

**THE PRACTICE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE IN CONTEMPORARY  
CHRISTIANITY: A STUDY OF THE VIEW OF GLOBAL REPENTANCE  
MISSION**

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Theology with Administration.**

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## DECLARATION

I, Francis Owusu, do hereby declare that this project work report is the result of my own original research except for sections of which references have been duly made and to the best of my knowledge no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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## **DEDICATION**

To the glory of God, this work is dedicated to my beloved wife Mrs. Esther Owusu, my three (3) children Nana Adwoa Afrah Owusu, Joel Berko Ampofo Owusu and Allan Owusu Sarpong and my Dad, Mr. Kingsley Osei Owusu of blessed memory.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTROUDUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The church as an organization is made up of individual members from different backgrounds who have come together in one faith for the purpose of worship and the edification of one another. It is often perceived that all the members of the church are Christians and are also expected to live Christ-like lives. Within the church, each member is to subject himself and herself to spiritual disciplines including prayer, the study of God's word, fellowship with other believers, as well as live holy and blameless lives. However, as Christians do not live in a vacuum but rather in the society, there exists the tendency of compromise with the world system. The challenge of authentic Christian living in the midst of corruptible influence seems to be very strong.

In the light of the influence of corruption in the society, Christians are constantly being admonished to abstain from worldly desires and cultivate strong commitment to Christian principles. Christians are called to be in the world, but not of it.

Throughout the centuries Christians have lived with this tension in many ways. Whereas there are some who have never conformed to the standards of the world systems, others have compromised by involving themselves in some un-Christian ways.

Earl and Sandy Wilson have noted that "many churches are unprepared to deal with sinful and destructive behavior patterns in their members. Yet it is important that a person undergoing the restoration process receives help from the church in the



form of the ministries of discipline and love.<sup>1</sup> It's significant to note that if sinful acts are not corrected they will have some destructive influence on others and eventually affect the image and order of the Church. Discipline is therefore a necessary tool to achieve that purpose. However, care should be taken such that the practice of discipline does not end up exposing the people being disciplined to a complete abandonment of the Christian faith. Thus discipline is not meant to merely punish people for wrong committed but to help restore such persons to fellowship and commitment to the Christian faith.

The Global Repentance Mission is a Bible believing and charismatic church. Established in 2015, the church is witnessing a steady growth in membership as the years go by. Among the membership are people who decided to join the church from other church denominations. The church is run by a set of beliefs and practices which emphasize conformity to biblical principles as taught by the church. However, with time some members put up behaviors which seem to run contrary to the established tenets of Christianity as believed by the church. In this sense, the church has to correct these behaviors so as to safeguard the other members and ensure conformity to biblical standards.

The practice of church discipline falls in line with the statement of problem with Biblical precepts. Many biblical characters were subjected to discipline which assured their restoration to right living. Mention can be made of King David who was reprimanded for going in for Beersheba, It is significant to note that the practice of discipline is meant to correct, restore and ensure a conformity to spiritual growth standards.

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<sup>1</sup>Earl & Sandy Wilson, *Restoring the Fallen: A Team Approach to Caring, Confronting & Reconciling* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 130.

A saying among the Akan that “*nea oretwa sa no nnim s[ nakyi erekyia*” rendered as one who is clearing a path in the bush never realizes that his path is becoming crooked as he moves along. This seems to indicate that one needs to be directed in life, in all that one does. According to Frank Ohene Okraku, it is good group the Akan that to be an “opinion” is indicative that one has become matured in outlook and conduct. Thus, *Opanin* seems to arise from *W’apao nyini*, which literally means, one has chosen the path of maturity.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, we come to understand the concept of discipline as walking in the path of maturity in the things of God. For one to be matured, he or she needs to observe and practice the spiritual disciplines as enshrined in the scriptures.

The centrality of the scriptures in the life of Christian believers is of paramount importance and this gives cause to the commitment to maintain Christian life styles. Allowing the principles of the Bible to guide one’s Christian life is the mark of self-discipline. If one lives contrary to the teaching of scripture by engaging in acts that have the tendency of bringing the Christian faith and the church into disrepute and subject of public ridicule and mockery, then disciplinary action will have to be taken against such a person so as to correct and restore him or her back to the faith.

The growth and sustainability of the church in any given community depends to a large extent on how it is able to handle its members. The practice of church discipline should not be perceived as a form of punishment or witch-hunting, but a means to restore sanity and order in the church. We read from Acts 5 that after the episode involving Ananias and Saphira, the church began to witness a tremendous growth in numbers. It should be noted that this took place in the early days of the first New

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Frank Ohene Okraku, Founding Member of Global Repentance Mission, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

Testament Church and which served as a test case for all churches that were to be established. A church that is founded on biblical precepts and is committed to sound biblical teaching, will definitely experience growth and will carry out discipline on its members in a more loving and responsible manner.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

It has been noted that the church as an organization is made up of people who profess faith in the Lordship of Jesus. As Christians, they are expected to live godly lives as examples of Christ in the world. Their zeal to bring other people into saving faith in Jesus is to be matched equally by a strong commitment to holy living.

However, throughout the history of the church and for that matter Christianity, Christians have continually engaged in serious battles with corruptible influences of the world system.

The church exists not for perfect people, but for people who through their commitment to the spiritual disciplines are making efforts to live Christ-like lives in their societies and communities. It is expected that any influence of corruption is to be corrected, so as to safeguard the image and order of the church and also to restore the “fallen” persons back to the Christian faith.

In line with this, the correction process should be based on love and not just seen as a form of punishment.

The Global Repentance Mission is a new Church which is experiencing a steady growth in terms of members and spirituality. The leadership of the church is committed to maintaining the growth of the church as well as the order of the church. In recent times, concerns have been raised concerning the practice of discipline in the

church. There are others who think that the church is young and is attracting people from every background and there is no need to disturb the “peace” of the church by “pushing some people away.” However, it is important to consider the fact that a church that sits unconcerned and does not confront sin in its midst will not be a restoring church. In their view, Jesus said we should allow both the wheat and the weeds to grow together and not make any attempt to remove the perceived weeds. (Matt. 13:24-30). Such people maintain that any attempt at removing the perceived “Weeds” through the practice of church discipline will slow down the church’s numerical growth. However, there are others who think otherwise saying that order should be maintained in the church in order to protect the committed ones from corruptible influence. It is this state of affairs that has necessitated this study so as to provide a biblical framework for the concept and practice of church discipline.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study intends to find answers to the following questions:

- What is the meaning of the concept of discipline?
- How has discipline been enforced or carried out in biblical times?
- What factors call for the enforcement of discipline?
- What is the nature of the practice of discipline in the Global Repentance Mission?
- What has been the impact of church discipline on the lives of the members and the church as a whole?

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of the study is to examine the practice of church discipline in the view of Global Repentance Missions. It specifically ascertains the meaning of the concept of discipline.

- Investigate how the concept of discipline played out in biblical times.
- Examine how discipline is understood and enforced in the Global Repentance Mission.
- Identify and assess the impact of the disciplinary measures of the Global Repentance Mission.

