

I may sound like a broken record, but I want to repeat a statement I've made countless times...

There is no such thing as a problem free church. All churches have problems. But there are two kinds of churches—just as there are two kinds of families. There are churches that seek to deal with their problems God's way, and there are churches that don't deal with their problems God's way.

Discuss: What does it mean to say a church (or a family) is dealing with its problems *God's way*? How can you tell?

A great book to learn how to deal with problems God's way is 1 Corinthians. In this letter Paul addresses a series of problems in order to help the Corinthian believers deal with them in a way that would please God.

Key: We must keep in mind why it's so essential to deal with our problems—some of us are prone to ignore problems rather than deal with them. Our motivation has to do with what Paul spelled out at the beginning of the letter...

See 1:2

Q: What is true of our identity as a church? Notice two key features:

1. We are "sanctified in Christ Jesus."
2. We are "called to be *holy*." That's God's purpose for us.

Thus, we have plenty incentive (and resources) to deal with problems.

Last week...

I. Paul exposed two problems in the church (1-2).

A. There was the sin of immorality (1).

1. *It was in the church family.*
2. *It was unacceptable even to pagans.*

Discuss: What was happening? A church member was involved sexually with his step-mother, an *unregenerate* step-mother. And his behavior was public knowledge.

There was another, equally serious sin-problem. What?

B. There was the sin of tolerating sin (2).

1. *The church should have been filled with grief.*
2. *The church should have removed the man.*

But it failed to do so. Consequently...

II. Paul proposed the solution (3-5).

A. He stated what he did (3).

1. *He took personal responsibility.*

Even though absent from Corinth in Ephesus, Paul made it his business to get involved in this matter.

2. *He passed judgment.*

Granted, the Bible forbids self-righteous, hypocritical judging. If we've got a log in our own eye, we have no business to try and pull sawdust specks from a brother's eye (Matt 7:1-5).

In this case, if I'm not seeking to be a godly husband I've got no right to urge you to do so. Or if I'm forfeiting my kids on the altar of my career, I'm in no position to express my concern over your parenting.

So what needs to happen? Get the log out, and *then* help your brother deal with his problem.

Key: Until we've heeded Matthew 7 we're not ready to follow Matthew 18—and not before. But after we've heeded Matthew 7, we have no excuse for ignoring Matthew 18.

Q: What instruction does Jesus give us in Matt 18:15? "If your brother sins against you, go..."

In a sense, in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul fleshes out Jesus' words in Matthew 18. Paul gives specific guidelines on how to do it with a specific sin issue—in this case, the man living in sexual sin.

B. He stated what the church needed to do (4-5).

1. *Assemble as a church.*

2. *Assemble to do the Lord's work the Lord's way.*

We're not supposed to deal with sin-issues any way we like. We must do it God's way. Some churches don't deal with problems at all. Other churches may deal with them, but do so in unbiblical ways.

3. *Hand the unrepentant sinner over to Satan.*

To "hand a person over to Satan" is indeed a drastic course of action. It basically involves saying to a person who professes to know Christ yet wants to live like the world, "You can't have it both ways. If you want to live for Christ, we'll do all we can to help you. But if you insist on living like the world, we will give you what you request—the world. We will remove you from the protective umbrella of the church and place you on the turf of the Evil One."

Such action is necessary for what reasons? Two...

a. This action is for the good of the man.

⇒ There may be physical destruction.

⇒ The goal is to see his spirit saved.

b. This action is for the good of the church.

That's what Paul addresses next in verses 6ff. Here's where we left off last time and where we'll begin this evening.

New Material...

III. Paul explained why church action is needed (6-8).

V 6 "Your boasting is not good," he says. Why not? He gives two reasons...

A. Sin spreads (6).

Q: What illustration does he offer to make the point?

1. *It's like yeast.*

2. *It affects everything it touches.*

Q: How does this illustration fit what needed to happen in Corinth?

Discuss: What happens when we fail to deal with sin in our church family, not to mention our personal lives and our families? It spreads. It contaminates everything it touches.

B. Sin distorts our identity (7-8).

Q: What exhortation does Paul give at the beginning of v 7? “Get rid of the old yeast...” What does he have in mind?

To support this drastic action, he appeals to a well-known picture from the OT, a holiday.

Q: What holiday? Passover

Q: What did Passover celebrate? When the death angel came and the Spirit of the Lord “passed over” the houses where blood as sprinkled on the door frame. Exodus 12:13 “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

Q: What did the Jews do to remember this Passover event? They ate a yearly meal called Passover, as the Lord commanded (Ex 12:24ff.).

Q: What did Jewish families do to prepare for this Passover meal? They swept out of the house all leavened bread crumbs. When they baked the bread for the Passover meal, they used unleavened dough.

Q: What holiday followed Passover on the Jewish calendar?

Lev 23:4-6 “⁴”“These are the LORD’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: ⁵The LORD’s Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. ⁶On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD’s **Feast of Unleavened Bread** begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast.”

With that background, let’s take another look at Paul’s words. Paul appeals to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the basis for the needed change in Corinth.

1. *Christ is our Passover Lamb.*

Q: How so?

2. *We must eliminate every trace of “yeast.”*

Notice again v 8, “Let us keep the Festival. What *Festival*? The Festival of Unleavened Bread. Paul’s not saying we must keep the literal holiday, but the significance of it. Christ fulfilled Passover for us. We have been spared because His blood was shed for us. The death angel has passed over us.

