities needed on the part of the believer seeking restoration, namely, humility and transparency.
  - c. It allows the group to immediately begin the forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration process.
4. Step four - Ongoing accountability (confession and prayer) – This principle is drawn from James 5:16 again. The verbs confess and pray, in Greek, are both in the present middle imperative. This grammatical form indicates an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Applying this principle to the restoration process indicates regular meeting times of confession and prayer, (daily, weekly, or as the situation merits) by the group. It should also be noted that this is a call that cuts both ways. The team members are accountable to one another and to the seeker of restoration. Do not ask a question unless you are prepared to answer the same question about yourself.
5. Step five - Biblical discovery – Since the path away from sin and to righteousness is inextricably linked with the “renewing of the mind” (Romans 12:1-2), and since one crucial factor to this process is God's communication through His Word, it will be vital for the group to move through a course of study in order to facilitate the life change that is a part of the restoration process. It is recommended that the course of study be specifically designed to aide the believer seeking restoration through their process, taking into account specific issues and needs pertinent to his situation.
6. Step six - Time – As mentioned earlier, time is a crucial element in the restoration process. The restoration to fellowship begins immediately upon confession and repentance. If restoration to ministry and leadership is considered, it will require longer periods of time so that trust and character may be established. Nowhere in the Scriptures does God communicate specific time frames for restoration to ministry or leadership, however, the requirements of such positions (1 Timothy 3:1-12) could possibly preclude further consideration for such positions depending upon the individual situation. This is quite possibly due to the fact that no two situations are precisely the same, nor are any two people. Restoration will vary by offense, individual progress, and the leading of the Spirit among

the restoration team. It is with a confident degree of certainty that it can be said that restoration will take a substantial period of time before restoration to ministry or leadership can take place.

7. Step seven - Graduated Service – This concept involves a step-by-step growth process by which the believer, seeking restoration, is reintegrated back into the fellowship, followed by ministry and leadership (if deemed appropriate by the restoration team and the church leadership). I Timothy 3:1-13 outlines the character and actions of one qualified for ministry and leadership. Therefore, this pattern serves as a paradigm for restoration purposes. When considering the restoration of a believer, the restoration team should consider the passages in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 before recommending the candidate for ministry and/or leadership roles. Two phrases from the passages are worth noting:
  - a. “not be a recent convert” – This phrase corroborates the concept of the passage of time before restoration. Having sinned, the believer must re-establish trust, reputation, and character with the church before entering into service. The amount of time will vary with the type of ministry proposed and the nature of the believer’s offence. Each new or additional ministry considered should result in a revisiting of these passages for the good of the believer and the church.
  - b. “a good reputation with outsiders” – This aspect of the restoration process must also be considered. An application of this principle includes the perception of others in the restoration process. This involves a judgment by the restoration team and the church because there will always be those who will judge harshly. Nevertheless, input from individuals in the Body of Christ must be seriously considered if we are preserve unity in the Body. Furthermore, there may be insights or information of which the team and the church should be aware.
8. Step Eight - Levels of restoration considered: Scripture and church life seem to imply levels of restoration. These, in graduated order, are:
  - a. Restoration to Fellowship – The rejoining of the believer seeking restoration to the corporate Body of Christ in worship and membership. This can take place as the believer expresses confession, repentance, a desire for reconciliation, and for restoration (Ephesians 4:32, I John 1:9, I Peter 3:13-14, I Corinthians 2:6-8).
  - b. Restoration to Ministry – Nowhere does scripture indicate that a fallen believer forfeits spiritual giftedness because of sin; nor does scripture indicate that a fallen believer is permanently disqualified from ministry because of sin. By the same token, scripture does not command a return to ministry either. This becomes a matter of spiritual discernment and judgment on the part of the restoration

team in conjunction with the church leadership. It seems that the church and team must, therefore, seek wisdom from God (James 1:5) in making a prudent decision in this aspect of restoration. It should be noted that a fallen believer does not have to enter the same ministries they served in prior to falling. This area seems to rest solely with the discretion of the Body of Christ's leadership.

- c. Restoration to Leadership – It is in this arena that the passages in I Timothy 3:1-9 and Titus 1:6-9 must be closely considered. Leadership in the church is not to be taken lightly. It seems prudent to indicate that this level of restoration would take a considerable period of time and testing before such a step would be considered.

### The Decision Making Process for the Restoration Team

Deciding the fate of another believer's standing in the Body of Christ is a great responsibility. How does one discern when another believer is restored to each of the levels discussed? What does one look for in the believer's life when making this decision? What are the pitfalls that any team member may encounter in this process? When is the process complete? In the following paragraphs, insights to these questions will be shared that, hopefully, will facilitate the answers to these questions.