#### **1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study**

The study does not attempt to deal with the concept of discipline in its general sense. Rather it attempts to examine the nature and impact of church disciplinary procedures in the Global Repentance Mission. Many people seem to have the view that young church organizations need numbers to grow and discipline will defeat that purpose. However, this study attempts to assess the church's disciplinary measures and how these have impacted the church. It attempts to make a case for Church discipline and Church growth and orderliness.

#### **1.6 Research Methodology**

The study is qualitative and employed the phenomenological approach. This approach of research is that which tries to understand the essence of a phenomenon by examining the views of people who have experienced that phenomenon. In other

words, it examines human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.6.1 Method of Data Collection**

First, the Primary Source involved interviews using semi-structured interview questions to seek information from key personalities such as pastors, church elders, as well as some ordinary members of the church. Also follow up interviews were conducted through focus group discussions. Again, through personal experience and observation, the researcher, being a member of the church gathered relevant data.

Secondary sources of data include publications such as books, journal articles, as well as unpublished works such as thesis, and credible electronic sources such as the internet.

Data from both sources is subjected to critical evaluation and analysis from a theological perspective.

### **1.7 Literature Review**

In every research process, it is usually significant to consider the views of scholars who have written on issues that have a bearing on the subject being addressed. Such views are able to give a sense of direction and focus to the discussion of the issue at stake. The views of some authors were considered in the following discussion in connection with the subject under consideration, under sub headings.

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<sup>3</sup> G. J. Donalek, *Demystifying nursing research: Phenomenology as a qualitative research methods urology nursing*. 24, 2004, 576-577.

### **1.7.1 The Biblical Understanding of the Concept of Discipline**

In the view of Sandy Wilson, Hebrews 12:1-3 speaks of the loving discipline of our heavenly Father. It tells us honestly that ‘no discipline seems pleasant at the time’, but it goes on to say that it, produces, for those who have been trained by, ‘a harvest of righteousness and peace.’<sup>4</sup> The authors consider the concept of discipline as a biblical instrument of restoration of people who have fallen in some form of sin. Thus, discipline in the biblical sense is meant bring back a sinner on the right track of righteousness and help such a person to abandon the old path of sin. Thus is relevant for the study which considers the subject of church discipline Floyd Mc Clung maintains that God’s purposes for humankind are always benevolent and merciful. He is for us and not against us as revealed by the scripture in Romans 8:28-32. He longs to save and redeem people, and wants to see each of us reach our full potential.<sup>5</sup>

In the view of the author, God has a perfect purpose for His people. He does not seek to destroy them and therefore His purpose for us is to drive us towards what is good and beneficial. Thus, the biblical understanding of the purposes of God including discipline is the development of right standing with God and serving His purposes.

According to Rick Warren, Paul often compared training for the Christian life to the way athletes stay in shape (1 Tim. 4:7). The path to spiritual fitness is as practical as the path to physical fitness. Spiritual fitness is simply a matter of learning certain spiritual exercise and being disciplined to do them until they become habits. He concludes that character is shaped by the habits we develop.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Earl & Sandy, *Restoring The Fallen: A Team Approach to Caring*, 130.

<sup>5</sup>Floyd Mc Clung, *Basic Discipleship* (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>6</sup>Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Oasis International Limited, 1995), 334.

The author considers the Christian life as one that grows through a kind of training. This training process involves a commitment to learning the purposes of God even in difficult times and having a desire to live for God. Thus, discipline is a commitment towards God and right living which produce a life of righteousness. This is very relevant for the study which examines the biblical understanding of discipline.

‘Walter A. Elwell is of the view that the notion of the discipline of God and eventually the concept of the community and its leaders effecting God’s discipline, derives from the notion of domestic discipline (Deut. 21:18-21). God is portrayed as a father who guides his child (the nation) to do right by the experience of physical suffering. The author, on the other hand sees Paul’s disciplinary practices in the New Testament as convincing remedial rather than punitive measures. They were meant to produce a pure desire for the good of the offender. The author concludes that for the individual offender the New Testament practice of discipline is clearly intended to produce repentance in an atmosphere of support and forgiveness.<sup>7</sup>

The author sees discipline as a tool to straighten and shape the life of people who have fallen from God’s standards. Thus, the Bible understands discipline as a corrective instrument of God meant to produce good and righteous life in people and thus help to maintain and sustain their walk with God.

According to David J. Atkinson and others, in the Old Testament the concept of discipline meant a correction which leads to wisdom, and of education or instruction (Ps. 50:17). The disciplining of his son by a father provides an analogy for God’s disciplining of his covenant people (Deut. 8:5; Heb. 12:4-11). The author concludes

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<sup>7</sup>Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), 178-179.



that from a biblical perspective, the whole of the Christian life is to be seen as training for eternity under the fatherly discipline of God.

In the scriptures, (2 Tim. 3:16-17), person-to- person exhortation. (Eph. 4:25), and the corporate life and sanctions of the church (I Cor. 5.1-5), each have important parts to play.<sup>8</sup>

The views of the author presuppose that the concept of discipline is to be viewed in the positive sense and not the negative. Thus, discipline is a tool of God meant to produce good character in people to conform to His image. The practice of discipline is considered as a training regime that ensures that people develop right character in their walk with God.

### **1.7.2 The Church and the Practice of Discipline**

Edmund- P Clowney has observed that the tabernacle and the later temple declared the holiness of God and the need that his wrath against sin be assuaged through sacrifice. But the erection of God's house also declared that God had taken his people for his inheritance that they were his and he was theirs through the provision of his grace (Ex. 34:9). The presence of God separated Israel from all the other nations and they were a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Ex. 19:6).<sup>9</sup>

From the assertions of the author, it can be deduced that God desires that his people in absolute holiness and separated from all evil entanglements. Thus, the church through its' disciplinary measures, ensures that God's people conform therefore is a safeguard against the presence of evil influences that might crop up in the church.

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<sup>8</sup>David, J. Atkinson, et al, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 311.

<sup>9</sup>Edmund. P. Clowney, *The Church* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1995), 33.

According to Francis Schaffer, every Christian group must also teach in words the duty to exhibit that God exists and that he is personal and then as a corporate body practice this truth. In his view, there is a cost in this, for the Church's methods must be chosen with much prayer and care.

The author views the church as a corporate body which exists to assist its members to conform to God's image. In doing so, its methods, should be carefully selected with prayer to make them achieve the desired purpose. The author does not mention discipline, but it is one aspect of the church's growth instruments.

J. D. Douglas in the New International Dictionary of the Christian Church notes that, the concept of discipline in the context of church life, is used to describe the practical methods and rules by which Christ, through the influence of the whole community, seeks to help each member to be healthy in his own Christian growth and discipleship, and to make his best contribution to the life and witness of the whole body. It ensured that members whose conduct brought offense to the community were challenged about their behavior and convicted so that they could be restored. Repentance has to be ensured and if the offending member remain impenitent, he is to be excluded from the fellowship in the hope of his ultimate return and repentance (Matt. 18:15-17).<sup>10</sup>

The assertions of the author presuppose that the practice of discipline in the context of the church is not out of place, but is a relevant measure that ensures that the identity and witness of the Christian community is not compromised. Our witness as Christ's representatives in the world can only be effective and relevant if, the standards of Christ are upheld and enforced through disciplinary measures.

