

1 Corinthians 5:1-13 PM

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[0 : 00] Let me ask you a question. Look to your neighbor, smile at them, go. That's great. Smile back again and here you go, here's question number one. Question number one is this, would you rather have big feet or small hands? Or small hands and big feet. Go, talk to your next door neighbor. Big feet, small hands, small hands, big feet. Go, go. Some of you already know the answer. You're not talking to your neighbor. Okay, three, two, one, that's plenty of time to have made that life changing decision. Okay, put your hands up if it was big feet. Put your hands down.

Who said big hands? There you go, great. Question number two, here we go. A dog with no legs or no legs with a dog? Talk to your next door neighbor. Are you heard me? You heard me? A dog with no legs or no legs with a dog?

Okay, time's up, time's up. Time's up. Who would rather have a dog with no legs than have no legs? I thought, with a dog. Anyway, okay, last question, here we go. Last question, this. Would you have a Christian friend who behaves like a non-Christian or a non-Christian friend who behaves like a Christian? Talk to your next door neighbor?

group one. group two. one. They, they, they, they, they, they they so expensive. They'll even go, they, they, the way he can't share them. I ask their average.

[2 : 03] he Okay, I'm not going to give you any time on that at all, but I'm going to come back to that question at the end.

Would you rather a Christian friend who acted like a non-Christian or a non-Christian friend who acted like a Christian? Paul and the church in Corinth.

We've been going through Corinth and we've had four chapters already and there are big issues as they elevated their preachers and their teachers. Some they loved, some they preferred. And they were talking about wisdom.

Do you remember we've been talking about wisdom? And suddenly, once you grasp the truth, God's wisdom is a totally different level. In fact, earthly wisdom is a bit like foolishness compared to God's wisdom.

Well, now we're getting into the problem sections. It's almost as if Paul has had four chapters trying to help us to understand some of the issues, the big issues in the church.

[3 : 19] And now he's going to go through systematically some of the issues that are very prevalent. And particularly, the next couple of sections are sexual issues. And then he'll go on to other issues as we go through.

So buckle your belt. Get ready as we look at some of the issues that were facing the Corinthian church. This, basically this city that was a trade city that had no history of Christian life and their lives were as worldly as you could have imagined.

And this little church is in the middle of it all trying to work out what is a Christian and what is Corinthian. What is Christian and what is Corinthian?

And how do I sort out the difference? And Paul's going to take us here. He's going to take us here. To this.

You can't see it. It's tiny. But it has a massive influence. It is. It's leaven or yeast.

[4 : 34] And Paul's going to help us to see what the issue was and how to solve the problem by looking at this. Now, I've been in Canada for a couple of years. And one of the things that I've decided that I need to do is to bake my own bread.

My own bread needs to kind of look a bit like this. This is one I made earlier. It's not looking too bad. And in it, you put the flour, you put a bit of water, put some butter, put some sugar, put some salt. And you put a tiny amount of yeast. And it amazingly makes it puff up like this. Nice and squidgy. Although it's a couple of days old. Nice and squidgy for you to eat.

The opposite is this. And not so squidgy. And not so puffy-uppy. Because this doesn't have any yeast or leaven.

We're going to come back to the bread and flour and yeast. And the way that yeast, even though I might want to, I can't take the yeast out of this, can I? It's in there. It's had its impact.

[5 : 42] It's transformed what could be just a flat pancake or pizza bread or into a nice big loaf. And so Paul's going to help us to see how that is relevant to our Bible passage.

Are you puzzled? Sexual immorality? Bread? Yeast? Where are we going? Let's have a look at the Bible. And have a little look at what Paul is helping us to see.

Paul has got to chapter 5. And he's saying this. Did you read it? It was shocking. He said, there is an issue in the church. There is an issue in the church.

And I want you to basically to get rid of this. As if you were getting rid of yeast and chucking it away. I don't want its influence in the church. I don't want its influence in your community. Get rid of it. And he describes it as, it is so serious, I want you to hand them.

[6 : 49] The issue is them and related to them. I want you to hand them over to Satan. I want you to hand them over to Satan.

Whatever it was, this yeast that was in the community was so bad, he was willing to say, hand them over to Satan. Have no more to do with them.

Kick them out. And the issue that we're going to look at was so bad that even the pagans, even the godless, even the Corinthians, who really should never have been any example to anybody about their issues of sexual immorality, they were looking in on the church and they were going, do you know that church they do?

Do you know that's what gets on inside those? Shocking. And that is the context that we've got in our Bible passage. What is it that's going on?

Well, it horrified them. Chapter 5 says this. It's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that is not tolerated, even among the pagans.

[8 : 03] For a man has his father's wife and you are arrogant. What's going on? Oh my goodness. These Corinthian Christians in their church had, well, and it spells it out quite simply, there was someone who was in a relationship with, well, I don't even want to mention it, to be honest with you.

It's that sad. It's that shocking. It's that disgusting. Even the pagans didn't want to mention it. And so a man has his father's wife and the church went, no.

Did you see what it said? The church was arrogant. The church was saying, well, that's love for you. That's freedom for you. We're Christians. We're new generation Christians and we think love is love is love and therefore we're going to support them.

We're going to encourage them. We're going to celebrate them. We're going to say this is amazing. And the pagans looking in from outside were going, this is disgusting.

I can't believe you Christians. And that's what we've got here. How sad is it? Just imagine those windows opened up for people to look in on us, to look in on our lives and go, do you know what?

