

## **The Discipline Policy of the Church as Applied to Children**

**Rationale:** There is a need for an overall discipline policy for children between the ages of 5 to 18 years of age. This is because leaders need guidance especially for leaders who are new to ministry and want to know how to proceed and what is appropriate. Another reason is that families have different standards of behaviour. The most important goal is maximising Gospel opportunities and sometimes children are hindering others coming to God. There is an overall need that a ministry is for the enjoyment and blessing of all the group.

### **Several scriptures that relate to children**

1. Luke 18:16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them"
2. Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."
3. Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
4. Hebrews 12:10-11 They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.
5. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
6. Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

### **Values**

1. It is to be given within an environment of love, encouragement and to build the child up, not to tear down or cause unnecessary hurt
2. It is clear that there is a measure of discipline that a volunteer leader has but is not above that given by parents
3. It is to be saturated in Scripture and the Bible verses that reveal a child's attitude should be shared with the parents
4. It is not to hinder the child coming to the Father, but help them see the Father as loving
5. It is to be truthful by being clear on what the behaviour was, and involve the parents in the reasons why this discipline was given

### **Atmosphere of Love in every Program**

It is well known that prevention is better than cure. Every program is to have an atmosphere of love and acceptance of every child, which is to prevent negative behaviour perpetuating. It is recognised that children come from various cultural backgrounds and different methods of parental discipline and that every child

has unique talents, personalities and character and some have a clear recognition of Christ and other have not verbally acknowledged God.

Within this framework, every child needs to be ministered to and served with respect and dignity. It is the aim of every ministry program for a child to receive love on a personal basis:

- Does a leader know their name?
- Does a leader know their hopes and their hurts?
- Does a leader know their family situation?
- Does a leader know their personal faith journey?
- Does a leader know any medical, diet or learning difficulties?
- Does a leader know their friends and their peers in the program?
- Are they welcomed when they arrive?
- Are they encouraged during the program?
- Are their needs or concerns adequately addressed by the leaders?

It is these answers that provide the adequate care and love that every child needs and desires and is how we love children and so show ourselves to be Christ's disciple.

### **The Rules of the Program**

Another preventative and fair method is having consistent, articulated and clear rules. The rules of the program as clearly stated and repeated so children know what is required of them, and there is no ambiguity of how the program is to run. The rules will be written down, and at the sign in desk when parents/children (ages 13 to 18) given authority to the leaders to supervise.

### **The Aim of Discipline**

The aim of discipline is to build up and train up a child in the way towards godliness; this will be done by giving truth in the context of a loving conversation with the child and with the parent/guardian.

### **These are Steps to Discipline.**

#### **Step 1 -> Encourage for Good**

If a child is behaving inappropriately, so a leader will encourage the child to act appropriately. This will be done personally individually; this will be done alongside the child rather than from the front. The correct behaviour will be clearly stated and encouraged.

If another child brings up the behaviour of another child/leader done against them, then a senior leader will ask questions of both children to check to find out the truth. If there is abuse involved the Policy on abuse will be initiated. A Pastor will need to be called as soon as possible.

#### **Step 2 -> Calm down space**

If the child does not respond to this level of encouragement, then the child is given space to calm down in the room and given a warning. The correct behaviour is spelt out and reasons why this behaviour is best, helpful, appropriate and shows kindness. The amount of time to calm down varies by age group and is appropriate to the level of anger and the level of energy of the child.

The child is released to join the group if the child shows a change of attitude towards their behaviour.

### **Step 3 -> Parent Discussion by Ministry Leader**

If the child continues with negative behaviour or escalates the behaviour, or if the behaviour puts other children at risk of injury or emotional harm, the child is sat aside and there is a discussion of what the child is attempting to do and how it is causing harm to others, the Gospel and to oneself.

The ministry leader or program leader, the child and one of the child's parents are called together usually at the end of the night so a discussion can be made. The child's behaviour is clearly stated, the steps that the leaders took to correct the behaviour and what requests were made of the child. The child or parent can be asked questions and any issues answered by the ministry leader. If the program leader needs to get back with any other information during the week, then that will be done with 3 days.

Either at this time or at the beginning of the next program day, the child has to show a change of attitude and thankfulness been given another chance by the leader to progress with the ministry. If not then refer to appropriate Pastor.

### **Step 4 -> Call the Pastor**

The child has been given a warning in front of their parents, and another occasion arrives on another day where the behaviour continues or is most severe the program leader, child and parent is spoken with and a discussion is given that the child will need to be removed from the program for 1 or 2 weeks. Again, the negative behaviour/s are stated clearly, the correct behaviour is given and at least 2 reasons why this is the correct way.

Notify the appropriate Pastor and the program leader makes sure this is reinforced in writing within 3 days to the parents involved. The Pastor will correspond with the parents and ask for a letter of forgiveness from the child- only 2 or 3 sentences are needed.

Eg: When I did this..... I hurt.....  
I want to say sorry to..... and in the future I will .....

### **Step 5 -> Child is disqualified from program**

At this stage the appropriate Pastor will be involved and any discussion will be between the parents and the Pastor, it will involve the long term involvement of the child in the program. This will involve advice from the other Pastors and/or Elders if appropriate.

**Note:** If the parents are involved in the program then the Pastor will need to get involved in step 3.

### **Summary**

It is endeavoured that all children participate in the activities by the church and every child can enjoy the Word of God, praying, sharing, playing, knowing one other and bonding with the leaders in a way that promotes godliness in the children and leads them to a relationship with Jesus. A negative or inappropriate behaviour is one that hinders them or someone else from entering into a relationship with Jesus. Therefore the highest priorities are the Gospel of Jesus among children and the love of God and of others.