

1 Corinthians 5

According to Acts 18, the apostle Paul spent 18 months planting and discipling the young church in Corinth. When Paul moved on, the group kept growing. But the joys of the church's growth also brought with it growing pains. Although these believers were God's alternative society to the culture of Corinth (like Israel was in their culture—Ex. 19:6), a lot of this young church's values and ethics were still governed by their former way of life.

In chapters 1-4 Paul dealt with the problem of worldly wisdom and divisions in the church. In the chapters that follow he moves on to address several moral and ethical issues and the church's response to them.

1. What was one of the most memorable doses of discipline that you received as a child? What effect did it have?
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.** What wrongdoing was “reported” (cf. 1:11) to Paul and how does he emphasize its seriousness? Who is most at fault?
3. What is the Corinthian church's response to, and view of this? According to Paul, how *should* they have responded (v.2)?
4. What would you say were the *values* and the *assumptions* that caused both Paul and the Corinthians to respond as they did?
5. What counsel does Paul give them as to how they ought to respond (vv.2-5)? How is Paul's strategy of discipline designed to bring health to both the church and the individual?

Why do you think so few churches today practice this kind of discipline?

6. **Read 1 Cor. 5:6-8.** From the yeast imagery, what is Paul's concern if this situation is allowed to continue? (I.e. What are the dangers of action? of inaction?)
7. As you **Read 1 Cor. 5:9-13**, imagine yourself looking over Paul's shoulder as he wrote the words of this chapter, under the direction of the Holy Spirit's inner guidance. What emotions, or longings, or thoughts do you think he most likely experienced as he wrote each section of this chapter?
8. What instruction had Paul given in an earlier letter (v.9)? How had the Corinthians apparently interpreted this command (v.10a)?
9. Why does Paul set forth one standard for relating to people in the church who are living in sin, and another for “*the people of this world*” (vv.9-13)?

Why is associating with immoral people in the church more dangerous than keeping company with immoral people in secular society?

10. What principle of judgement does Paul set forth? What kinds of judgement are the believers in Corinth responsible for and what judgements are they to leave to God?

11. How can we distinguish between the kinds of people who should be put out of the church (5:2, 9-11) and those who belong in the church even though they are “worldly” and immature (see 3:1)?
12. How do you react when you hear about serious moral and spiritual problems of people in the church? How can Christians confront one another in loving ways? How can church discipline become redemptive?
13. What new (or renewed) insight have you had in today’s study and what are its implications for you and/or our church?