



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Church discipline gone nuts...

Church discipline gone nuts..., on: 2008/12/19 8:08

Just wondering what you all think about this. Of course, this is just the woman's side of the story... but this seems to be rather strange.

First off, the woman in the article is upset that her former church is planning to make her sins "known to the church", yet she does this interview with FoxNews... huh?

Secondly, she resigned her membership to the church, so the way I understand things that should end the whole thing right there. There is no need for the church leaders to expose her publicly.

Do y'all think this over the line in regards to church discipline? She is obviously unrepentant in her sin, but do you think the church handled this scripturally? If not, could they have maybe won her over if they had handled it scripturally?

What say you?

Krispy

Florida Woman Says Former Church Plans to Make Her Sins Public

Thursday, December 18, 2008

By Diane Macedo

FoxNews.com

A 49-year-old Florida woman says her former church is threatening to reveal her sins to its congregation after learning that she is in a "sexually immoral relationship."

Rebecca Hancock told FOXNews.com that Grace Community Church, a non-denominational church in Jacksonville, Fla., was against her relationship with boyfriend Frank Young because the two were sexually active but not married.

When she wasn't willing to obey the church's orders to leave him, she decided to leave the church instead, allowing her two children to remain active members.

Now, she says, church elders have given her the worst ultimatum yet: In a Dec. 8 letter, they told her she either has to meet with them and end her "immoral" relationship or she will face public humiliation.

"Bottom line, on January they 4th they are going to the church publicly with my sins, and my children will be sitting in church at the time," Hancock told FOXNews.com.

Click here to see a copy of the letter (pdf).

A church leader wouldn't commit to an interview when contacted Thursday by FOXNews.com. The Rev. T. Scott Christman, pastor of the church, told the Florida Times-Union that the "process of loving accountability" is made very clear to members, and the church is doing "nothing more than following the practices of what biblical churches have done through history."

Hancock, who is divorced, said the problems began in March, when she started telling her church mentor about her relationship — in what she thought were confidential conversations.

"As it progressed I told her about it and she said, 'You've got to get out, you're biblically wrong,'" Hancock said.

Despite knowing her relationship was against church rules, Hancock said she never realized that disclosing it would trigger the first in a three-step process used by the church to deal with sinners: private admonishment, admonishment in the presence of witnesses and finally public admonishment.

Still, she said she tried to follow her mentor's advice and break up with Young, who wasn't a member of the church.

"I must have gone through 10 breakups trying to end it, but after not having the power to do it I would go back," she said. "It was hard to give up somebody I love."

Hancock learned that her private sessions with her mentor hadn't been so private after all, when in October her mentor pulled her aside in church and asked her come into another room.

"In the room, there were several women that I never told my business to. And they proceeded to tell me about my business and what I was doing and what a sinner I was — just persecuting me," Hancock said. "One of the ladies was even saying 'I was at your house when you didn't come home all night.'"

It was then that Hancock said she decided to leave Grace Community Church.

"I told them, 'I cannot believe you people are doing this. I'm not going any further — I'm never coming here again,'" she recalled.

Her boyfriend said the church wouldn't let it end there.

"The pastor kept calling her, and I informed him that she would appreciate it if neither he nor any member of his church contacted her ever again," Young told FOXNews.com.

Almost two months later, Hancock received the letter from the elders of Grace Community Church, explaining that she had left them no choice but to continue the disciplinary process.

"Your refusal to repent and be restored in your relationship with God and His Church leaves us with no alternative than to carry out the third step of the discipline process," the letter explained. "In accordance with Matthew 18:17, we intend to tell it to the church."

Darrell L. Bock, a research professor for the Dallas Theological Seminary, said that public admonishment is not uncommon in churches that focus on discipline but added, "Most churches would handle this much more privately than this particular community is choosing to do."

This kind of process normally would happen after "much more private interaction" with the person, Block said, and is normally reserved for church leaders as opposed to "a normal member of the church."

More importantly, he said, the actions are unusual given that Hancock had severed her relationship with the church.

Hancock sent a formal letter of resignation after receiving the elders' ultimatum in hopes of solving the dispute. She said she fears for her 20-year-old son and 18-year-old daughter if the church carries out its threat.

"I don't really care what they do to me. But I am concerned about my children sitting in church with their mother being crucified by the church that they trust," she said. "I am very concerned about how it would affect them."

Re: Church discipline gone nuts... - posted by RobertW (), on: 2008/12/19 8:14

Quote:
-----Do y'all think this over the line in regards to church discipline? She is obviously unrepentant in her sin, but do you think the church handled this scripturally? If not, could they have maybe won her over if they had handled it scripturally?

As far as I could tell she turned herself out of fellowship as would possibly have been the course of action for the elders if she had remained unrepentant. The reason why this is often ineffective is that there are churches all around that will accept those that are running from God. However, there is something to be said about being in a local church knowing you are in the will of God and then not being there anymore.

I don't think it is biblical to take church issues before unbelievers as it brings reproach on the Gospel. Perhaps they had been better to allow her to leave and she had been better not to have contacted secular authorities. This is a modern day lesson, I think. We need to be sensitive to Christ being made a reproach like that.

Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2008/12/19 10:49

The issue of addressing it to the body should be dead once she leaves the fellowship of the church. This does not mean that the church should let the issue die, just that it should be handled differently now that she is gone.

It sounds to me like these folks truly care about this woman's salvation, but their actions are showing that they are not being properly shepherded by the leadership in the church.

Tell you what, I give her children credit for sticking through this.

Re: Church discipline gone nuts... - posted by LoveGodsWay2, on: 2008/12/19 10:55

Remember, we don't know the church's side of the story. This is from the news media.

Re: , on: 2008/12/19 11:02

LoveGodsWay2... yes, I tried to point that out. At the same time, in the article on FoxNews.com there is a link to the letter the church sent to her, so it seems there is some legitimacy to her claims.

I just find it odd that she doesn't want to be exposed to the congregation... so she goes to the national media with this. Something is strange about that.

Krispy

Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2008/12/19 11:10

LoveGodsWay2 wrote:

Quote:

-----Remember, we don't know the church's side of the story. This is from the news media.

You are correct. :-) Thank you for the reminder.

Re: very strange - posted by LoveGodsWay2, on: 2008/12/19 11:27

Quote:

-----I just find it odd that she doesn't want to be exposed to the congregation... so she goes to the national media with this. Something is strange about that.

I agree, very strange.

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/12/19 17:16

Perhaps I am mistaken, Krispest, but isn't Church discipline supposed to be pursued as long as the unrepentant person "names the name of Christ", and is "called a brother"? (1 Cor 5:11) She almost certainly still considers herself a believer and has, or will have intentions of joining another fellowship. What then?

I believe the pastors are right, so long as she is holding the title of a Christian and refusing to be corrected she is subjected to discipline, even to the extent of warning other fellowships not to admit her.

What I wonder is why she doesn't marry her boyfriend? And if he will not marry her, why doesn't she perceive herself as little more than his harlot?