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<sup>10</sup>J. D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of The Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporate, 1974), 300.

Van Gelder is of the View that, in being led and taught by the spirit, the church must maintain a constant vigil to ensure that its practices are in fact, leading to the unmasking of the principalities and powers in the world. It must work to discern and change those practices that become tied to the powers that need to be unmasked.<sup>11</sup>

The author seeks to point out the role of the church in dealing with evil influences among its members. This is significant in order for the church to maintain its integrity and witness in the world. The practices of the church should lead to the maintenance of order and morality while demonstrating love towards offending members. This is in line with the objective of the study which seeks to examine the practice of church discipline in the Global Repentance Mission.

### **1.7.3 Discipline and Spiritual Growth**

In the view of David Watson, discipline involves God sending His Spirit into our hearts for the purpose of transformation and restoration. It is a process that demands our cooperation so as to help us conform to God's standards. This is so because, in our own selves, the natural self is always pulling against the Spirit and trying to alienate us from God.<sup>12</sup> The practice of discipline is the tool that ensures our conformity to God's standards through the guidance of his Spirit. Thus, in the view of the author, discipline ensures that offending members, who have been overtaken by the natural self, are assisted to get back to God through the guidance of the Spirit.

According to Joseph Stowell, although purity will often be castigated, ridiculed and resisted, a consistently pure life will engender, confidence and respect and be a

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<sup>11</sup>Craig. Van Gelder, *The Essence of The Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 162.

<sup>12</sup>David Watson, *Discipleship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1981), 99.

drawing force for those who long to be clean and right within. He concludes that purity is a pre requisite for fellowship and intimacy with God.<sup>13</sup>

The views of the author seek to point out that purity of life is the hallmark of a dedicated and committed Christian. It is the yardstick of our spiritual growth and as such should be enforced in the church. The practice of discipline is what is needed to ensure the maintenance of purity in the life of the Church. The author does not tell us how the church can enforce purity of life, and also is silent on how to handle members of the church who fail to live pure lives. This study is set to examine the practice of church discipline in order to establish its relevance.

Jim Peterson maintains that, the Epistles are filled with statements that remind us of our interdependence with one another as God's people. According to him we are told to be devoted to one another, to live in harmony with one another, to love one another to stop passing judgment, and to bear with each other's failings.<sup>14</sup> This means that Christians can grow in an environment of care and love. Even in their failings, they can be assisted to grow spiritually through discipline.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The study which examines the practice of church discipline with reference to the Global Repentance Mission is relevant for the following reasons:

- It provides a relevant framework for church disciplinary policy for other churches to emulate.
- It shall give pastors and Christians in general to understand the concept purpose and practice of church discipline.

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<sup>13</sup>Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 228.

<sup>14</sup> Jim Peterson, *Lifestyle Discipleship* (Colorado: NavPress, 1993), 118.

- Christian theological institutions which offer courses in systematic theology may find this study useful in the planning of their curriculum.
- It may also serve as a teaching material for church growth seminars.

## **1.9 Organization and Content of the Study**

The study is divided into five chapters with subdivisions where necessary.

The introductory chapter considers the general overview of the study and addresses issues such as the background to the study, the statement of problem the research questions, the aim and objectives of the study, the scope and focusing the study, the research methodology, the literature review, significance of the study as well as the organization and content of the study.

Chapter two examines some background issues relating to the study. These include the background of the Global Repentance Mission with emphasis on its history, beliefs and structures, biblical foundation for the concept of discipline, as the practice of discipline in secular society.

The third chapter examines the practice of church discipline and the Global Repentance Missions. It considers issues such as the basis of discipline in the Global Repentance Missions, the nature of the disciplinary procedures of the church, as well as the impact of discipline on the church.

Chapter four evaluates and analyses the findings of the study from a theological perspective. It considers issues such as the concept of discipline and church image and order, church discipline and spiritual formation, as well as the practice of church discipline and biblical authority.

The fifth chapter includes the study and considers the summary of the study, the conclusion of the study, and the recommendations of the study for further research and implementation by relevant bodies, agencies and institutions.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE GLOBAL REPENTANCE MISSION AND THE CONCEPT OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The discussion in the previous chapter covered the general introduction to the study. It considered among other issues of the background to the study, the statement of problem, aim and objectives of the study as well as the scope and focus and the methodology of the study. This chapter examines some background issues relating to the study. These include the history and structure of the Global Repentance Mission, the biblical foundations of the concept of discipline, as well as the church and spirituality.

#### **2.2 Background to the Global Repentance Mission**

The Global Repentance Mission belongs to the charismatic tradition and is an indigenous Ghanaian church organization established to champion the course of Christ, notably, the proclamation of the Christian message and the spiritual development of its members in line with the tenets of Christianity. It is situated at Odeneho Kwadaso on the main Kumasi to Obuasi highway popularly called star junction in the Kumasi Metropolis.

##### **2.2.1 History and Origins**

The Global Repentance Mission began its first commencement service on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. In an interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, he said the name of the church was derived from the biblical mandate for the Christian church to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, as stipulated in Matthew 3:8.

He said further that the church believes in repentance as the prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins for every Christian convert, and the subsequent bearing of fruits of righteousness as prove of the repentance thereof.<sup>15</sup>

The foundation of the church rests on the zeal to raise a new generation of Christian believers whose fruit of repentance would be evident to the world. From an initial membership of 52 comprising 35 males and 17 females, the church can now boast of a registered membership of 194 with average Sunday church attendance ranging between 140 and 170.

Some of the founding members who are still active in the church today include Frank Ohene Okraku, Gertrude Okraku, Esther Owusu Oppong, Eric Opoku Agyemang, Gifty Ampofo, Esther Opoku Agyemang, Tina Boakye Yiadom and Kingsley Bio.

### **2.2.2 Beliefs and Practices**

Every Christian organization or church is defined by its beliefs and practices. Thus, all the members are to be united in their beliefs that are what they stand for.

The Global Repentance Mission believes in:

#### **The Sovereignty of God**

Sovereignty means that God is the giver and sustainer of all life forms in the universe.

Every aspect of life be it human or non-human owe their existence to God.

#### **The Lordship of Jesus**

Secondly, the church believes in the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the source of salvation for all who believe. He is the head of the church, the body which he died for.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, Head Pastor, Global Repentance Mission, Kumasi, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2018.



### **The Holy Spirit**

Thirdly, the church believes that the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead is present with all Christian believers, shaping their lives and empowering them for ministry.

### **The Authority of the Bible**

Fourthly, the Bible is recognized as the Word of God and is the revelation of His nature, will and purposes for humankind. It is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice for all Christian believers.

### **The Second Coming of Christ**

Fifthly, the church believes that Jesus will return the second time which shall result in the resurrection of believers who have died in Christ. (1 Thess. 4:13-18)

### **Healing and Deliverance**

Sixthly, the church believes in healing and deliverance based on scriptural authority that ensures the freedom of the oppressed. This is in line with Jesus' own example as stipulated in the Gospels.