- ❑ *When is the process complete?* Looking back to the passage in James 5:16, the believer's struggle with sin is never complete. The present middle imperative grammar of "confess" and "pray" in the passage indicates that there is no endpoint to this process. It may mean that there is an easing in the process as time progresses, but one should be willing to continue, in some fashion, and to "bear up" alongside the fellow believer.
- ❑ *What are the pitfalls that any team member may encounter in this process?* Galatians 6:1-5, helps to answer this question. The sentence "Each one should test his own actions," comes into play. Every believer, especially those on the restoration team, needs to be aware of their own spiritual standing and temptations. The passage in James 5:16 calls on every believer to confess to **one another**. It then becomes important that each team member have accountability of their own so that they are not hindered or ineffective in helping the believer seeking restoration. This accountability may occur within the team or in another setting, but it seems indispensable in this process.
- ❑ *What does one look for in the believer's life when making this decision?* In Colossians 1:10, Scripture proclaims that fruit is the evidence that one should look for in each believer's life. Fruit takes time and cultivation. Look for the evidence in the believer's life, words, attitudes and works. The composite of these will give the restoration team a good basis for making a judgment of the believer's readiness for restoration to each of the levels discussed previously.

- *How does one discern when another believer is suited to restoration to each of the levels discussed?* This may be the least defined of all answers because it is not directly spoken to in Scripture. The answer is found in the person of the Holy Spirit. If the team has taken into account the criteria above, then listening to the guidance of the Spirit becomes the crucial factor. Since God is one, and He does not change, when the believer, team members and church leadership pray about this matter, God's answer should be one as well. One of the great confirmations of discerning God's mind in this matter is when the team and leadership of the church has reached the same conclusion independently. If there is disagreement however, a noting of the differences, a sharing of the minds, and a return to prayer are in order. It seems prudent to believe that God will be faithful in answering this question if He is sought diligently.

### Conclusion

It is an earnest prayer that those who enter into this ministry would be filled with God's Spirit, wisdom, and discernment. One of God's greatest desires is to restore His people to fellowship and service. In the same manner, the church must seek out those who are lost and make every effort to return those individuals to fellowship with God and His children, the church. This call applies to both believers and non-believers. May the Lord be pleased with the First Baptist Church's effort to fulfill His purpose in this matter.

## APPENDIX A

### Scripture References

Listed in the order in which they appear in the scriptures  
All Scripture Quoted is from the New International Version

Job 4:3 Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands.

Psalms 6:7 My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.

Proverbs 5:12-14 You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! 13 I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. 14 I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly."

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Proverbs 11:13 A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 18:15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.

Proverbs 19:2 It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.

Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 29:23 A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.

Matthew 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 6:14-15 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:16-20 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 18:15-20 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. 18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Luke 7:35 But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Acts 5:14 Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Romans 1:32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Romans 10:9-11 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Romans 14:1-4 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. 2 One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Romans 16:17-18 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

I Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours:

I Corinthians 2:6-9 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

I Corinthians 4:6 Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.

I Corinthians 5:1-13 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? 3 Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. 4 When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, 5 hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. 6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. 9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. 12 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

I Corinthians 9:27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

I Corinthians 11:22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

II Corinthians 2:6-11 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. 9 The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven — if there was anything to forgive — I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Galatians 6:1-6 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If

anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5 for each one should carry his own load. 6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 3:10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

Ephesians 4:11-13 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:15-16 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:22-25 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Colossians 1:28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

I Thessalonians 5:14-15 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

II Thessalonians 3:6-15 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy but warn him as a brother.

I Timothy 1:19-20 holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. 20 Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

I Timothy 3:1-10 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 8 Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep

truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

I Timothy 4:12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

I Timothy 5:1-2 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

I Timothy 5:20-21 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. 21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

II Timothy 2:17-19 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

II Timothy 2:24-26 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

II Timothy 4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

Titus 1:5-9 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

Titus 1:13 This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith

Titus 2:15 These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

Titus 3:9-11 But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. 10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. 11 You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

Philemon 11 Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.

Hebrews 12:5-11 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 5:13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

I Peter 1:14-16 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

I Peter 2:9-18 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. 18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

I Peter 3:8-16 Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. 9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. 11 He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

I Peter 4:1-4 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies,

carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

I Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

I Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

I Peter 4:13-19 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

I Peter 5:5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

I John 3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

I John 3:15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

I John 1:5-10 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

I John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not

lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.

Revelation 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Revelation 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Revelation 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

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