



“Care & Correction” - A Position Paper

God’s Love and Holiness

God is love (1 John 4:7-8). As an expression of His love, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1-2) with humanity ruling His creation and bearing His image (Genesis 1:26-28). Humanity was created with the intent of delighting in the Creator and living out His purposes in His creation. God is Holy and those created in His image were called to be holy as well (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:13-15).

However, sin invaded the world through Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God (Genesis 3:6). Consequently, this single act plunged humanity into sin and rebellion against God (Romans 5:12). Their disobedience defaced the image of God and as a result, humanity is separated from its Holy Creator (Genesis 3:22-24). Apart from God, humanity is lost in its sin and without hope (Ephesians 2:1-9). Sin not only separates a fallen creation from its Holy Creator but also separates humanity from one another (Genesis 3:7). Yet God, so loved the world that He gave His only son to die on the cross in place of sinful humanity (John 3:16). Because of Christ’s work on our behalf, we are made righteous through personal faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 5:1-2). He took our sin upon Himself and paid the price completely so we can have a restored relationship with our Creator (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Saved by His grace, believers are also called to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Also, we are reminded God is at work in every believer to will and work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). This process of restoring believers to the full image of God is an ongoing process being worked out over time. As a believer lays aside the old self and submits to the Spirit (Romans 8:13), they begin walking in obedience to Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:20-24). This ongoing process of being made more like Jesus is also known as the process of sanctification and is part of every Christian’s life (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:21; Hebrews 10:14) . A believer therefore, is called by God to continually yield and as a result, be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

God’s Word, God’s Spirit, & God’s People

There are three primary means of grace which God provides to aid a believer as they walk with the Lord. These means of grace are tools used by God to restore His image in His people. First and foremost, God uses His Word to shape the thoughts and actions of a follower of Jesus (Romans 12:1-2). God's Word is divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Therefore, it is a profound tool in the sanctification process. A believer is called to submit to the Word of God, and should therefore, read it, memorize it, study it, proclaim it, and meditate on it (Psalm 1:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:13; Psalm 119:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; Ezra 7:10; Joshua 1:8; Acts 17:11).

Second, God the Holy Spirit plays an active role in shaping a believer into the image of Christ. Every believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit at the point of faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:11), resulting in a real conviction of sin and a desire for righteousness (Ephesians 1:13-14; John 16:7-11). As a believer walks out their faith, the Holy Spirit both confirms and convicts as needed. Consequently, believers are called to submit to the Holy Spirit and live a life yielded to His control (Ephesians 5:18-21; Romans 8:14).

By God's grace, a believer lives by His Word and under the power and direction of His Spirit regularly confessing sin (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9-10) and submitting to the loving discipline of God (Hebrews 12:1-11). The process of confession leads to a continued dependency on the work of the gospel in our life to make us more like Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

However, we all have blind-spots. As much as we may long to live in perfect obedience to God, there are times when the flesh trips up the most diligent of believers' (Romans 7:15). Unaware or unconvinced by the Word, and numb to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the straying believer often needs a loving reminder of God's purposes for their life (Galatians 6:1). They have a need for repentance and restoration.

The third means of grace God uses to encourage and correct a believer is God's People (Hebrews 10:23-25). Though we are saved by the grace of God individually (John 1:12-13), we are brought into a body of believers as a community of faith - plural (1 Corinthians 12:27). This shared community of believers is a means of grace used by God to help encourage one another into further obedience to God - together (Hebrews 12:1-3). This community of faith creates a safe place for followers of Jesus to confess sin, walk vulnerably together, and encourage one another (James 5:16; 1 John 1:5-10). Most of the Christian life is lived with gentle obedience to these three means of grace - God's Word, God's Spirit, and God's People.

However, when a believer rejects these means of grace, a restorative process must be pursued as an expression of Love for God and one another (James 5:19-20). As a faith community, we

are so deeply connected together that this process is not only expected but invited (Proverbs 27:6; Proverbs 27:17).