### **Tithes and Offering**

The seventh in the doctrinal beliefs of the church is tithing. This is in line with biblical authority that enjoins Christian believers to give a tenth of their income or earnings for the support of the work of God. Also, the church believes in free will offering as providing opportunity to its members to exercise their worship of giving in offertory.

### **Future Judgment**

The church also believes in the future judgment with Jesus Christ as the judge. The judgment will be based on one's salvation in Jesus by faith and not of works.

### **Water Baptism**

The Global Repentance Mission believes that once a person expresses faith in the Lordship of Jesus, he or she is to be baptized in water by immersion as a public testimony of the person's new-found faith.

### **The Lord's Supper**

The church believes and practices the Lord's Supper as the uniting factor of Christian believers as they partake of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ. This reminds all Christian believers of the sacrifice of Jesus that secured salvation for them.

### **Feet Washing**

The Global Repentance Mission practices feet washing as symbolic of humility of lifestyle in Christ. It is also symbolizes self-denial which defines the believers commitment and devotion to Jesus Christ.

### **2.2.3 Major Activities and Programmes of the Church**

As a church the Global Repentance Mission exists to serve its members through various activities and programmes. These activities are organized on weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

- Fasting as a symbol of spiritual renewal.
- Evangelism – Every last Saturday of each month, the entire church moves out into the community proclaiming the gospel and distributing gospel tracts.
- Exaltation of the believers through Bible teaching. The Sunday morning service is themed evening service, is referred to as the Word Baptism Service; aimed at making members to be fully equipped with the Word of God for Christian ministry.

- Exaltation through the lifting of God's name in the form of worship and adoration.
- Revival meetings once every quarter which often lasts for one week.
- Anniversary Programme – every September of each year is set aside to commemorate the founding of the church, and it often lasts for the whole month.

#### **2.2.4 Church Government**

The church practices the Episcopal government structure the Episcopal polity is a hierarchical form of church government in which local chief authorities are bishops. It is a solitary form of leadership structure which invests power to one head who superintends the affairs of a church. Examples include general overseer, head pastor, presiding Bishop and others.<sup>16</sup> Currently, the church has the General Overseer in the person of Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, with three other ordained ministers and two practicing ministers who are yet to be ordained.<sup>17</sup>

#### **2.2.5 Departments and Auxiliaries**

As a Christian organization, the Global Repentance Mission has the following departments and auxiliaries:

##### **a) Men's Ministry**

The Men's Ministry is open to men from age 25 based on marital status. The Men's Ministry offers opportunities to all the men in the church to exercise their God-given talents and abilities in a relevant worship of God. They are also equipped to be good husbands and fathers through family life education.

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<sup>16</sup> Episcopal Polity of Church Government...

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, Head Pastor, Global Repentance Mission, Kumasi, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2018.

**b) Women's Ministry**

It is the belief of the church that at age 20 some ladies can enter marriage. Global Pearls, the women meet to share ideas and fellowship together. Through family life teachings, they are equipped to be good wives and mothers that ensure good Christian homes.

**c) Youth Ministry**

As youth, the church believes that by harnessing their potentials the future of the church will be guaranteed. Programmes and activities geared towards their spiritual development and character formation are ensured by the church.

**d) Children's Department**

The church believes that its future depends to a large extent on the children. Based on the biblical injunction in Proverbs 22:6, that stipulates that we “bring up children in the way they should go, so that when they grow they will depart from it,” the church ensures that programmes and activities relevant for their spiritual development are organized at their level.

**Auxiliaries**

**a) The Prayer Team**

Is the spiritual “fortress” of the church? The members function as intercessors for the church and meet regularly for such prayers.

**b) The Ushers**

The ushers are the “front desk” officials of the church. Their duties include receiving visitors and first timers to the church, and also ensuring orderliness and sanity in the church's worship period.

**c) Music Ministry**

This group ministers music in the church at worship by leading the congregation through praises and adoration. Other individual soloists are also given the opportunity to showcase their gifts and talents through music ministration.

**d) Crowd Control Unit**

This unit consists of able-bodied young men who offer their services in the control of the vehicles of the church members in an organized manner. Also they assist members who do not have vehicles and have to cross the main road to the church premises to do so with ease.

**e) Leadership Training School**

The church believers in team work and as a result it recognizes the abilities and potentials of all its members in building the church. Therefore, the Leadership Training School has been set up to equip promising members who demonstrate some potential for ministry in the local assembly. The school trains people in ushering, instrumentation, Bible study facilitation, and other forms of ministries.

## **2.3 Biblical Foundations of the Concept of Discipline**

In order to understand a particular concept and its usage or application in the church context, it is significant to investigate how it is used in the Bible. This is necessary in order to establish the biblical basis or authority of the concept. A balanced view of the concept of discipline is examined from the Old and New Testament perspectives in the following discussion.

According to Walter A Elwell in the Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, the notion of the discipline of God, and eventually the concept of the community and its leaders effecting God's discipline, derives from the notion of domestic discipline (Deut. 21:18-21; Prov. 22:15; 23:13). God is portrayed as a father who guides his child (i.e., the nation, more rarely an individual) to do right by the experience of physical suffering (Deut. 8:5; Prov. 3:11-12). Key ideas include "chasten/chastise" (Lev. 26:18; Ps. 94:12; Hos. 7:12), "discipline" (Lev. 26:23; Deut. 4:36; Prov. 12:1), and "reproof" (Job 5:17; Prov. 6:23). While God generally administers discipline to the nation, the community through its leaders is charged with the responsibility to administer the legal code for individuals. This code deals almost exclusively with severe offenses that require the "cutting off" (normally, execution) of the offender and gives few details concerning lesser offenses and remedial disciplinary measures.<sup>18</sup>

In the Old Testament, the concept of discipline had a wide range of meanings. It was used for correction, in the sense of instruction (Prov. 15:33) which leads to wisdom, and of education. In another sense, the disciplining of his son by a father provides an analogy for God's disciplining of His Covenant people (Deut. 8:5, Heb. 12:4-11).

David Atkinson observes that,

In the wisdom literature, the educative function of discipline is prominent. Thus, to heed to discipline is to gain understanding (Prov. 15:32). In his view, wisdom and discipline are inseparably linked (Prov. 1:2-3). In the Book of Proverbs, education cannot dispense with corporal punishment (Prov. 13:24). Such correction when necessary, gives hope of amendment (Prov. 19:18), drives out folly (Prov. 22:15, and gives life to those who receive it (Prov. 4:13). But this was to be done in love (Prov. 13:24) and not anger.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), 177.

<sup>19</sup> David J. Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1995), 310.

