

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

How to Sort through Judgment and Sexuality

One of the most interesting things that happens to me is when I tell people I am a pastor. Almost every time that disclosure leads to dead silence. Very rarely, do people ask follow up questions concerning my work. I compare it to that girl who used to be impressed by you; but now doesn't want to have anything to do with you. Quit talking to me; Loser!

Growing up, the most popular verse in the Bible was John 3:16 probably because of the Jesus movement among hippies. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish; but have eternal life." Everyone knew that verse, Christian and non-Christian. Today, the most popular verse hands down in the King Jimmy for everyone is Mathew 7:1 "Thou shall not judge." People are just hypersensitive about being judged. Maybe that is why people fall silent when I tell them I am a pastor. They probably perceive me as someone who judges. I understand. I wasn't a Christian for twenty six years of my life. It seems like yesterday hearing Christians tell me things like listening to secular music, going to movies, and hitting the night clubs was evil. Hey—that was my life in a nutshell! I felt judged. I thought I was a decent person. Besides, I was always the designated driver.

All that to say, today, we are going to look at a passage that deals with of all things, judging people: Christian and non-Christian. The great thing about going through chapters in the Bible is that we come to sensitive issues like judging people—not because I want to focus on it; but rather because it occurs in the next chapter. Honestly, I don't have an agenda here. Okay, let's look at the passage. In verse 1, Paul begins with an unusual issue.

5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

Paul was not present in Corinth. All his information came through reports from people who had been there, probably those he refers to as being from Chloe's household (1 Corinthians 1:11). Now, sexual immorality had always been an issue in Corinth and among other Gentile converts. They came from a background where sex was linked to religion. Unlike the Jews, they did not practice self-discipline in this area from youth. However, the immorality that was happening in Corinth was even detestable to the pagans. The pagans would have looked at the church and said, "Hey, that's sick!" What they were doing is the kind of stuff that gets you an audition on the Jerry Springer show. But these guys weren't from a hick town in the deep woods of Kentucky; these folks were from the church in Corinth.

A Christian in the church was having sex with his mother! It is most likely what Paul had in mind specifically, was a mother-in-law. That seems to fit the phrase, "his father's wife." Regardless, if it was a mom or step mom it was still sick. When a sex-obsessed culture perceives a Christian's sex life to be sick there's a problem. Houston we have a problem! It get's worse, the main verb "has" indicates this wasn't just a one-night stand where you feel guilty, repent, and confess to the church in the morning; this was an on-going relationship that was STILL happening. It wasn't a man who **had** his father's wife; it was a man who **has** his father's wife.

The term sexual immorality comes from the Greek word, *pornia*. This is where we get the word pornography. I heard a report the other day that said people spend more money on porn than they do on Country, Jazz, Rock, and Classical music combined. The porn industry makes about 10 billion dollars a year in revenues. The NFL, Major League Baseball, and the NBA don't make that much money combined. But for now, that is another topic for another time. Today, I want to focus on sexual immorality in the church. One important question is what does sexual immorality entail? According to a Greek lexicon, the word *porneia* (means "prostitution, adultery, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse." The key word here is unlawful sexual intercourse. Not from a civil perspective—though some forms are illegal—but from God's perspective. Here are some ways *pornia* is used in the Bible. It is translated as sexual immorality.

Besides incest—which we have here in our study; *porneia* is used in the context of adultery in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Jesus uses the term to refer to extra-marital intercourse, which he says are legitimate grounds for divorce. In 1 Corinthians 6:18 *porneia* is used in the context of prostitution. Besides incest; some in Corinth were also sleeping with temple prostitutes, which unfortunately was part of the culture. Paul rebukes them. In 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 *porneia* is used in the context of fornication; which is a fancy word that means having sex with someone outside of marriage. Here Paul says that he wishes everyone would remain single like he is. That way you don't have to worry about your wife going shopping or telling you no when you want to get that 60 inch plasma television! Just kidding! Anyhow Paul says, if you remain single you can focus on God. Then he comes to the big "but" in chapter seven, verse 9. But if you can't control your sexual passions—or as my mom used to say, "Keep it in your pants until you are married," then you better get married before you explode. So in a nutshell, *porneia* is used to describe incest, adultery, prostitution, and sex outside of marriage in the Bible. Each of these *porneia* issues are illegal forms of sexual intercourse in God's eyes. So anyhow, Paul is shocked at the incest and here is how he deals with it.