The Process of Care & Correction

Matthew 18:15-20 provides a very simple framework from which Care and Correction should be pursued.

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 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. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15–17)

“One on One” (Matthew 18:15)

- Believers are called to speak the truth to one another (Ephesians 4:15). The highest expression of love is not remaining silent while a brother or sister in Christ strays from the Word of God. Rather, the highest expression of love is to pursue one another towards greater intimacy with Jesus Christ through obedience to His Word (James 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1; Psalms 141:5).
- If they listen, you have won your brother or sister back into obedience to Jesus Christ. This in fact, brings joy to the heart of God who loves them and longs for them to walk intimately with Him through Christ (Luke 15:7, 10, 22-24)!
- If they do not listen or reject the truth spoken in love, you progress to the next step.

“Small Group” (Matthew 18:16)

- Unfortunately, some have hardened their heart and are unwilling to receive loving reproof by a fellow believer; even correction from someone who loves and encourages them towards repentance. If this is the case, a group of individuals is to join in the process to ensure that the loving reproof is not personal but is a point of biblical violation. Together, the group presents the fault to the wayward believer.
- Once again, if they listen, you’ve won your brother or sister.
- If they do not listen or reject the truth spoken in love, you progress to the next step.

“The Church Leadership” (Matthew 18:17)

- If an individual chooses to reject the loving reproof of a group of believers, then church leadership must be involved in the process. The role of church leadership is to provide support and affirmation to the initiating individual, and the group who presented the

fault. The goal of involving church leadership is to help the wayward individual see their fault and be moved to repent and return to the Lord.

- Once again, if they listen, you've won your brother or sister. At this point, a plan of restoration is created and agreed upon by those involved. Should a person submit to this process, they would be restored to full-fellowship within the body.
- If they do not listen or reject the truth spoken in love, you progress to the next step.

“Elder Correction” (Matthew 18:17-20)

- By this point, the wayward believer has rejected God's Word, God's Spirit, the loving reproof of an individual, the mutually affirmed reproof of a small group, and the affirming reproof of church leadership. This cascading rejection brings into question the state of the individual's heart before the Lord (Proverbs 28:14). A genuine believer is one who hears the Word of God and does what it says (John 14:21; 1 John 5:3). A “so-called believer” who has rejected these previous opportunities for repentance may be demonstrating an unregenerate heart (Matthew 7:22-23). At this point, the leadership of the church has no choice but to place this “so-called believer” under “Elder Correction”. This step considers the person as a “Gentile” or “Tax Collector” - meaning an unbeliever who has yet to trust in Jesus Christ. This step would exclude this individual from Communion, Baptism, and Spiritual Leadership - which are opportunities for believers to celebrate, proclaim, and put on display the gospel's work in their life. Also, “Elder Correction” would include an agreed-upon “restoration plan”. The individual would be expected to complete the agreed requirements for continued church attendance.
- “Elder Correction” would include an official letter from the Elders of Emmaus Church clearly stating the individual's position within the body as well as clarifying the “Restoration Plan” moving forward.
- The hope in “Elder Correction” is for a “so-called believer” to continue in attendance at Emmaus and continue to hear the gospel. They would be encouraged to sit under the teaching of God's Word, be surrounded by God's people, and therefore, surrounded by gospel influence in their life. Attendance would be permitted by the Elders as long as the individual poses no threat or harm to the body and is willing to walk out an agreed upon “Restoration Plan”.
- However, if this person rejects the agreed-upon “Restoration Plan” or does not faithfully hold to the agreement; then the Elders would be forced to take the final step in the process. This would result in moving from “Care and Correction” to “Active Discipline”.

Paul shares an example from the letter to the church in Corinth where Active Discipline was proscribed.