Elwell continues further by saying that, Community discipline was characteristic of Christian groups in the New Testament period. Paul, for example probably borrowed some notions from Jewish groups like the Pharisees of whose disciplinary procedures he was himself a recipient. These systems of discipline developed during the intertestamental period as reform movements among the Jews, who developed ways to establish and regulate the boundaries between themselves and outsiders.<sup>20</sup>

In the view of Walter Elwell, the Qumran sectaries developed an elaborate system of penalties intended to safeguard the purity and order of the community. This included a formal reproof procedure, short-term reduction of food allowance, exclusion from ritual meals, and permanent expulsion. Rabbinic traditions suggest that the Pharisees commonly imposed a “ban,” a temporary state of social isolation imposed for deviation from ritual purity laws or for heretical views and designed to recall the offender to full participation in the community. The right to put someone under the ban according to Elwell, was originally limited to the Sanhedrin, but some time before the destruction of the temple it was extended to groups of scribes acting together. Rabbinic sources are not clear with respect to complete expulsion from Pharisaic communities in the New Testament era, but it is reasonable to assume that unrepentant banned persons and heretics like Christians would incur more severe judgment. Paul himself five times received severe form of punishment administered by the synagogue for heresy, the “forty lashes minus one” (2 Cor. 11:24). The number of Deuteronomy 25:2-3, presumably in order to safeguard against excessive punishment.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 177.

<sup>21</sup> Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, 178.

In the view of David Atkinson, the New Testament, indicates that Moses was “educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22) and children are “disciplined” by their parents (Heb 12:8). The concept of discipline is also used of God exercising control over His people (Heb 12:6) exercised in love that they may share in God’s holiness (Heb 12:10).<sup>22</sup>

## **2.4 The Church and Spirituality**

The goal of the Christian life is living in conformity to Jesus. It is living by the principles set forth in the Bible in order to make one active disciple of Jesus. It is a fact that a true disciple is expected to follow in the footsteps of his master. This is significant in order to produce a people whose individual lifestyles are a representation of Jesus.

Much as Christians are mandated to make disciples of all nations as stipulated in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, it is important to understand this in spiritual terms. The disciple does not only communicate by word, but also by deed. In this sense, the lifestyle of the Christian should be such that it communicates the message he or she preaches. Jesus is regarded as the Master whose teaching and example contained patterns for Christian living.

In the church context, each individual Christian is expected to be given the right environment in order to grow spiritually. This means that each Christian believer is to live in accordance with the percepts of Christianity, and thus fall in line with what Jesus demands of his followers. In Matthew 5:12-15 Jesus demands that Christians become the Salt and light of the world, in terms of attitude and conduct. The spirituality of the Christian is measured by how he or she lives the Christian life.

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<sup>22</sup> Atkinson, *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, 310.



We are told in Acts 2:42-46 that the early Christians of the first century “continued in the Apostles “teaching.” This refers to their constant study of the Christian teaching which was able to build their lives. No wonder that the church of the first century made significant impact in the then known world.

According to Donald Bubua, Christian believers are to maintain a fellowship with one another. This can only take place as individual Christians understand the Christian life and how it should be lived. True fellowship with one another ensures spirituality. Bubua maintains that to maintain and nurture fellowship in the church, Paul commanded the Christians to keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:18). Being filled with the Holy Spirit was a prerequisite for relationship in the church’s fellowship.<sup>23</sup>

In the same sense, Joseph Stowell has observed that although purity will often be castigated, ridiculed, and resisted, a consistently pure life will engender confidence and respect and be a drawing force for those who long to be clean and right within. “Our lives will be like a treasured diamond in the toxic land fill environment in which we live. Purity is a pre-requisite for fellowship and intimacy with God,”<sup>24</sup> he concludes.

As the church moves towards spirituality, it becomes a true reflection of the image of Christ. Thus, the church does not only point people to God, but also live out what they say. True Christian spirituality is therefore measured by how the individual Christians-live out the Christian life in the world. By maintaining and adhering to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading and study, fellowship and the

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<sup>23</sup> Donald L. Bubua, *Building People a Caring Sharing Fellowship* (Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1982), 39.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church: Effective Spiritual Leadership in a Changing Culture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 228.

proclamation of the Christian message, Christians can be identified as the true disciples of Jesus. True discipleship is therefore hinged on true spirituality. Paul admonished the Corinthian Church to ensure that all things were done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40).

## **2.5 Cases of Indiscipline and how they were Handled in Biblical Times**

It is significant to consider some cases of indiscipline in biblical times and how they were handled. This is important in order to establish the grounds for assessment in the church situation today. These include the following:

### **Old Testament Examples**

- Adam and the Eve were banished from the Garden as a result of disobedience. In this sense they were suspended from fellowship with God.
- Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their acts of immorality which had gone beyond measure (Gen 19:1).
- The Israelites were warned not to approach the Mountain (Sinai) or touch it. Anyone who would go contrary to this injunctions to put the Israelites on their toes and ensure their spirituality.
- David was punished for adultery with the wife of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:1-11). He was rebuked by Nathan who was sent by God to point out his sin to him. The consequence of David's action was a trans-generation curse on his family. (2 Sam. 11)
- Achan was punished with instant death for bringing defeat to Israel through his disobedience (Josh 7:10-12).

## **New Testament**

- Jesus rebuked Peter for attempting to resist His death (Matt 16:23).
- Ananias and Saphira were judged with instant death for lying (Acts 5:1-10).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The chapter considered the background issues relating to the study. It discussed among other things the history and origins of the Global Repentance Mission, the biblical foundations of the concept of discipline, as well as the church and spirituality.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE PRACTICE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND THE GLOBAL REPENTANCE MISSION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter considered some background issues relating to the study. Some of these issues include the history and origins of the Global Repentance Mission, with reference to its beliefs and practices, governmental structure, activities and programmes. Also, considered were the biblical foundations of the concept of discipline, as well as the church and spirituality. This chapter examines the practice of church discipline as pertains to the Global Repentance Mission. Among the issues addressed here are the Christian faith and discipline, the nature of disciplinary action procedures in the Global Repentance Mission, as well as the effects of discipline in the church.

#### **3.2 The Christian Faith and the Practices of Discipline**

The Christian faith is believed to be a faith that encounters people and brings them together into common beliefs and practices. As they share fellowship with each other they grow in their spiritual lives in every dimension. However, as humans they need to be managed so as to keep the unity of faith and the peace. The apostle Paul meant this when he admonished the Ephesian-Christians that they should endeavour to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:3). A disciplined Christian fellowship is one that conforms to the image of Christ. As Christians, they need to maintain sound Christian living by being disciplined individually. This can be done by observing the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship and fasting, and many others.

The Christian faith is built on the premise of sound Christian principles. Against this background, any deviation from these principles would have to be corrected so as to keep the sanctity of the Christian faith. Paul writing to the Corinthian Christians asked “are you not to judge those inside (the church)? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you”<sup>25</sup> (1 Cor. 5:12-13). From this, we come to understand that the Christian faith does not and should not compromise on sin in any form. Sin should be confronted and addressed. Jesus said that all men would know that we are his followers if we follow in his words (Jn. 13:35, Jn. 15:14).

Rick Warren maintains that becoming like Christ is the result of the commitments we make. Without a commitment to grow, any growth that occurs will be circumstantial, rather than intentional. He concludes that “spiritual growth is too important to be left to circumstance.”<sup>26</sup> In Rom. 6:13, we are admonished to give ourselves completely to God to be used as tools in the hands of God for His good purposes.

