

**ACBC Exam Study Guide
Counseling Exam 10**

Q: Describe the role you believe church discipline should play in biblical counseling.

A. A Definition of Church Discipline

“God’s ongoing, redeeming work through His living Word and people as they fight the good fight of faith together to exalt Christ and protect the purity of His bride.”¹

B. Reasons to practice church discipline:²

1. It’s biblical
2. Its an implication of the gospel
3. It promotes the health of the church
4. It clarifies and burnishes the church’s witness before the nations
5. It warns sinners of an even greater judgment to come
6. (Most importantly) It protects the name and reputation of Jesus Christ on earth.

“The purpose of discipline is restoration - restoring a sinning believer to holiness.”³

C. Church Discipline (Sample Policy)

ARTICLE VII: DISCIPLINE:⁴

SECTION 1. GENERAL POLICY.

All members of the Body of Christ have an individual responsibility to live righteously and to encourage righteous behavior in other believers. Interpersonal accountability is a Christian obligation that extends beyond the membership of the local church. As Galatians 6:1-5 instructs, this process begins with self- examination and a spirit of humility sensitive to one's own faults. Believers are instructed to be aware of their own sins, to be penitent and to be quick to seek reconciliation with offended individuals (Matthew 5:23-25; 7:1-5)...Church discipline is regarded as a serious and clear directive in Scripture. Church discipline is intended to restore an erring member (2 Corinthians 2:5-8), to purify the Church (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), to warn other members about the dangers of sinful behavior or teaching (Deuteronomy 19:20; Acts 5:11; 2 Corinthians 7:11) and to demonstrate the reality of righteous living to the unsaved world (Ephesians 4:22-24). Discipline is exercised with compassion for the erring member and a sincere desire to seek that person's repentance, reconciliation and if necessary, restoration to the fellowship of the local church (Matthew 18:12-14)...

¹ Kellemen & Carson, *Biblical Counseling and the Church* (Zondervan, 2015), 158.

² Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline* (Crossway, 2012), 23-24.

³ John MacArthur, *The Master’s Plan for the Church* (Moody, 2008), 267.

⁴ <https://www.gccministries.org/constitution-and-bylaws>

SECTION 2. OFFENSES APPLICABLE TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

- (a) False teaching constitutes a deliberate, persistent program of teaching that intentionally rejects the foundational doctrines of Scripture (Titus 3:10; Revelation 2:14).
- (b) Apostasy constitutes a public denial of the essential truths of God's Word.
- (c) Divisiveness constitutes behavior that undermines the unity of the church either between members or against God's established authority in the church (Philippians 4:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
- (d) Immorality is constituted scripturally as behavior that is deemed immoral and brings shame on the testimony of Christ and the local church (1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-11).

SECTION 3. PROCEDURES IN MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY.

Church discipline is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, and justly. Below are the steps of accountability and discipline that follow the guidelines given in Matthew 18:15-20.

- (a) First step: Arrange a private meeting with the offender.
- (b) Second step: Set up another private meeting, this time with one or two other witnesses present (Matthew 18:16).
- (c) Third step: At this point, the matter must be brought by the elders to the members of Grace Community Church in a closed session (Matthew 18:17).
- (d) Fourth step: As defined in Matthew 18:17, the unrepentant offender will be considered a "pagan or a tax collector."

By way of application, this constitutes a removal from church membership and fellowship resulting in a recognition that the unrepentant offender is outside the realm of God's blessings (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Common ground for intimate friendship has been removed.

SECTION 4. INTEGRITY OF KNOWLEDGE.

In all matters of church discipline, if and when members become aware of the offense and the disciplinary action being brought against the unrepentant member, the members are expected, without exception, to hold the knowledge with integrity, avoiding gossip and the defamation of character (Ephesians 4:31-32; James 4:11). Church disciplinary matters are internal affairs and must not be paraded before the world.

Key Texts:

Matthew 18:15-17
1 Corinthians 5:1-7
Galatians 6:1-3

Key Resources:

Jay Adams, Handbook on Church Discipline (Zondervan, 1986).
J. Carl Laney, A Guide to Church Discipline (Wipf and Stock, 1985).
Jonathan Leeman, Church Discipline (Crossway, 2012).
John MacArthur, The Master's Plan for the Church (Moody, 2008), 265-286.
Kellemen & Carson, Biblical Counseling and the Church (Zondervan, 2015), 154-170.