“It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife. You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.” (1 Corinthians 5:1–13)

“Active Discipline”

- An individual placed under “Active Discipline” has rejected the following with a hard heart: God’s Word, God’s Spirit, the loving reproof of an individual, the mutual reproof of a small group, the affirming reproof of church leadership, and the agreed-upon “Restoration Plan” put in place through “Elder Correction”. This persistent rejection has not only demonstrated a hardened heart towards the Lord, but a rebellious and cancerous spirit to the community. Therefore, removal from attendance is required. This is the final and most painful step in the “Care and Correction” process. This final step removes the individual from attendance and participation within the body. That is, until the individual expresses brokenness from their sin and seeks to repent and reconcile before the Lord and the body of believers they had previously disregarded.

“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15)

“Ongoing Loving Admonishment”

- Even after an individual is placed under “Active Discipline” the ongoing admonishment towards repentance should remain. Regardless of the individual being removed from the body of Christ, the fellowship of the saints, and the community of faith in general; restoration is the goal. Believers who are familiar with the situation and the individual under “Active Discipline” should continue to lovingly invite this person back to faith in Christ, repentance, and restoration to the body of believers.

By What Authority Can a Church Carry Out “Care & Correction”?

“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”” (Matthew 18:18–20)

- Notice, the decisions made in plurality by the church leadership have already been made in heaven. Meaning, God is not obligated to affirm the decisions made by church leadership. Rather, if the process was followed correctly, prayerfully, in plurality, and biblically; God has already confirmed this decision through the church leadership. The leadership God has instituted is simply executing on earth what is already decided in heaven.

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:1–5)

- The ultimate authority of a local church is the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18; John 10:11,18). He is the foundation, cornerstone, and ultimate Head of the Church (Acts 4:11; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Colosians 1:18; 2:10; Ephesians 1:22; 5:23). However, He has delegated the shepherding and leadership to appointed Elders who serve as under-shepherds to Christ. They are tasked with prayerfully caring for and leading the local church (Acts 6:4). This sacred task is not to be carried out with pride or arrogance but with prayerful humility. The shepherding of a local church is both a

function of care but also correction. Biblical shepherds both provide for and discipline the flock when needed.

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

- These biblical Elders are responsible for the flock and are called to be on guard, diligent, and faithful in their shepherding and care for the local body of believers. They are overseers of the local church and are the earthly representatives of Christ.

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

- Believers are called to submit to church leadership knowing that the Elders will answer to God for their leadership. However, this does not make Elders infallible, but instead they are in need of the continued work of the gospel in their lives as well.

Common Questions:

Is “Care and Correction” loving?

- It is actually the highest expression of love (Proverbs 27:6). This process is intended to lovingly pursue a brother or sister in Christ who is headed down a path of sin and destruction (James 5:19-20, Proverbs 24:11). Remember, the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and to watch passively while a fellow believer pursues a life of disobedience to God’s Word and rejection of His Holy Spirit is not loving one another (Jude 23). Together, we are called to enter into a deep community by confessing our sins (James 5:16), encouraging one another towards greater intimacy with Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and obedience to His Word and Spirit (Galatians 5:16-17, Hebrews 10:23-25, 1 John 2:3).

But I don’t feel qualified, I have my own issues.

““Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.” (Luke 6:41–42)

- Notice the qualification for speaking to a brother or sister about an issue in their life is not perfection. If the standard was indeed perfection, these conversations would never happen. Instead, the believer is called to humbly examine their own lives (Galatians 6:1) and acknowledge their own issues (the log) while speaking to their brother or sister about theirs (the speck). This platform of humility creates common ground and invites both parties to deal with the wood in their eyes while they pursue Christ.

Doesn't the Bible Say "Do Not Judge"?

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2)

- Indeed the Bible does speak against judging others. However, this type of judgment is implemented when a person holds someone else to a standard they themselves are not willing to uphold. This hypocritical judgment is seen as a double standard and within the context, Jesus does not permit it. Consequently, we are called to lovingly judge (hold accountable) fellow believers as we pursue ongoing transformation in Christ (John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3). Today's cultural concept of judgment is often viewed as a person in a higher position looking down on another who is in a lesser position. However, the biblical concept of judgment is a person humbly and lovingly holding another believer to a shared biblical standard (2 Thessalonians 3:13-15).