### **3.3 The Practice of Discipline at the Global Repentance Mission**

In its bid to reach the fullness of the spiritual development of Christ, there is the need to maintain discipline at all levels of the church’s life. Thus, the Global Repentance Mission is committed to ensuring sanity and spirituality among its members. Paul admonishes us to do all things “decently and in order” (1Cor. 14: 40). This means that, the church should ensure a commitment to sound doctrine in administering the grace of God among its members?

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<sup>25</sup> Earl & Sandy n, *Restoring The Fallen: A Team Approach to Caring*, 129.

<sup>26</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 333.

### **3.3.1 The Basis of Church Discipline**

Much as the church desires to assist its members to arrive at spiritual maturity, it is also committed to ensuring their commitment to the spiritual disciplines of prayers, Bible study, fellowship and holy living. This means that any deviation from the sound Christian principles would have to be addressed with the deviants restored to fellowship in the Lord.

At the Global Repentance Mission, discipline is the hall mark of the church and as such, any misconduct is addressed seriously in order to restore the offending member and also maintain the sanctity of the fellowship.

The code of conduct at the Global Repentance Mission is based on a commitment to holy living maintaining a high standard of morality in speech and conduct with regard to inter-personal relationship. The leadership of the church, being mindful of their commitment to spiritual maturity of the members, often encourages members to live by sound biblical principles to safeguard them from evil influences. According to the head Pastor of the church, Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, the church's mode of discipline is based on restoring offending members to right standing in Christ and not considered as a means of punishment.<sup>27</sup>

By maintaining disciplined lifestyle Christians demonstrate that they are matured and are growing into spirituality. It is important to note that anyone can become physically fit if he or she will regularly do some good health habits. In the same sense spiritual vitality can be obtained through learning and practice spiritual exercises and being disciplined to do them until they become habits. Thus, character is shaped by the habits we develop. Paul said in Eph 4:13 that '... Until we all arrive at the fullness of

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom Head Pastor, Global Repentance Mission, Odeneho Kwadaso, Kumasi, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018.

Christ.’ This is what is meant this, discipline is meant to keep Christians on the way to maturity in Christ, attaining the fullness of Christ.

### **3.3.2 Cases of Misconduct and how they were Handled**

At the Global Repentance Mission, there have been instances of misconduct. It is important to examine these cases and to find out how they were handled by the church’s leadership. Being a young church, it is very important to safeguard the identity of persons involved in misconduct in the church and has gone through some form of disciplinary action. By so doing we are committed to safeguarding the person’s spiritual commitment and to ensure their continuity in the Christian faith.

According to Frank Ohene Okraku, since the inception of the church which is in its third year, there has been only one case of misconduct involving one young lady that resulted in her suspension. The case in point was that the young lady was found to be pregnant even though she had not officially been declared as a married person. When the issue came up and the lady was confronted, she admitted for guilt saying she herself had realized her misconduct which is against the biblical principles.<sup>28</sup>

After admitting her misconduct the lady was taken through biblical counselling of moral and upright living. As part of the disciplinary measures, which were explained to her, she was asked to suspend her duties as usher until such time that the church leadership became convinced of her restoration and commitment. The lady willingly accepted the church’s decision at the meeting of the church board, which was also carried to the entire church through a formal announcement by the head pastor. Even though she was suspended from her duties in the church, she was not put out

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mr. Frank Ohene Okraku, Founding Member and Church Elder, Global Repentance Mission, Odenho Kwadaso, Kumasi, 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

fellowship. She continued in fellowship through regular attendance and participation in Bible study, prayer meeting and Sunday service.

In the view of Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, the disciplinary measure was meant for restoration and the church deems it necessary in ensuring that offending members are not “thrown away” or sacked from the church’s fellowship. Again, the church is committed to ensuring that the disciplinary measures serve as deterrent to other people not to misconduct themselves. Ensuring sound church atmosphere is all that church leadership is committed to,<sup>29</sup> he concluded.

It is important to note that disciplinary action or suspension on the young lady was lifted after six months. After her safe delivery and the subsequent dedication of the baby in the church, a formal announcement of her “re-admission” into fellowship and her duties was made to the entire church.

It is important to realize the change that has taken place in the lady as a result of the disciplinary action. It was found out that her commitment level had witnessed a significant advancement coupled with a renewed joy and vibrancy in her approach to church fellowship meetings and duties. Again it was discovered that she had now become an herald advising and encouraging her colleagues and other young people on how to live for Christ.

Even though this case of misconduct on the part of the lady was very unfortunate, it served as an eye opener for the rest of the church members. There were other issues that bordered on discipline which did not necessarily warrant suspension from the fellowship of the church. Mention can be made of cases such as absenteeism from choir rehearsals, and singing group preparatory meetings. These matters did not come

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom.



to the church board level but were dealt with at auxiliary group levels, through suspension from performance for some period of time. One for instance one Hilda Owusu was suspended from choir meetings and performance due to a grudge with the choir executive officers.

Again, mention can be made of two ladies namely Barbara and Georgina, both members of the choir who were suspended due to absenteeism from choir rehearsals. They were handed with three months suspension from choir meetings, even though they participated in church fellowship. The action taken against these ladies served to restore them to right conduct and renew their commitment to their spiritual duties in the church.

Apart from these cases, there were occasions where the head pastor will give caution statements to the church members lateness to church, and putting up unwanted behaviour such as noise making, and acts of gossip and rumour peddling in the church.

On the part of the church, being at the young stage, the case of misconduct and how it was handled by the church's leadership has been found out to be very remarkable. This is because, many were the church members who having been accustomed with church discipline in other denominations, had come to realize the loving and caring manner in which disciplinary issues are handled in the Global Repentance Mission. The action has brought about a renewed commitment on the part of many of the members to the maintenance of spirituality.

In the view of Esther Opoku Agyemang, the action taken by the church's leadership in addressing the case of misconduct was not done with human wisdom. Rather, by prayer and direction in the scriptures, the action was handled with the love of Christ

for all people. By this the church had come to realize the unity and love that exists in the church.<sup>30</sup>

On his part, Kingsley Bio, an elder of the church, since the time of the first case of misconduct, it has been realized that no such case has ever taken place again. This is as a result of the commitment of the members who have come to learn lessons from that action. Church discipline has become for them a “new light” that is guiding them on the path of spiritual maturity.<sup>31</sup>

### **3.4 Effects of the Practice of Church Discipline**

After narrating the case of misconduct and how it was handled in the Global Repentance Mission, it is significant to find out the effects of the disciplinary action on both the offending member and the church as a whole.

In the case of the young lady that was subjected to the church’s disciplinary action for misconduct, it was found out that the measure taken by the church served as a catalyst for her spiritual growth. In her words cited by Frank Ohene Okraku, “I have known what it is to be a Christian. Falling in sin should not be the end of the journey, but rather making a commitment to rise up.” In her view she had come to realize that it takes the genuine love of a father to discipline his children. That discipline is not a punishment, but a learning process that takes process that takes one into greater heights in Christian maturity.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Madam Esther Opoku Agyemang, Founding Member of the Church, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2018.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Kingsley Bio, Elder, Global Repentance Mission, Odeneho Kwadaso-Kumasi, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mr. Frank Ohene Okraku.

