

# Application for Associate Membership

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
                    last                      first                      middle initial

Circle: Mr. Mrs. Miss Dr. Other \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent (if living at home) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (Mobile) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

EMPLOYER/SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION/GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

SKILLS: \_\_\_\_\_

HOBBIES: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you attended NewSong regularly? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have assurance of your own personal salvation?                       Yes                       No

Upon what do you base that assurance? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you been baptized                       Yes                       No

If yes: When and Where? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you understand and agree with the doctrine and distinctives of NewSong?

Yes                       No

5. Have you read and understand our stand on church discipline?                       Yes                       No

*(Please read and sign commitment)*

6. Do you intend to be actively involved in ministry, and are you committed to being under the

oversight of your pastoral staff in that ministry?                       Yes                       No

If yes, in which ministry(ies) would you like to be involved?

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7. What church did you last attend? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any **unresolved conflicts** at that church where we may be of assistance to you?

Yes

No

8. Do you have a numbered **box of envelopes** with which you regularly contribute to the ministry of this church?  Yes  No

9. Have you completed the **NewSong Connect** class?  Yes  No

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please read Church Discipline Statement and sign commitment)*

## Commitment to Church Discipline

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have thoroughly read NewSong Fellowship Church's statement on **Church Discipline**, and I am in full agreement with this process, believing it is biblical and that its purpose is to bring any erring believer in Christ back into fellowship with the Savior and His Church.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# The Privilege of Restoration: Biblical Guidelines For Church Discipline

The Belgic Confession (1561), which developed out of Reformation teaching, identifies three characteristics "by which the true Church is known. These marks are: (1) the preaching of pure doctrine, (2) the administering of the sacraments (water baptism and communion), and (3) the exercising of church discipline."

The Church today often replaces counseling for biblical discipline of an erring believer. Both are necessary in the process of restoration. Christians today are rightly concerned about discipleship, but often fail to confront and correct an erring disciple. The results are evident in the Church. Because of our reluctance to rightly apply the principles of church discipline, the work of the Kingdom of Christ is hindered in our world. The World sees the Church as impotent and ineffective in dealing with its problems of sin within the Body of Christ.

The Church without discipline is a church characterized by a lack of purity, as there is more of the World in the Church than the Church in the world. The Church that neglects discipline faces a serious lack of power to serve God in the world. The Church, by not assuming its responsibility to discipline sinning members, limits the progress and potential impact upon both saved and unsaved.

Joshua 7 illustrates clearly how the sin of one man can bring defeat to the entire congregation. There is no victory in Ai while Achan's sin goes unchecked. When the Church is without purity, power, and progress, God's reputation is damaged. Only by following the principles of discipline, as given in God's Word, can the full blessing be restored to both the weakened Church and the sinning saint (I Timothy 6:1b; Romans 2:23-25; Ezekiel 36:21-23).

In preparing this teaching, it is our objective to share these principles of discipline in a form that can be applied in the Church today. As we go through the definitions of key words and the steps outlined in Scripture, it is our hope that we will have clear guidelines with which to lovingly and faithfully apply church discipline in the household of God, of which we have been given the oversight and care (II Timothy 2:14-26). Only by the application of biblical church discipline can true Christian love be demonstrated (Hebrews 12:1-17).

## **The Disciplinary Process**

Church discipline is a process consisting of three key elements: confrontation, repentance, and restoration.

### **I. The Confrontation Process**

The **confrontation** phase of discipline aims at bringing the sinning member to the point of confession and repentance from sin. It involves six steps taken from our Lord's teaching in Matthew 18:15-20.

### **Step One: "And if your brother sins..." (Matthew 18:15a)**

The first responsibility is to determine when there is a need for discipline. Five categories of sin necessitate discipline in the Body of Christ:

- violations of Christian LOVE. (Matthew 5:23, 24) These are private offenses to be dealt with on a personal level.
- violations of Christian UNITY. (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:9-11) These are actions that are divisive and destroy the peace and harmony of the church body.
- violations of Christian TRUTH. (I Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 1:5-13; Ephesians 4:15; 11 John 7-11) These involve heresies and rejection of basic doctrines of the faith.
- violations of Christian MORALITY. (I Corinthians 5; Hebrews 12; Galatians 5:19-21; I Corinthians 6:9,10) These relate to moral and ethical standards of the Bible.
- violations of Christian COMMITMENT and TESTIMONY (James 5:19,20; Hebrews 10: 24, 25; Philippians 4:1-5) These are situations in which a believer requests help for areas of weakness in his/her life.

### **Step Two: "...go and reprove him privately..." (Matthew 18:15b)**

When we become aware of a brother's sin, we are to go to him privately and deal with the offense on a personal level. Many personal offenses and issues of sin can be dealt with on a one-to-one basis.

Matthew 18:15c "...if he listens to you (and confesses - TLB) you have won your brother." If the sinning one confesses and repents, the general principle is that what has been dealt with privately should not be made public. Exceptions are in the case of sins with public consequence. Then it is best to inform the church before the sin becomes public knowledge (e.g., unwed pregnancy, etc.).

If no repentance is forthcoming, then the next step is taken.

### **Step Three: "but if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed." (Matthew 18:16)**

When private confrontation fails to bring repentance, it is to be followed by a private conference with two or three other witnesses. In the case of church discipline, church members are preferable. The choice of witnesses should be influenced by their relationship to the sinning one, since they will witness his response.

The presence of witnesses can better substantiate the charges, especially if they have seen the offense, or at least see the evidence. Their presence also strengthens the rebuke in hope that repentance will follow.