What if Having a "Care and Correction" Conversation Hurts a Friendship?

- If a friendship is so fragile that a loving, humble, and restorative reproof would in some way damage the friendship- how deep was that friendship to begin with? In fact, Galatians 2 shows a great example of a friendship put to the test. In this passage, the Apostle Peter is demonstrating racial discrimination towards gentiles in the presence of fellow Jews. The Apostle Paul, recognizing the sin, puts the friendship to the test and "confronts him to his face because he stood condemned". The beauty of this interaction is seen years later when Peter refers to Paul as "his beloved brother" (2 Peter 3:15-16). No, the real expression of friendship is truth, lovingly spoken (1 Timothy 1:5).

What are the Biblical Values that drive the "Care and Correction" process:

- Driven by Love (Ephesians 4:15; Hebrews 12:5-6; 1 Corinthians 16:14)
- Yielded through Prayer (Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 6:18)
- Pursued With Grace and Humility (Luke 6:42; Romans 12:10-13; 1 Peter 5:6-7; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Philippians 2:3)
- Affirmed by the Community (Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 18:16)
- Restorative in Nature (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; Matthew 18:15)

- With the Exaltation of Christ in Mind (2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 2:13)

What is the Ultimate Goal of a “Care and Correction” Process:

- 1. Restoration of a Wayward Believer** - This process should have the wayward believer’s best interest in mind. Restoration to the Lord and to the Community of Faith is the goal.
- 2. Purity of Doctrine** - The local church is called to contend for the faith and stand for sound doctrine. Our preaching and teaching are to be aligned with the Scriptures and anchored in truth. As the winds of falsehood and cultural compromise blow in our world, the local church is to stand firm and be unmoved (1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 1:9; Jude 3; 2 John 9-11).
- 3. Purity of Life of a Believer** - A believer is to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and to embrace the continual process of transformation into the image of Christ. Our lives should reflect the glory and holiness of Jesus our Savior (Ephesians 4:14). If we are reflecting anything less than His glory, we are in need of a restorative process of discipline (Colossians 1:9-12; Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 12:1-2).
- 4. Unity of Fellowship as a Local Church** - Though a local church will embrace diverse thoughts, backgrounds, passions and perspectives, there ought to be an overwhelming sense of shared unity through Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10; Colosians 3:13-14; Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:13). Though the body is made of various members, we are all one body (1Corinthians 12:7-27; Romans 12:5). Disagreement can be embraced but factions cannot (Titus 3:10; Jude 17-18). Our unity reflects the ongoing work of the gospel as we delight in Him together (John 17:23).
- 5. The Ongoing and Ever-Increasing Witness of the Local Church (The Gospel On Display)** - The church consists of individual believers called together by Christ to reflect His glory and put the gospel on display in our community. Our striving for holiness and love for one another demonstrates the life-changing power of the gospel (Matthew 5:16). Together we show the world the power of God to redeem and restore. Together we model our shared commitment to Jesus Christ and obedience to His word. As the body of believers, we live out His great commission together, as we lovingly encourage one another towards intimacy with Jesus Christ (John 17:21-23).

What is the Shepherding Structure of Emmaus

- Elders → Staff → Coaches → Leaders → Individuals
- Emmaus encourages a culture of submission to Gods’ Word and Gods’ Spirit on a regular basis. However, if spiritual blindspots are present, loving discipleship conversations are initiated. These “iron sharpening iron” conversations are at the heart of Emmaus’ mission. “Walking with people...” is part of our mission. We are inviting our entire

church family to grow in discipleship and intimacy with God. We are to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all that God has commanded us in His Word (Matthew 28:19-20). These restorative conversations are the normal expression of the discipleship process and are lived out in our church on a regular basis. If an individual rejects the counsel of loving brothers and sisters then the "Care and Correction Process" must be pursued. However, most of these conversations are handled in Community Life through leaders and coaches with very few issues rising to the severity where church leadership is invited into the process.