2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. 3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. 4 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

It was bad enough that a Christian was having a sexual affair with his mother-in-law. What's worse was how the church responded to the incest. They weren't even grieved by the sin; instead they were arrogant. Consequently, instead of confronting this man they were arrogant in regards to God's commands and Paul's immorality guidelines which he wrote in a previous letter. They allowed the affair to continue. Imagine that; Christians ignoring blatant sin in the church because they wanted to be tolerant.

Two big buzz words in our culture when it comes to alternative lifestyles are tolerance and acceptance. Unfortunately, this has permeated into the church. Today, there is a new buzz word in some churches called *radical hospitality*. Many of these churches cater to fornicators and homosexuals all in the name of tolerance and acceptance. They teach as long as two people are in a committed relationship; it does not matter if they are having sexual intercourse. The problem of course is that it minimizes the commands of God to accommodate our culture. The end result is an unhealthy and ungodly church. Notice how Paul handles it.

He says, although I am not present with you; here is what I want you to do. Kick them out of the church! Paul says I don't even have to be there—I'm with you in spirit. I have already passed judgment. There are some sins that you don't even have to have a meeting about, incest is one of them. But sometimes people want to have meetings to justify their sin. At my old church; there was a Christian who was living with someone of the opposite sex who was not a Christian. I heard all the excuses. I need to have a roommate to financially make it. I'm doing this for him." Here's the lamest one. "We're just friends." Yeah right! Bottom line, If a guy or a gal can't get a same gender roommate; there is a problem in advance. If you are a Christian leader, you cannot remain mute because of tolerance and acceptance.

I like to imagine this Christian brother in Corinth. Yes, it is true I am sleeping with my mother-in-law. But you have to understand that we love each other and are committed to each other. We both consent to this relationship. I love Christ—but I love her as well. The church responds. Well they are both adults. They are committed to each other. She might find Christ through him. If we kick him out she might never come to Christ. Besides, he is tithes every week and we need to grow. Jesus is full of grace and so should we. It happens more than you think.

Not many of you know this; but when I first came to Northside Machele and I were not married. She was known as the pastor's girlfriend. One day I was talking to someone in the church and she asked if Machele and I were living together. Surprised, I said, "NO!" She looked at me and said "I don't get bent out of shape like them (referring to Northside), it is fine with me. Wow! That would have been some example. The new pastor is living with his girlfriend and they are not having sex! Right! In reality, when I first came here I was living in a fifth wheel because I was finishing school in Portland. Machele would never even step foot inside during the day because she realized we weren't married and did not need rumors to be going through the grapevine, or back then, the church mouse newsletter.

Paul says, I don't even have to meet with this guy. There is no justification for his blatant sin. Kick him out! I have judged him.

Some of you might think. That's not very tolerant. That is rather judgmental. My response is you are right. When it comes to brothers and sisters in Christ there is a standard we are to live by. Paul never pronounced judgment on the lady. That is probably because she wasn't a Christian. But the brother in Christ was another issue.

Paul wanted this guy kicked out the church so that Satan would destroy his flesh and save his spirit. Unfortunately, Christians don't always repent. The only alternative is to let them go their own way and sow their wild oats. The issue Paul is concerned about is the Spirit. The hope is that in a couple years this guy would come back and say "Guys I was wrong." I am glad you disciplined me. It was the only way I would learn. I want to ask forgiveness and want to be restored. This is the purpose of church discipline. It is always reconciliation. But if you allow a Christian to continue to have sex outside of marriage, have an affair on their spouse, or be involved in the homosexual lifestyle you are going to create an unhealthy church. This is what Paul addresses next.

