

STUDY GUIDE

Monday, July 11 – Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. It would be very easy to just skip this chapter and go right to Chapter 13 (that's the love chapter, not a means to deal with debt). But since Paul decided to deal with this issue in the church, let's spend some time looking over these verses. The church must discipline flagrant sin among its members – such sins, left unchecked, can polarize and paralyze a church. The correction, however, should never be vengeful. Instead, it should be given to help bring about a cure. There was a specific sin in the church, but the Corinthian believers refused to deal with it. In this case, a man was having an affair with his mother (or stepmother), and the church members were trying to ignore the situation. Paul was telling the church that it had a responsibility to maintain standards of morality found in God's commandments. God tells us not to judge others. But He also tells us not to tolerate flagrant sin because leaving that sin undisciplined will have dangerous influence on other believers.

Tuesday, July 12 – Read 1 Corinthians 5:5. To “hand this man over to Satan” means to exclude him from the fellowship of believers. Without the spiritual support of Christians, this man would be left alone with his sin and Satan, and perhaps this emptiness would drive him to repentance. “That the sinful nature may be destroyed” states the hope that the experience would bring him to God to destroy his sinful nature through repentance. Sinful nature could mean his body or flesh. This alternative translation would imply that Satan would afflict him physically and thus bring him to God. Putting someone out of the church should be a last resort in disciplinary action. It should not be done out of vengeance, but out of love, just as parents punish children to correct and restore them. The church's role should be to help, not hurt, offenders, motivating them to repent of their sins and to return to the fellowship of the church.

Wednesday, July 12 – Read 1 Corinthians 5:6. Paul was writing to those who wanted to ignore this church problem. They didn't realize that allowing public sin to exist in the church affects all its members. Paul

does not expect anyone to be sinless – all believers struggle with sin daily. Instead, he is speaking against those who deliberately sin, feel no guilt, and refuse to repent. This kind of sin cannot be tolerated in the church because it affects others. We have a responsibility to other believers. Yeast makes bread dough rise. A little bit affects the whole batch. Blatant sins, left uncorrected, confuse and divide the congregation. While believers should encourage, pray for, and build up one another, they must also be intolerant of sin that jeopardizes the spiritual health of the church.

Thursday, July 13 – Read 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. As the Hebrews prepared for their exodus from slavery in Egypt, they were commanded to prepare bread without yeast because they didn't have time to wait for it to rise. And because yeast also was a symbol of sin; they were commanded to sweep all of it out of the house (Exodus 12:15; 13:7). Christ is our Passover lamb, the perfect sacrifice for our sin. Because he has delivered us from the slavery of sin, we should have nothing to do with the sins of the past.

Friday, July 14 – Read 1 Corinthians 5:10-12. Paul makes it clear that we should not disassociate ourselves from unbelievers – otherwise, we could not carry out Christ's command to tell them about salvation. But we are to distance ourselves from the person who claims to be a Christian, yet indulges in sins explicitly forbidden in Scripture and then rationalizes his or her actions. By rationalizing sin, a person harms others for whom Christ died and dims the image of God in himself or herself. A church that includes such people is hardly fit to be the light of the world. To do so would distort the picture of Christ it presents to the world. Church leaders must be ready to correct, in love, for the sake of spiritual unity.

These verses are instructions for dealing with open sin in the church, with a person who claims to be a Christian and yet who sins without remorse. The church is to confront and discipline such a person in love. After going through this chapter, you may feel conflicting, you may have questions. That's ok. Remember the overarching theme – In love. Whatever we do, however we do it, love needs to be central.