Now we are called to live holy lives dedicated to the Lord. That’s what the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolized. Now that you are clean people (holy), live like it. Live holy lives.

Q: What must we do to live holy lives?

A: We must get rid of every trace of sin, of “yeast” (8).

Wiersbe—“Leaven to the Jews was always a symbol of sin and corruption; so, before Passover, they always scoured their houses to

remove all traces of leaven. Christians must have the same attitude; we dare not allow the yeast of sin to grow quietly in the church and produce trouble and shame. Christ died for us, not to make us like the world, but to make us like God.”¹

Discuss: What happens when a church fails to eliminate “yeast” from its midst? Again, the two results we’ve just seen. One, it spreads. And two, it distorts our identity.

E.g. Suppose you bought a beautiful dress, a very expensive one. And suppose on the way out of the house you dripped your coffee on it. What would people say when they saw you? “What a beautiful dress” Or, “Ooo! You’ve got a spot!”

What does the world see when the Body of Christ fails to deal with sin in its midst? Does it see our beautiful Savior? No. All it can see is the spot.

Key: Church discipline is for the good of the person in sin, but there’s an even greater good involved. It’s for the glory of the Savior. It’s so His church will be pure and give the world an accurate picture of what He’s like.

Discuss: Why do so many churches neglect dealing with members who are living in sin?

The subject of church discipline can easily be twisted, and great harm can result. So the next section is vital...

IV. Paul clarified what to do to insure no misunderstandings (9-13).

Just who is a church to discipline?

A. This doesn’t apply to our relationship with non-Christians (9-10).

Q: What phrase does Paul use to refer to non-Christians in v 9?

Q: What specific types of sinners does he list? We’ll be seeing another list in v 11.

We’re not supposed to “discipline”/remove ourselves from non-Christians living in sin. Why not? Paul states two reasons at the end of v 10...

1. *We can’t avoid contact with ungodly pagans.* Why not?
2. *We’d have to leave the world.*

B. This applies to our relationship with unrepentant, professing believers (11).

Q: What type of person does Paul say we must disciple? Notice two factors. One, he “calls himself a brother.” And two, his life is characterized by sin. Not simply that he sins (we all sin), but that his life is marked by unrepentant sin. He *is* a... (and Paul lists six categories—notice what they are...this goes beyond sexual sin...).

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

Q: What two responsibilities must we carry out with unrepentant believers?

1. *Don't associate with a professing believer who lives in sin.*
2. *Don't even eat with such a person.*

You say, "That sounds tough." It is. It is a severe penalty.

It goes beyond the scope of this exposition of 1 Corinthians 5, but I need to mention something important at this point. "Lifestyle" sins are not the only ones that the Bible calls for action against. When should a church discipline a member?

Wiersbe gives five categories, "There are several kinds of Christians that we are warned about in the Bible, believers who should not be permitted fellowship in the local church: (1) the member who will not settle personal differences, Matt. 18:15–17; (2) the member who has a reputation for being a flagrant sinner, 1 Cor. 5:9–11; (3) those who hold false doctrine, 1 Tim. 1:18–20 and 2 Tim. 2:17–18; (4) those who cause divisions, Titus 3:10–11; (5) Christians who refuse to work for a living, 2 Thes. 3:6–12. Those who are suddenly overtaken by sin we should lovingly seek to restore; see Gal. 6:1."²

C. When it comes to judging...(12-13)

1. *We're not to judge those outside the church.*
2. *We are to judge those inside the church.*

Problem: Sadly, the trend today is to get it turned around. We want to attack sin in the world, and condone sin in the church. We mobilize the church to try and "save the culture." We get upset when Gay Rights activists flaunt their sinful lifestyle, when Planned Parenthood tries to promote its ungodly agenda, etc. And there's a place for righteous indignation.

But those folks are not the enemy. They are *victims* of the enemy. Yes, they need to change, but what biblical responsibility do we have to affect that change? We're supposed to pray for them, reach out to such individuals and share the gospel, and demonstrate compassion and burden for their lost souls.

On the other hand, we have a clear responsibility towards those within the church who are living in sin. What is it? We are to urge repentance and do all we can to help sinners repent. But if they refuse to do so, we're to take action to remove the sinner and the sin from our assembly.

Wiersbe is right, "The church cannot change the world if the church is like the world... One reason the church today has so little influence in the world is because the world has too much influence in the church."³

Wiersbe explains further, "It shocks some Christians when they realize that God expects us to exercise spiritual judgment in the church. We are not to judge the outsiders; God will do that. But we are to expel from church fellowship any Christian who will not confess sin and make things right. This is not to be

²Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

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done hastily; all parties involved must be permitted to state their case. There must be prayer and the ministry of the Word. There must be sincere Christian love. The very act of church discipline is a testimony to the world and a warning to the church, and especially to new believers, that God expects His children to be different from the world. To condone sin is to deny the very cross of Christ!”⁴

Response: In light of what we’ve learned...

We do not have a current “discipline” situation in the church right now. This makes it a perfect time for us to ask some hard questions are we prepare to deal with things in a God-honoring way in the future.

Let’s make it personal and answer some important questions...

1. Do you believe that a church should deal with members who are living in unrepentant sin?
2. Do you believe that to deal with such situations, we should follow the guidelines of Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5? We should approach such professing brothers and urge repentance, and do all we can to facilitate it. But if repentance is not forthcoming, do you believe we must discipline the individual and remove them from our fellowship?
3. Will you agree today to deal with future situations as we have just learned, no matter who the person may be or how difficult it may be?
May God help us to honor Him.

⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.