



## TEACHING PLAN

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Corinthian believers. Their sin sensitivity meters were broken. People were openly living immoral lives, and no one in the church was trying to help.

**Why might sexual sin have lost its shock value for the Corinthian Christians? Compare Corinth to contemporary society. Why might we become desensitized to sin?**

**Does living in an immoral society justify casual acceptance of immorality? Why or why not?**

**> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5.**

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**Why does Paul react so strongly about the immoral brother in the Corinthian church? What does he tell them to do?**

**What shocked Paul more—the sin or the church’s attitude toward the sin? What shocked the church at Corinth?**

**What wrong attitude toward the problem in their church did the Corinthians have (v. 2)? What attitude did Paul think they should have had?**

**What are some ways we show pride in our sin rather than being broken with grief?**

Paul connected the problem of ignoring church discipline to arrogance within the corporate body (v. 6). They were so consumed with inflated pride that they had been blinded to the most offensive sins within the church—sins that even pagans in Roman Corinth would not tolerate. They should have removed the offender from their fellowship. The purpose of this measure is revealed in verse 5.

**How could “handing this man over to Satan” (v. 5) actually be for his good? Why might isolation and a lack of spiritual support drive people to genuine repentance?**

**How did the Corinthians’ lack of shock over the immorality jeopardize their witness?**

**How can we regain our capacity to be shocked? What will we face in this world if we once again allow sin to shock us?**

One big danger for us *inside* the church is becoming just like those *outside* the church. The church has taken a lot of heat over the past several years about being filled with hypocrites. Yes, we are all sinners, but when we begin acting in ways that turn people outside the church off to the God we follow, there’s a big problem.

**What are some of the reasons we overlook or ignore the sin in other’s lives?**

**What is the difference in dealing biblically with sin in the Christian community and becoming judgmental?**

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When we take church discipline seriously, a danger we face is the pride and judgment that can come from focusing on other people's faults. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave a stern warning for the disciple who was quick to judge another believer without taking his or her own sins seriously.

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 7:1-5.**

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**What is the point of the speck and the plank?**

**What did Jesus call the person who constantly finds fault with someone else but fails to notice his or her own faults?**

**Why is it so easy to be hypocritical, criticizing others for faults that also are ours? What are we trying to convince ourselves of?**

Jesus delved into His disciples' inner character. The speck denoted a small object. The log, however, represented a huge piece of wood that obviously would cause blindness. The word-picture pointed out the ridiculous nature of a judgmental person who condemns another person's sins without taking his/her own into account.

**According to these verses, what responsibility do we have when it comes to pointing out the sins of another Christian? Read Galatians 6:1-2 for insight.**

**What is the difference between correcting someone with God's Law, and correcting them with God's grace? How does this look in practical terms?**

Verse 5 indicates that we do have some responsibility to help remove "specks" from the eyes of fellow believers, but our motive for doing so is important. If the motive is to make ourselves feel more righteous, then we're in no position to speak truth, and we're guilty of replacing God's righteousness with our own. Instead, our motivation should be rooted in humility and a desire to help our brothers and sisters in Christ stay in right relationship with God. We should approach others with graciousness, acknowledging that we're also sinners and encouraging them to join us in the practice of repentance (see Romans 2:4).

> **HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-8.**

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**From the yeast imagery, what is Paul's concern if this situation is allowed to go on without discipline?**

**What did Paul propose the Corinthian church do to fix their pride issue?**

**What does Jesus' death do for our struggle with sin?**

**How does reflecting on the gospel impact the way we approach our sinfulness and church discipline?**

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Boasting within the corporate body gives rise to tolerance of corporate sins. With a wordplay on the expression *Christ our Passover*, Paul offered a threefold solution to this corporate arrogance: (1) remember what Jesus did to deliver them from death; (2) acknowledge that Jesus rendered them clean before the Lord; and (3) live in sincerity and truth. Reflecting on Christ's work of forgiveness and reconciliation in our lives reminds us of our need to repent of sins and our reliance on His grace.

### > HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 5:9-13.

Dealing with immorality in the church can be tense, but it's necessary. When we see something in a Christian friend's life that we know doesn't please God, we have a responsibility to do something about it because we love the person and we love God. But how can we honor God and restore our friend to righteous living without pushing him or her away? That's the challenge of spiritual friendship. In this passage, Paul wrote about the extreme end of the "sin confrontation" scale—removing the unrepentant person from the church—but the point of this passage is the starting point for anyone who wants to know when, where, and how to confront sin in another's life.

**What is our responsibility when we see Christian friends not dealing with their sin?**

**What standards does Paul give for relating to those outside the church versus those inside the church? Why the difference?**

**What happens when a church is more concerned with judging those outside the church than evaluating their own behavior and motives? Are you more lenient and tolerant of Christians or non-Christians and why?**

The church versus world distinction is key in this discussion. We aren't to hold those who don't know Christ to the standards of Christ (v. 10). God will do this, but we shouldn't. If we are going to reach people who are far from God, then we can't boot them from community because they have sin. We are, however, supposed to disassociate with "anyone who bears the name of brother" (v. 11) who is unwilling to deal with ongoing sin in their lives.

**What was Paul's motive when he wrote that immoral brothers should be expelled?**

**If you were one of the believers at Corinth hearing this letter read, how would you have felt if you were one he said should be put away? If you were one who had to do the putting away? What must we do regardless of how we feel?**

**What's the desired end result of disciplining church members?**

**What are the dangers we should be on guard against when it comes to church discipline?**

Certain cautions should be added. First, discipline is for the purpose of restoring not destroying believers who sin. Second, discipline is only for serious sins that are proven.



CHURCH DISCIPLINE (1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13)

5:1 The sin of divisions within the Corinthian church was not the only problem reported to Paul. A scandalous, immoral relationship existed among the members of the Corinthian church. Paul preached the need for sexual purity in response to salvation. In his absence a serious case of immorality emerged and the leadership of the Corinthian church failed to respond. Paul rebuked the church for their lack of moral indignation and response to the sinner who was a professing Christian.

5:2 Paul did not address the sinner. The sin was obvious, public, and scandalous. He focused his criticism on the congregation that ignored the sinner's conduct. They should have been filled with grief, both for the sinner who had fallen into sin and for the reputation of the church that was suffering because of the scandal. Instead of grief they were inflated with pride. Pride fails to admit wrong and the members tolerated the sinner and continued to treat him as a brother in good standing. They appeared unaware or unconcerned about what the scandal was doing to their church.

5:3 As an apostolic judge, Paul issued a "judicial opinion"—a banishment of the offender but with a view toward ultimate restoration. Taking up the language of a legal trial, he used at least 10 legal idioms in these verses. Beginning with the phrase **I have already decided... as though I were present** (literally "I have judged as one who is present"), Paul's terms echoed the language from secular courts.

5:4-5 Paul declared that the assembled corporate body was capable of judging the offender in the name of their Lord because he, as an apostle, had already rendered his legal decision as though he were present. Paul's legal perspective on this case would have supported the church body that possessed the authority of the Lord Jesus to render a decision on this sin. They had the authority to remove him (2:2) from their midst for the destruction of the flesh. This may refer to physical judgments such as sickness or even death (11:30). If the person were a true believer, banishment to Satan's domain would cause misery and possibly repentance. Paul expressed hope for the guilty person's ultimate restoration with the legal phrase, so that his spirit may be saved on the appointed Day of the Lord (Rom. 2:6,9).

5:6 Boasting within the corporate body gives rise to tolerance of corporate sins (cp. v. 2, "inflated with pride"). The yeast of arrogant hypocrisy had spread throughout the Corinthian batch of dough.

5:7-8 With a wordplay on the expression **Christ our Passover**, Paul offered a threefold solution to this corporate arrogance: (1) their recognition of what Christ as their Passover did to deliver them from death; (2) their acknowledgment that Christ as their Passover rendered them clean (unleavened) before the Lord; and (3) their remembrance that as they observed Christ as the Passover, they were to purge their household of malice and evil to celebrate with sincerity and truth.

5:9 Paul reminded the Corinthian church how they should respond to immorality and other sins in the church. It is evident from Paul's mention of a previous letter that 1 Corinthians was not the first correspondence he had with the church. Paul had previously addressed these issues in a letter that has not been preserved. He had given them a command not to associate with sexually immoral people but they had misunderstood what he meant.

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