On the part of the persons undergoing the disciplinary measures in the church, it came to light that they did not develop any ill-feeling against the church leadership or the leadership of the groups in which they are members. They saw their suspension as a wake-up call on them to straighten their lives. Hilda Owusu maintained that her suspension from the choir meetings enabled her to sit up as far as her Christian commitment is concerned. She had learnt the lessons of submission and obedience through what she had gone through.<sup>33</sup>

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the practice of church discipline in the Global Repentance Mission. Among the issues addressed are the Christian faith and discipline, the nature of disciplinary action procedures in the church as well as the effects of the practice of discipline in the life of the church.

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Hilda Owusu, a Chorister, Global Repentance Mission, Odeneho Kwadaso, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON CHRISTIANITY AND THE PRACTICE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The discussion in the previous chapter centered on the practice of church discipline in the Global Repentance Mission. It addressed issues such as the Christian faith and the practice of discipline, the practice of discipline at the Global Repentance Mission, as well as the effects of the practice of church discipline.

This chapter serves as an evaluation and analysis of the findings made in the study. This is carried out through a theological reflection on the major issues raised in the study. The issues discussed here include church discipline and Christian spirituality, church discipline and the church's leadership, as well as the practice of discipline and the church.

#### **4.2 Church Discipline and Christian Spirituality**

The question that is usually asked in connection with church discipline is its relevance for today. Much as the church is a human organization, it is also a spiritual community which is to maintain a right relationship with God and its Head, who is Jesus Christ. Thus, each member of the church is expected to live in accordance with Christian principles set out in the scriptures. This presupposes that the Bible is the standard of all conduct and Christian practice in the church context. Because Christianity is not a tag to be worn by any individual Christian believer, it means that the lifestyle of that person counts to a greater extent. We read in the book of Acts of how the early believers in Antioch were called "Christians". It was not because of

mere profession, but that their lifestyles reflected Christ who is the standard of Christianity (Acts 11:19-30).

As Christians maintain disciplined lifestyles at personal levels, that is living in accordance with the principles of Christianity outlined in the scriptures, they tend to demonstrate their maturity and spirituality. Thus, spirituality is both a process and a destination by which every Christian believer must aspire.

The crucial question is how does one grow spiritually without knowing what to do as a Christian? It is important that each individual Christian desire to subject himself or herself to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, fellowship and witness among many others. It is also important to consider what happens to the believer who is made to undergo church disciplinary measures such as suspension. Does that mean the person is not spiritual?

In Romans 7, Paul talks about how he subjected himself to personal discipline. In doing so, he learnt the lessons of Christian spirituality. Much as we live in a world that is constantly at war with our quest for Christian spirituality, we need to let the church be our vehicle to achieve that purpose of maturity in Christ. The testimony of the suspended persons at the Global Repentance Mission, including Hilda Owusu serves to imply that, church discipline does not mean “being handed over to Satan” but rather a process of recovery and restoration to spirituality and Christian commitment. Thus, individual persons who are subjected to church discipline learn new lessons which often inspire them into new heights.<sup>34</sup> In her view, her suspension enabled her to “sit up” in terms of her Christian commitment.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Hilda Owusu, a Chorister, Global Repentance Mission, Odeneho Kwadaso, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018.

### **4.3 Church Discipline and the Church's Leadership**

The critical issue regarding the practice of church discipline has always been with the way and manner in which disciplinary measures are meted out to offenders in the church. What is the motive and goal of church discipline? What is the role of church leadership in the practice of church discipline? It is important to understand that church discipline is a process and not just an event. Thus, church discipline must aim at setting in motion a system that will not be a nuisance but rather a catalyst for spiritual restoration and renewal.

It is also important to consider the way church discipline ought to be. Is church discipline a punishment or a restoration process? What offences warrant which disciplinary action in the church context? The role of church leadership in implementing disciplinary measures is very crucial to the sustenance of church unity and spiritual vitality. There should appear no ambiguity regarding church disciplinary measure. Every aspect of church disciplinary measures should be made known by church leadership to the membership. Again, the disciplinary action should not appear to be personal. In some cases, church leadership can take certain decisions on offenders based on personal issues.

In an interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom he said it is important that church leadership also carry out disciplinary measures devoid of any fear or favour. A leader who is bent on purity becomes a living advocate for right Christian living.<sup>35</sup> He seeks by his actions, to draw defiled lives looking for cleansing and shows them the way to enjoy and continue in a deepening intimacy with God. Thus, it takes spiritual leaders to enforce church discipline. It is of no surprise that the Apostle Paul places purity of

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, Head Pastor, Global Repentance Mission, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018.

life on his list of spiritual qualities which are nonnegotiable, if the good shepherd or leader is to express or demonstrate his belief in Christ in an exemplary manner (1 Cor 11:1). This will ensure that his decisions on any issue in the church will always be respected. Paul's call on the Corinthian Church to follow his example shows how the church leader must be an example in word and conduct. In this way, his decisions will be accepted and he will be a model to be emulated.

However, concerns seem to be expressed in today's church whereby church disciplinary measures are implemented by leaders whose conduct present nothing good to emulate. But we need leaders whose lifestyle would generate and inspire confidence and be a drawing force for those who long to be clean and right. Since purity is a prerequisite for fellowship and intimacy with God, it is important church leaders show the way in that respect.

At the Global Repentance Mission, decisions regarding discipline coming from the leadership are often regarded and respected by the church especially offenders. This is because, the leadership inspire respect and confidence and offenders do not harbour any ill feeling against the leaders in whatever disciplinary action is meted out to them. Here discipline by way of suspension is not meant to punish but to restore offenders back to intimacy with God. In this sense the church's leadership often hold counselling sessions for people undergoing disciplinary action so as to demonstrate the love of God to such persons and help heal every wound of immorality or indiscipline that might have caused their being disciplined. Thus, church leaders hold it a duty to ensure total healing of their members who are under church discipline. This they can do through teaching, counselling, visitation, encouragement and all forms of ministry that will allow offenders undergoing disciplinary renewal be attracted towards God and the church.

It is important to note that the church leader is not to sit down unconcerned while acts of indiscipline and immorality are left uncondemned. According to Paul, in the Pastoral Epistles, church leaders are to rebuke and refute (1 Tim 5:20, 2 Tim 2:25-26).

