

Principles for Discipline

Matt. 18 ¹⁵“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. ¹⁶But 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.’ ¹⁷If 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.

Keep the offense in the smallest possible circle.

Have offended and offending people sort things out between them. Let it come to leadership only when absolutely necessary. (The “one or two witnesses” does not necessarily mean leadership.)

Avoid using any labels like “rebel” or “trouble maker”.

Never make a judgment after hearing one side of a dispute.

When you have to deal with a dispute, always “seek first to understand”. Ask questions and listen well. Make sure both sides feel understood and fairly treated. (Avoid spending disproportionate time with the parties involved.)

If one or both parties have deeply entrenched sin, seek for a way or a place where they can be mentored.

The sin should be confessed only as far as those who are impacted by it. The aim is to remove the stain from the offender’s name. Confession is not a punishment, but part of restoration. Leaders or others should never seek to confess on behalf of the sinner. (Note that entrenched sin in a leader usually effects all whom he/she leads so the entire base or school or team should hear any confession.)

When sin has been uncovered but is denied, especially repeatedly, and where the offending party has engaged in ongoing deception, the restoration process must be very thorough and not rushed.

If it looks as though a staff person must be dismissed, or a student sent home, much grace must be exercised to help that person to not feel rejected. Their home church or family must be communicated with where appropriate. (Refer to the Dave Gustaveson recommendations, “Refining our Exit Process”.)

Refer to the YWAM Guidelines for Justice and Reconciliation (ywam.org, staff lounge).

They should be made aware that they have the right of appeal according to our Guidelines for Justice and Reconciliation (ywam.org).

Do not deal with difficult discipline issues alone.

Keep a written record. Sign off on the record if it becomes necessary.

Think about how Jesus related to “pagans and tax collectors”. That is very different than the “shunning” sometimes employed by Christians.