If the erring brother repents, restoration appropriate with the situation and the offense can begin. Now there are others involved who are able to help in the process of restoration.

If no repentance comes after the conference, then the next step is taken.

**Step Four: "and if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church." (Matthew 18:17a)**

The place of the church family in discipline cannot be over-estimated. The relationship of one Christian to another is a strong theme of the New Testament. (See I Corinthians 10-14; Romans 12:5, 10-13; Ephesians 4; Galatians 6:1).

*In "telling it to the Church,"* our motivation is to restore the sinner. The Church is asked to pray for, and put spiritual and personal pressure on the sinning brother, reaching out in love and concern for the one ensnared in sin. Prayer and fasting are in order when an erring one is under the control of sin and Satan's dominion. (Isaiah 58:6)

Great discretion will be used in publicly announcing the nature of the sin (Ephesians 5:11, 12). Any announcement will be filled with an expression of grief and concern that the offender acknowledge and repent of his offense.

If repentance is not forthcoming after public announcement to the Church, then the next step must be sorrowfully obeyed.

**Step Five: "and if he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax gatherer." (Matthew 18:17b)**

(AB) "...let him be to you as a pagan..."

(TLB) "...then the Church should excommunicate him."

Although a reasonable period of time should follow public announcement, when it is evident that the sinning one will not even hear the Church's verdict of his guilt and repent, then separation and public exclusion is forthcoming.

The ecclesiastical word is "excommunication," which refers to "cutting off a person from church membership, fellowship, and/or communion." It seems to imply that the unrepentant brother is to be treated as a non-believer because he is acting like one. The Church must keep on loving, praying and hoping for repentance so that restoration can begin. However, while the brother remains unrepentant, fellowship is broken.

Failure to obey this step in discipline will further impair the witness of the Church and the prospect of repentance and restoration of the fallen brother. (I Corinthians 5:11-13; II Thessalonians 3:14-15)

Although it is hoped that genuine repentance and restoration will follow such exclusion, if such is not forthcoming, then a further step seems in keeping with the church disciplinary procedure.

**Step Six: "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18)**

Awesome authority and power is given to the Church and its leaders in matters of discipline. When a professing Christian, after being reprov'd in accordance with Scriptural principles, still refuses to repent, the decision of the Church to exercise biblical discipline reflects the will of God in heaven.

There is a promise to the Church when it agrees together in the discipline of a fallen member in faith that he will be restored; "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything (context is disciplinary matters) that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven ... for where two or three have gathered in My name, there I am in their midst." (Matthew 18:19-20)

A related text is I Corinthians 5:3-5. Paul took authority to deal with the unrepentant brother at Corinth in the most severe measures prescribed in the New Testament: "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

It appears that Paul was willing to subject the sinning believer's physical life to attack or even destruction by Satan, because he was confident of the eternal salvation of the spirit. (John 3,10:27-29; I Corinthians 12:13; II Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:9)

As in all church discipline, even such drastic action by the Church has restoration as its goal. The eternal salvation of the believer is always preeminent over the temporal effects of discipline. (Matthew 16:24-27; II Corinthians 3:1, 11:1-3)

## **II. Repentance**

The immediate goal of the necessary steps of confrontation listed above is to bring the errant brother to repentance. *Repentance* is the turning point in the disciplinary process. It is the bridge between confrontation and restoration. Repentance is:

- to agree with God about sin and act in accordance with His Word.
- the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have entered upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both (1) a recognition of sin and sorrow for it, *and* (2) a hearty amendment, the effects of which are good deeds.
- the improved spiritual state resulting from deep sorrow for sin.
- used by those who, conscious of their sins and with demonstration of their sorrow, are intent on obtaining God's pardon.

### ***Evidences of True Repentance:***

- Acknowledge sin. (I John 1:5-2:2; James 4:7-10)
- Exhibit genuine sorrow as contrasted from being "sorry for getting caught." (II Corinthians 7:8-11)
- Seek to make restitution. (Luke 19:1-10; Philemon 18, 19)
- Manifest fruit of repentance. (Matthew 3:7, 8; Luke 3:8-14)

## **III. Restoration**

The process of church discipline is not fully achieved until a period and process of restoration has been completed. Restoration is the final step of bringing back the fallen one through correction into a right relationship with the Body of Christ.

It is a mending of broken trust and a restoration of harmony and order. It involves a re-qualifying, and a re-commissioning to active ministry.

The restoration process may involve a period of special disciplines and limitations appropriate to the offense and the position of the offender. These are not punitive measures, but necessary restorative steps. They will vary in each situation. The mending process must be carefully navigated in order to ensure total healing and fitness for return to active life in the Church.

Restoration includes:

- Involvement of the entire church body. (Galatians 6:1, 2)
- Forgiveness by God and Church. (Luke 17:1-4; Matthew 18:21-35)
- Comfort and help by fellow believers. (11 Corinthians 2:5-7)
- Re-affirmation of Christian love. (II Corinthians 2:8-11)

### ***Final Remarks***

God is serious about sin in the Church and among the saints. He has given us in Scripture His loving plan for restoring sinning believers to fellowship with Himself and with the Church.

The true Church today cannot ignore the responsibility of church discipline nor avoid confrontation with Christians who are living in sin. We are commanded to "judge ourselves" personally (I Corinthians 1:28-32) and corporately (I Corinthians 5:9-13).

Church discipline is a tangible, visible way that committed Christians care for and show true love for each other.

With the coming of the Lord at hand, let us consider the blessing and benefits afforded us by a loving, caring Heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:1-17) in giving us a guide to discipline in the Church. Let us prepare for the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 3:10-18; I John 3:1-3)