



151st Church of Christ
Small Group Study Guide – 1 CORINTHIANS
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AN IMPERFECT LOCAL CHURCH
A Study in 1 Corinthians

Lesson 8, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Incest and Judging
CLASS

GENERAL OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20, Reported Problems

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Incest and Judging

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| 5:1-5 | Incest: Sin in the church |
| 5:6-8 | Leaven in the lump |
| 5:9-13 | Judging insiders or outsiders |

In chapters 1-4, Paul developed the theological foundation that God-given spiritual wisdom will produce understanding and behavior that is considered foolish by the world's standards. Christians will not only do some different things (e.g., pray, attend church services, worship a single God), but they will think differently, weigh right and wrong by a different set of scales, and seek different, eternal, goals.

On that foundation Paul will now address a series of issues specific to the Corinthian church situation. Some of these issues have been "reported" to him (e.g., 5:1), while others came to him through questions asked by the congregation (e.g., 7:1). In all cases, Paul calls Christians to think and respond following the wisdom revealed by God through His prophets and apostles regardless of what the foolishness of the world expects or perceives to be normal and acceptable.

Paul opens this section with a case of immorality involving a church member that was more worldly than what the world would generally accept, but that in their self-described spiritual sophistication, the Corinthian Christians tolerated. Since only the man is targeted, we will assume that the woman was not a Christian, and therefore, not to be held accountable by the church. We know nothing about the father, but it is possible that he was deceased, which the son may have used to rationalize and justify his actions. These details would have been known to the original readers of this letter.

DISCUSSION

1 Corinthians 5:1-5, Incest: Sin in the church

- 1. Who might have reported this situation to Paul?**

2. Think of some ways in which being “puffed up” (v. 2, ESV “arrogant”) stands in the way of godly behavior and repentance. What kind of “mourning” does Paul reference, and how would mourning produce a different reaction than being puffed up?

3. Who was puffed up? The man or the church? To whom does Paul address his instructions about what to do in this situation? What does this tell us about Paul’s primary focus in this letter?

4. Is it imaginable that a church would decide to tolerate or endorse something forbidden in Scripture (such as sexual immorality) and claim that their decision was the result of a spiritual advancement to which other churches should aspire?

5. Several times, in various ways, Paul calls for coordinated church action towards the man. Identify the various ways Paul describes this action. (Hint: I found four.)

6. What does it mean to “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (cf. 1 Timothy 1:20; Romans 7:5-6; Galatians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Matthew 5:29-30)?

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 Leaven in the lump

In the first five verses of the chapter, Paul has identified a serious problem in the congregation and has told them *what* they should do about it. In these 2 verses, he uses the analogy of leaven in bread to explain *why* this situation should not be allowed to continue unchecked.

7. What was done with leaven leading up to and during celebration of the Passover (Exodus 12:15-20)? What was to be done to anyone who violated this command?

- 8. What earlier analogy had Paul used that would emphasize the importance of keeping the church as pure as possible, and what would happen to those who contaminated the church?**

- 9. On the basis of Paul's analogy, do you think that he believed that, in some cases, the "slippery slope" principle could present a real danger in the church?**

1 Corinthians 5:9-13, Judging insiders or outsiders

Paul had written an earlier letter to the Corinthians (a letter that we do not have), in which he had been misunderstood. In that letter he had told them, "not to keep company with the sexually immoral." They didn't realize that this statement wasn't about our interaction with people of the world, but was to be understood only in the context of life within the church. We should expect people of the world to behave in worldly ways, but we should hold ourselves to a higher standard.

- 10. What do we know from the content of 1 Corinthians that indicates that Paul doesn't think that only perfect Christians are qualified to hold others accountable and even to take decisive action if they fail to repent? What kind of Christians were to confront this man?**

- 11. What are we to make of the fact that while Paul calls for the immoral brother to be "disfellowshipped," he doesn't call for the same action for the other sins and problems addressed in the letter?**

- 12. What Christian writer included an entire chapter about love in the church in one of his books? What book was that? Does not the command to love contradict this instruction to judge?**

13. If a person isn't living a godly life, how can we tell who is an "insider," and who is an "outsider."

14. What factors either permit or demand that we judge one another, and what factors exclude judging (cf. Matthew 7:1-5; Galatians 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)? Are Christians expected, in some cases, to judge one another?