

Restoration after Moral Failure-

Procedure for responding to situations of moral failure.

Introduction:

God is a God of redemption and restoration. This is his heart, and history reveals to us it is also the action he takes. As his followers we must always have both redemption and restoration at the heart of our actions towards those that have failed. In every situation of moral failure love should pervade, but truth should also prevail.

The apostle Paul encourages us to restore the person who has fallen with a spirit of gentleness. (Gal 6:1). It is not our place to be harsh and bring judgement on a matter but rather to walk in the light together.

One of the dictionary definitions for restore says, 'it's the process of returning something to its original state or condition'. (Collins) Surely this must be our goal in dealing with any type of failure.

It may also be wise to state here that it is in the context of mutual accountability that we have a place for restorative process. It is out of our relationships as friends, families, colleagues and leadership roles that encourage and enable us to lovingly confront inappropriate moral behaviour and see healing and restoration take place.

In writing these procedures it is acknowledged that cultural and church diversity have bearing on the perception of behaviour that constitutes failure as well as the processes of restoration. A special factor is the status of leadership and how and who can deal with this appropriately. There must be room for grace but, accountability must be firmly upheld including the actions of evaluation, monitoring and confrontation in their respective place.

Procedure:

It has not proved to be helpful for large numbers of people or for various different leadership groups to be involved in deciding the course of action to be taken. As soon as possible after the incident or disclosure of moral failure, a smaller 'Intervention Group' should be formed to process the way forward. It would be best for the leader directly responsible for the person in question to form the Intervention Group (assuming he/she is in no way implicated). However, the Regional Leader is responsible to ensure that the Intervention Group actually is in place for good procedure. (Also see Guidelines for Justice and Reconciliation)

This group could include the following:

- the regional leader
- the national leader
- the person's base leader
- the person's ministry or line leader
- a person skilled in member care

Ideally this group should not only include someone with an operational function, but also someone with a pastoral motivation and someone with prophetic gifting, in order to decide on a course of action which would be best for the person(s) concerned, as well as for the team/base, and for the wider YWAM body. There should be at least one person who is of the same sex as the offender.

Although this smaller group will carry the responsibility for processing the incident(s) and the course of action to be taken, other leadership should be informed of the situation early on and have the freedom to give prayerful input to the group. Leadership to be informed would generally be the base and national leadership teams.

It is good to point out the principle of keeping the news and process of an incident as 'low' as possible yet communicate it as 'high' and 'wide' as appropriate or needed, depending on the sphere of the influence of the moral failure.

It is recommended that the incident be processed as promptly as possible, in order to avoid the 'rumours', insecurities and confusion that could potentially arise if there is a significant time delay between the incident(s) itself and its disclosure and ensuing discipline. The promptness of processing will be influenced to some extent by the willingness of the individual to cooperate with the ongoing process. Should accusations and gossip be prevalent then it is recommended that the IG send a memo to the respective field leaders addressing these rumours and to communicate that leadership is aware of them and is dealing with the given situation. This would be in order to restore confidence and hope.

The course of action to be taken will depend to some extent on whether the offender shows signs of repentance and openness, rather than seeking to cover up the sin or 'sweep it under the carpet'. An important issue is whether the sin was openly/voluntarily confessed or whether it was found out by others. When people share openly, bringing it to the light, they are set free. If they are found out and will not confess, or try to cover up the sin, make excuses or blame shift in some way -

then the issue becomes a little more complex and greater wisdom is needed. If we suspect sin that is not being confessed, then we should pray for exposure. The person may need confrontation, following the Biblical guidelines of Matthew 18. If the person recognises and confesses their sin, the way is open for forgiveness and restoration. Usually the person will be required to make public confession of the sin to the appropriate grouping(s) of people, and to step down from their positions of influence/authority and leadership for a season.

The type of disciplinary action taken will depend on factors such as:

- the nature of the sin ('major sin' includes issues such as sexual immorality, financial impropriety, addictive or destructive behaviours, severe marital conflict, child abuse, etc. – these are all reasons for breaking confidentiality)
- whether it is a besetting sin/weakness and area of ongoing temptation for the individual
- the scope of the person's influence and authority in the Mission
- the ramifications of the incident - how many people were affected by the sin.

We need to have a Biblical understanding of discipline; it is not the same as punishment. We are not speaking here of implementing punishment for bad behaviour but rather ensuring discipline is upheld to encourage responsibility for actions and their consequences.

Further consideration must be given to the following aspects when deciding with whom and to how far disclosure is brought.

- If the offender holds a major leadership position in the mission, it is recommended that the whole body be made aware of why the person is stepping down from leadership.
- If the staff person does not hold a leadership position, it is usually sufficient to confine disclosure to the person's base staff.
- If the person is a student, it will be processed mainly at the level of school leadership and, if the person is required to leave, the reasons should be explained to the school body and to the base staff. It will also be necessary to communicate with the pastor of the student's sending church. (If the student is not 'sent home', the base leadership may use discretion as to whether the wider base staff and students need to be informed of the details of the incident.)

It is recommended that the offender himself/herself be the person to disclose the situation / confess the sin to other staff in an appropriate setting, and to take whatever steps may be appropriate, such as asking for forgiveness, making restitution, etc.

Once the incident has been disclosed and a course of action decided on, there is still a need for a person or group of leaders to be available for the ongoing process of restoration, both in the life of the offender as well as for any 'victims' or injured parties (e.g. wife of an adulterous partner, family of an abuse victim, young staff or close co-workers who were devastated by a leader's sin, etc.)

This is another reason why it is important for a pastoral person to be involved in the process from the beginning, in order to facilitate ministry in the life of the individual.

To have appropriate ongoing follow-up is key to long-term restoration of individuals. Another key factor is the timing allowed for restoration and, if it has been a leader, then when is it the correct moment for them to be reinstated to roles of responsibility.

In order to prevent recurring incidents of failure in the individual it is important to have ongoing accountability in place.

Further Notes:

Scriptures to meditate on for those in the process of restoration would include;

Gal 6:1,2

John 21

2 Samuel 12

Mark 16:7

1 Cor 6:11, 15-20

2 Cor 2:6-11