

**SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE**  
**I Corinthians 5:1-13**  
**8/24/03**

*Read the whole passage first.*

How are we as Christians to respond if we discover that a fellow Christian is dealing drugs?

What should we do about a church member who does not pay his bills or repeatedly borrows money from other Christians and does not pay them back?

What is a church to do if it is discovered that a car dealer in the church is cheating people by illegally turning back the odometers on used cars.

What are you to do if your Christian roommate is regularly having her boyfriend spend the nights?

How is the church to respond when a member leaves his family for another woman?

Few things seem as incongruent in the minds of most people today as the thought of connecting the word *church*, with the words *accountability* and *discipline*

“What other Christians do is nobody else’s business. It is between them and the Lord.”

“She can’t help herself. You don’t know how she feels and what she has been through.”

“Isn’t the church suppose to be a place where sinners can come and not feel judged?”

Let’s take a look this morning at what the Bible says about this issue of spiritual accountability and church discipline.

**1. Both The Immoral Man And The Church Were Living In Disobedience To God’s Word.  
I Corinthians 5:1-2**

**a. The man was involved in the sin of incest. v. 1**

- Most likely with his step-mother cf Lev 18
- “Has”- present tense- an ongoing immoral relationship

**b. The people of the church were sinning by their inaction. v. 2a**

- Note that this chapter is *not* directed at the immoral man at all.
  - ◆ **It is addressed to the church members who refused to do anything about it!!!**
- **Arrogant**-The people in the church were apparently proud of being open-minded, non-judgmental, and understanding. cf v. 6a
  - ◆ They, like many Christians today, thought that what this man did was no one else’s’ business. It was between him and the Lord.
- They may also have mistaken tolerance and acceptance for Biblical love.
  - ◆ cf Heb 12:6-8
    - ◇ cf Adam and Eve, the Exodus generation, Judges, David, Hosea, the Babylonian captivity

- There are many verses in the Bible that instruct Christians to confront sin in the lives of one another.
- To not act is sin

◆ **John White and Ken Blue: Healing The Wounded: The Costly Love Of Church Discipline**

- ◇ “Unless someone in the church decides to go lovingly to the person involved in the scandal with the object of establishing the truth, effecting righteousness, and seeking to bring about reconciliation, every single member of the church who is aware of the situation is sinning every moment- is in fact a participant in the sin of the ‘identified sinner’ in one way or another. The church is sinning by avoiding church discipline.”

2. Paul Prescribed That The Man Be **Removed** From The **Church**. I Corinthians 5:2b-5a cf vv. 7, 9, 11, 13

a. **But aren't we told not to judge others? vv. 3,12 cf Mt 7:1-6; I Cor 6:2-5**

- Mt 7:1 **Judge** can have several different nuances just like in English.
  - ◆ To evaluate and determine.(Judge for yourself)
  - ◆ Judicial action to determine if a law has been violated.
  - ◆ Critical, self-righteous condemning attitude
- What Mt 7:1-6 teaches is that we are not to look down on others with a critical, self-righteous, hypocritical, condemning attitude.
  - ◆ Take the long out of your eye and then go.
  - ◆ Note v. 6
- Many passages in the Bible teach that we are to evaluate and judge Christian behavior by God's word.
  - ◆ To use this verse to reject church discipline is to pick and misapply one verse out of context and to avoid the Bible's full teaching on the subject.

b. **What process are we to go through? cf Mt 18:15-18**

- v. 15 Make sure the issue is sin.
- v. 15 go privately
  - ◆ With a view to restoring the person, not to be personally vindicated.
- v. 16 Go with one or two others
  - ◆ to confirm the facts
  - ◆ to encourage repentance
- v. 17a Tell it to the church

◆ Representatives?

- v. 17b-18 Break all Christian fellowship with the person.

