

Accountable in an Unaccountable World

1 Corinthians 5

We, God's people, must exercise accountability and discipline toward one another. Why? Because we love one another, we love the Church, and we fear the Lord.

We all have areas of sin or deficiency of character that God keeps patiently working on. But sometimes within the church, an individual's sin becomes so serious and blatant that action must be taken by the church to confront and correct the behavior. That is "church discipline."

If this is your first Sunday with us, I'm sorry. We are studying 1 Corinthians, and this is the next topic. Important in the flow of the book.

- Corinthian believers look a lot like the world.
- Paul: move upstream. Go against the flow of the culture around you.
- Big issue in 1-4 has been division. He pointed them back to the Gospel
- Next major section, Paul begins to address particular issues of sin in the church

READ 1 Cor 5:1-2

2 Corinthian Sins:

1. The man's sin: Unrepentant immorality
 - Immorality (*porneia*) = any form of sex outside of marriage covenant
 - Specifically "incest"
 - Son with stepmom. Divorced from father; was father dead? We don't know.
 - Against Old Testament Law
 - Not acceptable even among gentiles. Allowed prostitution, homosexuality
 - Not one time affair
 - Blatant, obvious, willful, ongoing, unrepentant
2. The church's sin: Silence – 5:2
 - Bigger problem; focus of chapter is not the man's sin
 - Arrogant. Proud of their spirituality/maturity (so wise, gifted)
 - Not mourning. Not acting decisively for holiness. Ignoring sin while maintaining their maturity
- Why did they fail to act?
 - Flawed theology. "All things are lawful." We are so enlightened that sin does not affect us.
 - Partiality. Rich, powerful man. Afraid to offend him.
 - Internal conflict. Distracted by fighting with one another over status and authority.
 - Don't know. But Paul is shocked that they have failed to act.

Paul's Solution: Church Discipline – 1 Cor 5:3-5

- 5:3 – "Judged" = passed a verdict on behavior and sentenced to punishment
 - Specifically: remove the man from fellowship in the church
- 5:2 – "removed from your midst"
- 5:7 – "clean out the old leaven"
- 5:11 – "do not associate [or even] eat with such a one"
- 5:13 – "remove the wicked man from among yourselves"
- 5:5 – "deliver such a one to Satan"

- Outside of the protective authority of the church
- 2 Cor 4:4 – “god of this world”
- 1 John 5:19 – “whole world lies in the power of the evil one”
- 1 Tim 1:19-20
- Really intense. Rare among church’s that practice discipline.
- Complex topic. Can’t cover every possible circumstance.
 - Basic principles. Direct all questions to Buck Anderson

#1: WHEN do we exercise church discipline?

- Only for professing Christians – 1 Cor 5:9-11a
 - Don’t expect non-Christian to act like a Christian.
 - Jesus associated with worldly people, but did not participate
- Not every time someone sins – 1 Cor 5:11-13
- Unrepentant of certain types of sin.
 - All sin separates us from God
 - Rom 6:23
 - Christians still sin. Broken fellowship with God and others
 - Certain sins have greater consequences on earth
 - Impatience with your spouse v. Getting drunk every night; abuse
- Sexually immoral
 - 1 Cor 5:1-5 = incest
 - 5:11 adds immorality in general = prostitution, homosexual acts, adultery
 - other forms marital infidelity
 - Abandonment. *physical abuse of spouse and/or children*
 - *divorce without biblical grounds*
- Covetous swindler = greedy person who cheats/steals/extorts
- Idolater
- Reviler = abusive person
- Drunkard. Generalize – addicted to a substance and unwilling to seek help
- Other NT passages include the following:
 - heretical teaching (2 Jn 9-11)
 - divisiveness within the church (Titus 3:10-11; Rom 16:17)
 - Unwillingness to work and provide for family; creating disruptive, disunified church. 2 Thess 3:10-15; 1 Tim 5:8
- Sins listed by NT writers not intended to be exhaustive but illustrative. Probably others that we could add based on common sense/wisdom
 - Confronted. Unwilling to change. Won’t acknowledge, seek help and try.

#2: HOW do we exercise church discipline (process)?

- 5:5 – “such a one” = anyone who acts this way. This is precedent setting.
 - 5:11 – “so called brother” = any person publicly identifying with Christ; not casting doubt on man’s salvation. Assuming it is true.
 - Paul skips steps 1-4 because it is already public in the community
1. Examine yourself – Gal 6:1
 2. Confront privately – Mt 18:15
 - a. Keep someone else’s sin as private as possible. This makes repentance and restoration as easy as possible
 - b. 1 Peter 4:8 (Prov 10:12). Love covers a multitude of transgressions.
 - c. Love doesn’t sweep sin under the rug.
 - d. Ex – sin like backing yourself in corner. How can I help you out?

3. Bring in help (2 or 3 witnesses) – Mt 18:16
 - a. People who have a relationship with the unrepentant sinner
 - b. Not for gossip, but to increase the moral pressure for change.
4. Bring it to an elder – Mt 18:17a
 - a. Pastors are not elders. We do not have the authority to discipline
 - b. 1 Tim 5:19-21
5. Remove and isolate – Mt 18:17b-20
 - Sin that has been confronted. Facts are confirmed.
 - Unrepentant; i.e. no change of mind, heart or behavior
 - Historically we have announced on a Sunday morning; business meeting; home church; depends on level of involvement and leadership
 - Removed from membership; asked not to attend until repentance.
6. How do I apply this within my family?
 - Disciplined person is a member of my family?
 - Family member who is not a Christian? We need boundaries.
 - Complex. Wisdom required. Pastors and elders available.

#3: WHY do we exercise church discipline? 1 Cor 5:6-8

- **For the good of the Church**
 - Old Testament image to speak of the holiness of the Church
 - Leaven = sin is infectious
 - “You are unleavened” = sin is inconsistent with our identity
 - Church is to be a reflection of the holiness of God
 - We should not judge!
 - 1 Cor 5:3; 1 Cor 5:12
 - We have a responsibility
 - Culture: My business is my business. No one has a right to tell me what to do, think, say, feel. My private life.
 - Rude awakening when interviewer asks for FB page
 - Church infected. View our lives as entirely our own
 - We belong to one another and the Church belongs to Christ
- **For the good of the world** – 1 Cor 5:1
 - Corinthians looked a lot like the world. Even worse.
 - World: What’s so different about Jesus? Why follow Him?
 - Our witness has power when we are holy; transformed community
 - World needs to see us take sin seriously. If we don’t, how can we expect them to take it seriously? Sin has consequences.
 - Ex – In trouble. Mom crying; hated to discipline. Spanked and I laughed. She stopped crying and I never laughed again. Kids do that once.
 - If we love the lost, we take holiness seriously
- **For the good of the sinner** – 1 Cor 5:5
 - “for the destruction of [his] the flesh so that [his] the spirit may be saved”
 - Greek text does not include pronoun “his”
 - 2 options: referring to the sinner or the church
 - If church...
 - Handing the man over to Satan (putting him outside of the church) destroys lusts of flesh that have invaded the church through this man. Result: spirit/life of church saved

3. Become eager for accountability

- We are NOT ALONE
 - No private sins
 - The world: what you do in secret is your business
 - Not if you're a follower of Christ!
 - The entire church is hurt by this sin – like leaven in dough

 - Hebrews 12
 - 1 Tim 1:18-20