



world**outreach**

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

SERIES FIVE

MODULE THREE:

CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

AND RESTORATION



Outline Session 1-3

1. What is 'corrective discipline' and why is necessary?
2. What process can we employ for corrective discipline?
3. How do we 'restore' people (after the disciplinary process)?

SESSION ONE: WHAT ‘CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE’ IS AND WHY IT IS NECESSARY?

DEFINING TERMS

‘Discipline’ is training that moulds, corrects and matures the moral character of an individual.

‘Corrective discipline’ is ‘any action(s) initiated and implemented by church leaders in response to the unscriptural attitudes or behaviour of a believer within a church community, which has the transformation of their character and conduct as the goal.’

We are, essentially, fallen, sinful and weak creations, but we are *redeemed* creations in a process of renewal, restoration, sanctification and maturity.

Hebrews 12:5-11 states that the Lord disciplines us: as evidence that we are his children (vv. 7-8), for our good (v. 10), and to produce a harvest of righteousness (v. 11). In the same way, there will be times when Christian leaders have to discipline, correct and restore those they lead.

THREE ATTITUDES NECESSARY IN LEADERS MUST ADOPT IN CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE

1. Compassion. Gal 6:1 ‘gentleness and humility’
2. Firm resolve
3. Commitment to restoration. The purpose of corrective discipline is not punishment. The end goal of restoration is to see the person fully restored in their relationship with God, in their Christian character, and in the Christian community, as Jesus taught in Matthew 18:15-20.

THREE (representative) EXAMPLES OF WHEN CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE MAY BE NECESSARY

1. IMMORALITY (moral impurity)

As Christians, we must live our lives according to biblical standards for sexual purity. Sex is a good gift from God the Creator. We have been created as sexual beings. God created sex to be an intimate pleasure between a man and woman within the marriage relationship (Heb 13:4), the way to reproduce offspring, and a seal of a personal life-long union to a monogamous marriage.

Therefore, sexual activity should be in accordance with God’s intention as revealed in the Bible. The biblical portrayal of human sexuality is based on the understanding that we are created male or female in the image of God and that the union of husband and wife in marriage is the appropriate relationship for sexual activity.

As such, Christians must value this gift by maintaining chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage.

Any breach of these biblical boundaries would be regarded as immoral.

Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 5:1-13 of a man in an incestuous relationship with his step-mother. He demanded something be done. For he warned them (v. 6 NLT): '*Don't you realise that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough?*' In other words, if you don't deal with this, the sin of immorality will spread. So, it's crucial to bring corrective discipline.

2. PROPAGATING FALSE DOCTRINE

Christians must hold to sound, healthy teaching consistent with established and accepted (orthodox) Bible teaching and their church's doctrinal position. They should avoid promoting or spreading anything false, heretical, misleading, unbalanced or extreme.

The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to watch his doctrine (teaching) closely (1 Tim 4:16). Paul sometimes prefaced the word 'teaching' with the adjectives 'sound', 'godly' and 'good', which came from a word group used in medical language for healthy (or health producing).

1 Timothy 1:3-4 and 2 Timothy 2:25-26 make clear that ministry leaders, have a responsibility to lovingly confront those propagating false teaching, not only to protect those we lead, but also to bring the false teachers to repentance and out of satanic snares.

3. BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS (or unresolved offences between members)

At times, people offend or hurt others *intentionally*, but it is far more common for people to *unintentionally* hurt or offend others. What should we do, however, if we are hurt or offended by another person? Matthew 18:15-20 tell us.

Jesus said, '*If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense.*' This implies that if we are aware of any friction, conflict or hurt with anyone, we (the offended person) must **take the initiative** and go to the (offending) person. Importantly, this verse also indicates that the goal of going to the person and speaking in private is **reconciliation** ('*If the other person listens, you have won that person back*').

If, however, the person refuses to reconcile or repent from their words or actions, Jesus' teaching provides further applications (see Matthew 18:16).

Because the person has refused to listen or respond to a private word, others have to become involved. Jesus said that the offended brother must take one or two other appropriate people along with him (or her) to seek to sort out the relationship and bring reconciliation. Based on Jesus' use of Deuteronomy 19:15 in Matthew 18:16, the one or two others must be people who are **impartial, discerning and God-fearing**. In practical terms, this would probably mean finding people who are respected by both parties for their qualities, character and spiritual maturity. The role of the one or two others is to ensure objectivity, fairness and justice in the mediation and reconciliation process.

But if the person has refused to listen to or meet with the one or two others, or if the person still won't listen even though impartial people have been involved, the Lord said in Matthew 18:17: '*... take your case to the church...*'

Normally, this would mean to those in spiritual oversight who represent the congregation. More often than not, in a broader New Testament sense, this would refer to the elders or pastor. At times, this will necessitate corrective discipline as the church leaders seek to bring the person who refuses to sort things out to a place of reconciliation, peace and harmony.

These three examples are only that: examples. We could add to this list many other things: misappropriation of finances; wilful, habitual sin; or addictions. The point is that sometimes people's actions, attitudes, or life choices need corrective discipline to help them get back on track.

SESSION TWO: A SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR ‘CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE’

WHAT IS A PROCESS OF BRINGING CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE?

Please note: These are principles, not a ‘how to’ manual.

Please remembers: The reason we implement corrective discipline is not to punish, but to correct – it is for remedial and restorative purposes.

1. PREPARE YOUR HEART AND MIND TO SPEAK WITH THE PERSON CONCERNED

The first step is that, as soon as you become aware of something, prepare to act.

Don’t procrastinate.