◆ **2 Thess 3:14-15** If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. *Yet* do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

- Restoration is to be immediate whenever repentance takes place. 2 Cor 2:7

**c. What does it mean to deliver someone over to Satan? v. 5a cf I Tim 1:20**

3. **One Purpose of Church Discipline Is To Restore The Person To Fellowship With God. I Cor 5:5b cf Mt. 18:15; Gal 6:1; James 5:19-20**

**Matthew 18:15** "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, *you have won your brother.*

**Galatians 6:1** Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, *restore such a one* in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

**James 5:19-20** My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who *turns a sinner from the error of his way* will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

4. **Another Purpose Of Church Discipline Is To Protect The Congregation From The Corrupting Affect Of Unrepentant Sin. I Cor 5:6 cf 15:33; II Tim 2:16-17**

For a church to ignore unrepentant sin is not loving, its dangerous.

- A church that refuses to confront sin in the body is like a person with cancer who refuses the treatment prescribed by the doctor.

◆ If he waits too long it will destroy the body.

- I Cor 15:33

- 2 Timothy 2:17 their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

- Prov 12:26; 13:20; 22:24-25; 26:20-21

5. **A Third Purpose Of Church Discipline Is To Prevent God's Name From Being Slandered. I Cor 5:7-8 cf Rom 2:21-24**

As the unleavened bread of the Jewish Passover pictured a new life of purity, so we who have been saved from sin should not live sinful lives.

Christ is our Passover. He died for our sins and we as Christians are not to go back to our old lifestyles.

***How we act reflects on Christ.***

- **Romans 2:21-24** you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast

in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,

◆ "Christianity is a joke. Those Christians are nothing but a bunch of hypocrites."

- The way we live our lives reflects on what others think of our God.

Church discipline declares to the unsaved world that we take God and His word seriously.

6. Church Discipline Is *Not* To Be Applied To The Unchurched. I Cor 5:9-10

7. Church Discipline Is *Only* To Be Applied To Unrepentant People Who Call Themselves Christians. I Cor 5:11-13

a. Church discipline may involve any sin that a person willfully continues. v. 11 cf 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; Titus 3:10

- 2 Thessalonians 3:6 Now we *command* you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.
- II Thess 3:12-14 Those who won't work.
- Titus 3:10 Divisiveness (gossip)

b. Church discipline involves breaking off contact with the person until they are willing to repent. vv. 11-13 cf 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

- *I am sure that some in Corinth reacted against God's instruction here through the Apostle.*

◆ "We don't want to offend him and drive him off. How can we help him then?"

◇ The exclusion from church fellowship is the last step of many attempts to help the person and yet they are still in rebellion.

◇ God says that when the person's heart has become hardened that this is what is necessary to bring him around.

◆ "But I'm his best friend. I'm not going to turn my back on him. I know that he will come around if we just don't push."

◇ Why hasn't he obeyed God up to this point?

◇ Who will he hurt in the mean time? cf v. 6

◇ True love confronts. Withholding fellowship can lovingly force him to face his sin and come to terms with his rebellion.

◇ By maintaining fellowship they themselves would be rebelling against what God has commanded. They would inevitably become an enabler and supporter of his sin.

◇ The real question is, "What does God say that they should do? Are they willing to obey God in this matter?"

**What Would You Do?**

What would you do if you lived in Corinth and this man was a friend of yours?

How would you deal with him?

- Would you separate from him until he repented?
- Or would you tell him that even though you think that he is wrong, you will still be his friend and support him no matter what he does?
  - ◆ If so you would be doing exactly what the Corinthians were doing.
- Some today might try to defend him with psychological and emotional excuses?
  - ◆ “You don’t know what he has gone through and how he feels.”
  - ◆ “You want him to be happy don’t you?”

The real question is, “What does God’s word say that you and I are to do when our Christian friends continue in unrepentant sin?”

God takes sin seriously and so should we. Heb 10:26-31; 12:6-8; I Pet 4:17; I Cor 11:27-32;

1 Pet 4:17 For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Is there sin in you life that needs to be confronted before God? Prov 28:13

Prov 28:13; I John 1:9

Are you are saved. II Cor 13:5

God is a God of love. He takes no joy in judging sin, but He will.

- Lamentations 3:33 For He does not afflict willingly Or grieve the sons of men.
- Isa 28:21
- Ezek 33:11

**Acts 3:19** Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

**Acts 20:20-21** solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance** toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.