

## Questions and Answers about Church Discipline and Disfellowship

*"The companion of fools will be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20)*

**1. Question:** What is the difference between "church discipline" and "disfellowship"?

**Answer:**

**1. Church discipline** is narrower than disfellowship, although church discipline may result in the disfellowship of the unrepentant. If a professing Christian at your church is in sin you normally go through the steps of Matt. 18 unless there is an exceptional case.

**2. Disfellowship** is what you do with any professing Christian who is in unrepentant sin. If a person is not part of our church community then we would not go through church discipline to put them out of our church community. However, we certainly would not fellowship with them.

For example, we do not go through the church discipline steps with a lesbian bishop of the Episcopal Church, Steve Brown the antinomian, Joel Osteen the apostate, Benny Hinn, a Mormon, a Church of Christ, an antinomian church, or a works righteousness church. We simply obey God's command not to fellowship with them (1 Cor. 5:9-12).

**2. Question:** "What if a person claims that they are repentant for sinning while in covenant with our church, and then immediately withdraws their membership from our church?"

**Answer:** Membership in a local church is voluntary on the part of both the member and the church. If a person at any time chooses to withdraw membership they may do so. If they claim that they are repentant the church will normally take the person's word for it. When they remove their membership they place themselves outside of our flock and we are not responsible for or to them.

**3. Question:** "What if they leave our church without being disfellowshipped and then turn around and begin to sow discord, slander our church, practice a sin like gambling, or begin to fellowship with someone who has been disfellowshipped, or attend a church which is antinomian, a cult, or a church that does not honor biblical church discipline?"

**Answer:** In such a case they are in sin. However, because they are not in covenant with our church they are not our responsibility, and we have no obligation to go through the church discipline process with them. However, we would not fellowship with them, and we will warn our members not to fellowship with them because they are in sin and sin is a cancer which always spreads. This is a major reason for having church discipline in the first place. The lambs must be protected by the rams and the shepherds.

**4. Question:** "What if a member or regular attendee of Cornerstone is insubordinate (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:14; Titus 1:10), refuses to "obey those who rule over them," and refuses to break off fellowship with that person who is in sin (as described previously)?"

**Answer:** The shepherds of a flock have the responsibility before God to protect the flock. If a person is disfellowshipped (whether the church has gone through the church discipline process or not) and a Christian fellowships with that person then the Christian is in sin. And if that Christian is in sin, and is a part of Cornerstone, then we would be forced to begin the church discipline process with that insubordinate and sinning lamb. God has given the lambs godly and qualified shepherds. The lambs responsibility is to submit so that the leaders can give an account with joy and not with grief for that would be unprofitable for that disobedient person (Heb. 13:17).

For example, if a member of Cornerstone were to begin attending Rick Warren PDL conferences, or Charismatic tongue speaking seminars, and began to bring that philosophy back to the church we would begin the church discipline process.

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