The longer you leave it, the worse it may become.

Suggested preparatory steps *before* you speak with the person.

A. *Know your authority and operate within it.* Do you have the authority to bring corrective discipline, or should it be referred to your oversight? If you are authorised, then operate within the sphere of your authority with confidence. Depending on the nature of the issue, it is always wise to let your immediate oversight know of what is happening.

B. *Find out as much information as possible before approaching the person.* Try to get a really good grasp of the circumstances. Ascertain, as best you can, what happened, when, why and how.

C. *Adopt a clear, unbiased perspective at all times.* This means remaining objective. Never have pre-drawn conclusions.

D. *Anticipate possible scenarios, objections and responses.* This prepares your mind.

E. *Pray*

2. LOVINGLY BUT FIRMLY RAISE THE ISSUE WITH THE PERSON IN PRIVATE

Once you’ve made appropriate preparation, the second step would be that you as a leader go to the person concerned in private and lovingly but firmly raise the issue with them.

A. *Always begin (and conclude) by showing grace*

B. *Address the issue clearly with grace without minimising the circumstances*

C. *Ask questions like:* How do you see it? Is this true? Did you know what the Bible teaches about this issue? Do you know of any other relevant information? How could things have been different? In this way you can discern the true intentions, motives and state of their life.

- D. Listen attentively, carefully and discerningly to their answers
- E. Ascertain, as best you can, what degree of repentance is in the life of the person
- F. Introduce what the Bible says about the issue
- G. Act decisively and fairly
- H. Make them aware of any consequences
- I. Pray with the person and get the person to pray
- J. Affirm them again with grace

3. FOLLOW UP WITH THE PERSON AND THE APPROPRIATE PEOPLE

Now that you've had the difficult conversation, you'll need to take the next steps. Who needs to know? Who will take responsibility to help the person get their life together? Over what time frame?

- A. Keep a written record of the meeting. Make notes on what happened, what was said and what you did about it. These records must be strictly confidential, objective and not prejudicial.
- B. Tell whoever needs to know (on a need-to-know basis)
- C. Arrange for the appropriate people to help the person
- D. Keep confidentiality
Keep records and details of the circumstances confidential, aside from those who need to know.
- E. Follow up with the person

SESSION THREE: HOW TO ‘RESTORE’ PEOPLE AFTER THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

Steps involved in how to see people restored as part of the process of corrective discipline.

Let’s briefly look at this passage – 2 Cor. 2:5-11 – and draw some principles on how to restore people.

1. ENSURE THERE HAS BEEN TRUE REPENTANCE

A first step in restoration is to ensure the person who received corrective discipline has genuinely repented. Without repentance, there won’t be any real change or transformation of their life or behaviour. They’ll more than likely continue on as they were.

(2 Corinthians 5:6) *‘The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is SUFFICIENT for him...’*. The corrective discipline had done its work. The man had come to repentance. Now it was time to restore him.

2. FORGIVE THE PERSON – PERSONALLY AND AS A COMMUNITY

(2 Corinthians 2:7) *‘Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him.’*

Forgiveness means that we hold nothing against them, but graciously release from our minds any resentment, anger or bitterness we may have harboured toward them. It necessitates us not treating them as their actions may deserve, but with kindness and grace.

3. COMFORT THE PERSON

Reread verse 7 with a different emphasis: *‘Now, however, it is time to forgive and comfort him.’*

One of the most meaningful and appropriate things we can do as a church community is comfort the person who has been corrected and is being restored. This is the equivalent ‘comfort’ the father of the Prodigal son showed when he saw his wayward son returning home. He was: (Luke 15:20) *‘Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him.’*

Why did Paul say that it was essential to forgive and comfort him? The second part of verse 7 says, *‘Otherwise he may be overcome by discouragement.’* If we’re not proactive in this step, the person may be overwhelmed or swallowed up by their grief and negative feelings and lose heart and hope and, possibly, abandon their faith.

4. REAFFIRM LOVE

(8) *‘I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him...’*

No-one should ever feel marginalised, inferior, second class or embarrassed in our communities of faith just because they’ve failed in some way. We’ve ALL failed God in

many ways on many occasions, yet his love is constant, his grace is continual, and his acceptance is unending. We, too, must treat others – even the seemingly unworthy ones – as God treats us – the equally undeserving – with love, grace and acceptance.

FINAL PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTRY LEADERS OVERSEEING A PERSON'S RESTORATION

- 1. ARRANGE FOR SOMEONE MATURE AND TRUSTWORTHY TO WALK WITH THE PERSON THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS.**
- 2. ENSURE THEY'RE REBUILDING THEIR LIFE ON RIGHT FOUNDATIONS.** The purpose of disciplinary action is to help the person become personally disciplined. This will mean they now build their lives according to the Scriptures, by the Spirit's power and in close relationship with God.
- 3. BUILD ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURES AROUND THEM.**
From the very start of the process, ensure there are appropriate checks and balances – someone who has the right, freedom and concern to ask the right questions and hold them accountable.
- 4. THERE WILL BE DISAPPOINTMENTS.**
Don't be surprised when people disappoint you. You'll have to deal with your disappointment. Rejoice, however, when they do respond well and are fully restored.
- 5. BE ON GUARD AGAINST SATANIC ATTACKS.** One of the reasons Paul called for the church to forgive, as he had done under the Lord's authority, was (11) '*...so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes.*' Satan's primary scheme to destroy churches is to cause or exploit division in the church. But by forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration, this satanic strategy of 'divide and conquer' is not only neutralised but overcome. Be on your guard.