#### **4.4 The Practice of Discipline and the Church**

From the gospels we read of Jesus teaching and example which contained patterns for discipline (Matt 11:29). Church discipline has been noted as a means of restoration and not punishment. This agrees with the stand of some scholars such as Douglas J. Dixon who says that discipline, and in this case church discipline, ensures “that members whose conduct brought offence to the community (the church) were challenged about their behaviour and convicted so that they could be restored.”<sup>36</sup>

There are indications in the New Testament of how moral advice was given and discipline was effected in early church life. The case of Ananias and Saphira was exceptional (Acts 5:1-11). It is important to understand that discipline is meant to ensure the sanctity of the congregation by learning lessons of integrity as they grow in the fellowship of God’s Church. It ensures that erring brethren are shown forgiveness and won back rather than just for punishment. In reading the scriptures one will notice that teaching on discipline and restoration is always tied to the church fellowship. In Galatians 6:1-2 we read of a brother restoring an individual. The admonition to carry each other’s burdens was given to the churches in Galatia, but is also meant for the church everywhere. In James 5:13-16 indicates that we are to confess our sins to each other. The confession is to take place within the fellowship of believers. Earl and Sandy Wilson, maintain that “the sick person is to call on the elders” which indicates

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<sup>36</sup> Douglas J. Dixon, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 302.



that the process of confession and healing is to be carried out not as private affair but as fellow members of the local assembly of the family of God.”<sup>37</sup>

It is clear from scripture that God always desires to surround the fallen believer with brothers and sisters in the church who are able to exercise discipline and gently restore. Again it is important to note that the church context should be an avenue for people to feel free to admit their wrongs and be prepared to repent, confess and be restored. The situation at the Global Repentance Mission tends to agree with what Earl and Sandy Wilson points out that the church is to be safe place for people to be real, and authentic about their life situations.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the church situation should provide the opportunity for people who in one way or the other, have fallen to admit their faults and express a willingness to be restored.

Again, it is important to note that as discipline is meted out to offenders and this is made known to the congregation, the members tend to learn lessons out of what has happened. In the view of Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom, it thus, serves as deterrent to others not to do same; but to desire for purity of life, and commitment to God and His Church. Much as the entire church learns lessons out of the practice of discipline, they are also to offer love to affected persons under discipline to serve as encouragement for them. We are witnesses to situations whereby people being suspended are left on their own and this often leads to such people abandoning the faith entirely. He concludes that, the church is to demonstrate love and care towards the fallen to ensure their restoration, and not to point accusing fingers at them.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Earl & Sandy Wilson et al, *Restoring the Fallen* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1997), 127.

<sup>38</sup> Earl & Wilson, *Restoring the Fallen*, 128.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

The chapter presented an evaluation and analysis of the findings of the research. It discussed issues such as church discipline and Christian spirituality, church discipline and the church's leadership, as well as the practice of discipline and the church.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The study was designed to examine the practice of church discipline with particular reference to the Global Repentance Mission. The study report begins with a general overview which captured the background to the study, the statement of problem, research questions, aim and objectives of the study, scope and focus of the study, research methodology, review of related literature, significance of the study, as well as the organization and content of the study. Additionally, the study examined some background issues such as the background to the Global Repentance Mission, biblical foundations of the concept of discipline, as well as the church and spirituality.

Furthermore, the study examined the practice of church discipline in the Global; Repentance Mission. It considered, issues such as the Christian faith and discipline the nature of the practice of church discipline in the Global Repentance Mission as well as the effects of the practice of church discipline in the church. Moreover, the considered an evaluation and analysis the findings made in the research. It discussed issues, such as church discipline and Christian spirituality, church discipline and the church's leadership as well as the practice of discipline and the congregation. Finally, the report concludes with a summary of the study, conclusion of the study, and some recommendations.

#### **5.2 Conclusion of the Study**

The study set out to examine the practice of church discipline in the Global Repentance Mission. It was based on the assumption that church discipline has been perceived as

a means of punishment for wrong doing in church circles. Many times, it has been assumed that when one commits some form of evil, usually immoral acts that tend to border on the image of the church, such a one must be made to go through some form of punishment to serve as a deterrent to others in the church. Thus, suspension, which is connected with church discipline, has raised many concerns in recent times. Whereas some see suspension as punishment for evil doing, others think, it is not serving the right purpose, and also affect the churches numerical growth, negatively. The argument is always that people who are suspended often leave the church because they feel they have been disgraced. However, it has been proven from this study that being suspended from duties in the church does not mean such offenders are put out of fellowship often; the implication for the offender depends, to a large extent, on how the discipline is administered.

From the study, it has been established that church discipline is not only meant to save the image of the church by punishing but also serves to restore the offending person to right relationship with God. Thus the focus of church discipline should not only be on the image of the church but also on the integrity and continuous spiritual growth of the offending persons. In this way, caution statements, warnings and admonitions can help people develop personal discipline and not to be suspended.

The practice of church discipline should also involve creating the right atmosphere for all church members to grow spiritually through the personal practice of spiritual disciplines of Bible study, prayers, fellowship and witnessing to the Christian faith. As Christian believers begin to grow spiritually, they recognize and begin to adopt the measures necessary for their own personal discipline. It behoves on church leaders to ensure the right environment for all members to grow into maturity. Also church leadership should ensure that discipline is not carried out indiscriminately or in a bias

manner. Also through counselling, teaching and visitation, people serving disciplinary actions could experience the love of God through the church's fellowship. We are called upon to bear one another's burdens (Gal 5:1-2).

### **5.3 Recommendations**

In the light of the findings so far made in the study, the following recommendations have been put forward for consideration.

- **Education on the Value and Practice of Church Discipline**

Against the background that many people are divided in their knowledge and attitude to the practice of church discipline, it is recommended that much education in the form of teaching, and Bible studies on the concept and practice of church discipline is carried out. This will go a long way to provide the necessary information to church members to appreciate church discipline not as punishment but as means of restoration in the relationship with God and continuous walk with Him. The education should also include conferences, seminars and workshops to equip church leaders on the value and practice of church discipline.

- **New ways of Implementing Church Disciplinary Measures**

In the light of the perceptions with regards to the practice of church discipline as being punishment for evil doing which sometimes becomes offensive to offenders or victims of such measures, it is recommended that new ways be found to implement church disciplinary measures. Such ways could enable the persons undergoing the discipline to continue their involvement in church activities and programmes so as to build up their spirituality. Also, such persons should have access to the pastors in the

form of continuous counselling to enable them overcome any evil tendencies that made them fall into evil.

- **Discipleship Training**

In order for people to grow in the things of God, and to experience maturity and spirituality which is able to ensure purity of life, it is suggested that the church put in place a workable system of discipline that will assist every member and new ones to know and adopt the Christian principles of life and conduct.

- **Adoption of Church Disciplinary Code**

There is an Akan adage that says that “Obosom a ]ne wo b[tena no ]kyer[ wo na kyiwadi[” meaning the deity that wants your company or fellowship allows you to know its likes and dislikes. Against the background of this Akan adage, that seeks to make one aware of the demands of right living, it is recommended that every member of the church signs into a code of discipline which has to be provided by the church. By so doing, the church members will be made aware of what constitutes right living as far as fellowship in the church is concerned. Such a code should be Bible based to enable the members to appreciate it and apply it to their personal lives and their daily walk as Christians. When church members become aware of the church’s disciplinary measures, it will assist them to live rightly as expected of them.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. What is the Christian understanding of the concept of discipline?
2. What is the basis of the practice of church discipline?
3. What is the nature of the practice of church discipline in the Global Repentance Mission?
4. What impact does the practice of church discipline seeks to achieve in Global Repentance Mission?
5. How can the practice of church discipline be enhanced and sustained in the church?

## APPENDIX II

### RELEVANT PICTURES



**Researcher with the Head Pastor Rev. Ebenezer Boakye Yiadom**



**The Church Congregation**



**The Church Building**