

The unfolding of your words gives light.

The Temple of God

An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

⁹I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people^a; ¹⁰I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world^b. ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler^c—not even to eat with such a one^d. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders^a? Do

^a 5:9 **I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people.** The word translated “associate” (meaning *mix up together*) is used only by Paul in the New Testament (here, verse 11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14) and always with a negative. Each time Paul calls the reader to relationally avoid a professing brother who is rebelling against God.

This verse also tells us that there had been another corrective letter written to the church. This lost letter carried the authority of the apostle but not the authority of Scripture. The content of this chapter was not new instruction so the church was resisting God-given authority by tolerating unrepentant sin in its midst.

^b 5:10 **I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.** See a similar list of character traits in 6:9-10. These are the marks of those who do not have the Spirit.

This call is like your wife or mother telling you not to track mud into the house. She is not against mud. She is against mud where it does not belong. I have heard this explanation: “Our call is not to bring the world into the church but to send the church into the world.”

Jesus prayed in John 17:14-18 for the purity of His people in the midst of impurity. That purity does not come from living a monastic life but from the living and abiding word of God.

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. John 17:14-18

Paul does not call the church to stay away from people who make no claim to faith. The secondary call of this verse is to encourage you have redemptive relationships with unbelievers. While Scripture certainly rules out evangelistic dating and other unequal yokes, it does not rule out snatching immoral, covetous, swindling idolaters from the flames. Do you *mix up together* with lost people?

^c 5:11 **But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler.** When you are immersed in a culture that is sexually out of control, sexual sin is rampant. So the “immoral person” (*pornos*, used of a male prostitute) must be confronted. We wrongly assume that sexual sin is the only life-dominating sin the church must address. Note Paul’s list here. When you are immersed in a culture obsessed with wealth, covetousness is rampant. Likewise a culture obsessed with entertainment. It is a lie that says real satisfaction can be found in possessions, religion, attacking people with your tongue, getting high or gaining wealth by cheating people. Seeking these pleasures dishonors the God who created pleasure.

If this makes you uneasy about some of your personal sins Paul has made his point. Jesus died to cleanse His bride.

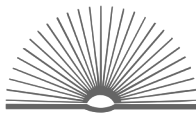
^d 5:11 **not even to eat with such a one.** Certainly this includes exclusion from the Lord’s table, but there must be more involved. Meals are where close ones gather and share joy. Eating

The Epistle of 1 Corinthians
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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The unfolding of your words gives light.

you not judge those who are within *the church*^b? ¹³But those who are outside, God judges.
REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES^{c, d}

pictures fellowship. There is none of that when a brother is in rebellion. Social connections can never be the same until he repents. Avoid that kind of connection until he turns back.

^a 5:12 **For what have I to do with judging outsiders?** Calling lost people “outsiders” is not an insult. It only contrasts their position before the church. These are the neighbor kids. Disciplining them is not our responsibility.

^b 5:12 **Do you not judge those who are within *the church*?** We must, however, judge our own. It is very evident when parents do not care enough to discipline their own children. In the name of love and tolerance—and possibly because of laziness—parents let children run wild. Churches need to show more love than that.

^c 5:13 **REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.** The pattern for this action comes from Deuteronomy 17:1-13. The quotation (verse seven) refers to the death of a Hebrew who turned to worship false gods. In that setting Israel had civil authority and could execute capital punishment. Just as national Israel was given authority to judge in civil affairs, so the church is given authority to judge in spiritual affairs.

Thoughts important when a church has to discipline a member:

- Informal discipline should be going on all the time.
- You should be humble enough to thank people who seek to correct you even if you think they are wrong.
- This does not mean that the people making the decision are without serious personal sin.
- This serves as a warning and a comfort to sinners that their church loves them enough to correct them.
- Churches should not discipline people for sinning. They must discipline them for sinning and refusing to repent.
- This must be an attempt to correct and restore rather than punish (get even).

^d 5:9-13 Christian churches have differed much over the matter of the biblical doctrine *separation*, disagreeing over what distance churches and individuals should keep between themselves and the world. While this text does not entirely address that matter, it does give us a perspective on our role as a body of saints in the midst of a world that is relationally separate from God.

This text calls us to our responsibility as a church and as individuals:

1. We have individual and corporate responsibility to connect with lost people. We have greater reason to stay away from unrepentant Christians than unrepentant non-Christians.
2. We have a corporate responsibility to judge individual sin. The purity of Christ's church is His concern and it should be ours.
3. We have an individual responsibility to judge our personal sin.

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