

The process of formal discipline begins when a presiding priesthood leader calls for a disciplinary council. The purposes of disciplinary councils are to save the souls of transgressors, protect the innocent, and safeguard the purity, integrity, and good name of the Church.

Church discipline is an inspired process that takes place over a period of time. Through this process and through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, a member can receive forgiveness of sins, regain peace of mind, and gain strength to avoid transgression in the future. Church disciplinary action is not intended to be the end of the process. It is designed to help Heavenly Father's children continue in their efforts to return to full fellowship and the full blessings of the Church. The desired result is that the person make whatever changes are necessary to repent completely.

See also Forgiveness; Repentance

Civil Government and Law

Section 134 of the Doctrine and Covenants outlines Latter-day Saints' "belief with regard to earthly governments and laws in general" (D&C 134, section heading). The section includes the following statements:

"We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man; and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society. . . .

"We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.

“We believe that every man should be honored in his station, rulers and magistrates as such, being placed for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty; and that to the laws all men show respect and deference, as without them peace and harmony would be supplanted by anarchy and terror; human laws being instituted for the express purpose of regulating our interests as individuals and nations, between man and man; and divine laws given of heaven, prescribing rules on spiritual concerns, for faith and worship, both to be answered by man to his Maker” (D&C 134:1, 5–6).

One key element of the separation of church and state is the government’s responsibility to grant freedom of religion. Latter-day prophets support this principle, as stated in the eleventh article of faith: “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” Consistent with the separation of church and state, the Church does not endorse any political party or candidate. It does not permit the use of its buildings and facilities for political purposes. The Church does not participate in politics unless there is a moral question at issue, in which case the Church will often speak out.

Although the Church remains politically neutral, Church leaders encourage individual members to be involved as citizens. As a Latter-day Saint, you should understand your place and position in the land in which you live. Learn about the history, heritage, and laws of the land. If you have the opportunity to vote and to participate in the affairs of government, be actively engaged in supporting and defending the principles of truth, righteousness, and freedom.

Additional references: D&C 98:10; Articles of Faith 1:12

Coffee (See Word of Wisdom)

Comforter (See Holy Ghost)