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

My High school cooking instructor would be proud of this next explanation. When a person made bread dough they could make it rise by allowing the leaven or yeast to accumulate for a certain period of time. But then someone had a better idea because they got sick of waiting until next week to eat bread, They would take a small chunk of the dough and save it so the yeast would begin its process to make the dough rise. So whenever you made a new batch of dough you would take the small lump of dough from before and mix them together. The yeast would spread quickly and the whole lump would be leavened.

Paul is saying this guy committing incest is like a small lump of dough that is left over from the past. What happens when you mix the small lump, symbolic of the immoral brother with the fresh batch; a reference to the church? The whole church will become infected. Paul doesn't want that to happen so he tells the church to cleanse out the old lump of dough. In that way, the rest of the church won't become infected.

Because Christ died for us; the church should be unleavened. It should not be infected. Unleavened bread represents sincerity and truth. Those are two elements God cares about. Let's read on. This next section is important when it comes to sorting through judgment and sexuality.

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one.

So here is where the arrogance of some in the church becomes evident. Paul actually wrote them before when it came to sexually immoral people. He told them not even to associate with them. Now some of you might think that seems very wrong because this seems discriminatory. You are right. Christians are supposed to discriminate. They are not to associate with people who claim to be Christians yet are blatantly living a sinful life. That's where discrimination comes in.

But here is the intriguing part. We are not supposed to discriminate when it comes to people from our cultures who are *not* Christians. Many churches have taught subtly that we are supposed to be separate from the world. Some have been very overt about teaching this practice. But that is not what Paul says. He says if you don't associate with sexually immoral people, the greedy, the swindlers, or the idolaters who are not Christians you won't have anyone to talk to. You'll have to leave the planet to find people to associate with. The only way we will ever have an impact on our culture for Christ is to have association with them. Now one word of caution. Some of you may be new Christians and you are not ready for this. That's okay. Let God heal and transform you. Most people who come to Christ need a time of separation, otherwise you are still susceptible to being influenced negatively. The problem is when we turn this separation into a life long separation. Statistics show that by the time a person has been a Christian for five years they have few or any relationships outside the church. So biblically we discriminate against Christians blatantly sinning, but we do not discriminate against our non Christian culture who are breaking God's commands. The main reason is that they don't have the Holy Spirit who allows us to live victoriously and they have not committed their life to living by God's standards. Paul reiterates this in these last two verses.

12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

The passage ends with defining judgment. We are not to judge non-Christians. That is the duty of God. He will judge those outside the church. It is not our job to make unbelievers feel judged no matter what kind of lifestyle they lead. What about those who make your life miserable. We're not to judge them either. Instead, Jesus said we were to pray for those that persecute us (Matthew 5:44). But when it comes to Christians that are living in sin, judgment is not a suggestion it is a command for those who are in leadership and spiritually mature (Galatians 6:1).

Some of you might argue; but Jesus told his followers they are not to judge their brother. Jesus never said you cannot judge; he said you cannot judge if your brother or sister has a speck of sawdust in their eye; and you have a giant two-by-four in your own eye. Translation: If someone tore the tag off a mattress; don't go judging him like you are better than him because you have a bigger sin issue. You robbed mattress store. You robbed Sleep Country! So before you judge him for taking the tag; make sure you confess and bring all the mattresses back. Then you judge him for being a tag taker. Jesus does not prohibit judging a brother or sister in Christ; he just doesn't want you to be a self-righteous hypocrite. He expects you to live a godly life and to judge rightly.

In the case of this passage, Paul says purge the evil person among you. But once again, this is not to permanently remove someone from Christian fellowship; but rather a punishment that will hopefully lead to repentance. In the end—like the prodigal son—the Father throws a party for those who return to him. He is delighted when His children return to him. He never gives up on his lost sheep.