[9 : 32] I'm more of a Christian than they are. I look more Christian than they do. Wouldn't that be really sad? We're called to be a holy, separate, distinct people.

We're supposed to be special, set apart by God. Like a light in the darkness. If they look in from the window and see that we're darker than they are, surely that's wrong.

Surely that's shocking. But if you know your Bible, if you know your Bible, you'll know full well that this is nothing new. This is nothing new.

If you look at your Old Testament, and I've loved Friday mornings, I get a chance to do morning prayer with those that are online. And we are going through the whole Bible. If you haven't read the whole Bible, do.

It's amazing. But actually there is so much, well, dark, disgusting, horrible, violent stuff in the Old Testament.

[10 : 39] And if you don't know it already, a bunch of it's done by the people of God. They're no different than the rest, sadly, shockingly. So, when Paul comes to this issue in Corinth, don't think it's something new.

Actually, the people of God have always struggled with being a holy people set apart for God.

They've always struggled. There are times, even in the Old Testament, where the church was, or at least the people of God, were known to be involved in child sacrifice.

They used to mix and mingle idolatry. They used to mix and mingle religions. So before you get a holier-than-thou kind of pedestal, we need to own up to our history.

Our history from long ago. But to be honest with you, we don't need to look very far back to our present history. And to see shocking things that people have done in the name of Christ, even in our nation here.

It saddens us. And Paul, it shocks him. And especially because the stuff that went on at that time, they were celebrating.

[11 : 53] Church, what are you doing? Well, we get to this place where we understand that we are all have sins and fallen short of the glory of God.

If you don't read the Old Testament and think, actually, do you know what? If I lived in those days, I possibly could have been, who knows, taken up in that. It is shocking, but we are all sinners in need of a saviour.

That's what the Old Testament tells us. If you haven't got to Malachi and the end of the Old Testament and realised there is no other way than Jesus Christ, then you've probably wasted a lot of your time.

Because that's what the Old Testament tells us. Jesus is coming. A saviour is coming. You need salvation. There is another way. Because, as this passage talks to us in verse 11, it's not just the sexually immorality.

it's the greedy. Did you spot that? Verse 11. And how many of us at times have been greedy? And even celebrated greed?

[13 : 04] How many of us have been idolaters? You may not have an image that you bow down to, but how many of you have put other things in the place of God? But then first, that's what idolatry is.

It's where whatever it is makes the decisions in your life. That is idolatry. Maybe you're a reveller. A party-goer. Maybe that's what you live for.

Does that sound familiar? Does that sound like your neighbour, your friend? Someone who lives down the road? Someone who lives for the next high? The next whatever exciting thing is? Again, that's listed here.

The drunkard. The swindler. Paul has a plan. The problem is clear. It is not just sin.

Shocking sin. It is that the church has softened their approach to sin and are celebrating the sin. It is that bad.

[14 : 05] Does that make sense? Paul is not saying, oh, you sinned. Let's kick you out of the church. No, no, no. What he's saying is this. You've sinned. You now celebrate your sin.

You've gathered the people around you that think you're amazing and therefore you continue and encourage others to do the same. It's a totally different level from when we sin, when we fall short of God's glory and we have our heavy hearts and we ask for forgiveness.

we repent. We turn around. It's totally different. And so Paul has a plan. Have you worked out what Paul's pastoral plan is? It's a shocker. But it needs to be a shocker because the situation is a shocker.

He says this, kick out the unrepentant Christian that they may see their sin and repent. The message version of the Bible, which is kind of like a paraphrase, often puts it in slightly easier youth language.

Let me read this to you. Verse 11 says, but I am saying, says Paul, that you shouldn't act as if everything is just fine when a friend who claims to be a Christian is promiscuous or crooked or is flipped with God or is rude or gets drunk or is greedy or is predatory.

[15 : 26] You can't go along treating this behavior as if it's acceptable. sexual immorality is one of numerous slipping slopes that all of us at some point will be faced with challenges or at least no others who will face these.

And Paul's pastoral plan is this, he says, kick them out. He says, kick them out. Love them. Love them enough that you will say to them, what you're doing is so serious that I consider that you are, you're worse than the pagans.

Get out of church. You are being like yeast in bread. You are permeating the community and you need to be removed and kicked out.

That's what we're told here. And he pictures it like this, verse 5, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Paul's pastoral plan is this, kick them out so that they may come back in again. Do you get the purpose? Paul says this, love them enough to tell them that this is disgusting, this is wrong. [16:48] I love them enough to say, and I don't consider that if you continue in this way that you will, can remain a part of our fellowship. Excommunication is one of the long, crazy words that we use for it.

But we basically say we don't feel that you could be a part of our church anymore. It is that serious. And if there is something really, really, really serious, this is as serious as it gets. Quite simply, we're handing you over to Satan and we're concerned about your salvation. salvation. But we long for you to repent, to transform and turn and come back that you may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Now, hang on a second. You're there going, hang on, my big brain of Corinthians, one Corinthians, has already told me that Paul has said, do not judge. Do you remember earlier on in an earlier chapter, Paul was basically saying, hang on a second, he says, I don't care whether you judge me because it's God that judges me.

Do you remember that, chapter three? Basically, it's God that judges me so therefore I'm not going to worry too much about you lot judging me and how I preach and teach, et cetera. But this is slightly different.

[18:03] It's not Paul changing his argument saying you can judge, no, you can't judge. He's basically saying this. He says, it is God who truly judges the heart and that's what really matters.

But when it's blatant sin, we don't need to wait until either Paul comes to pastorally lead you. We could basically tell you quite simply, the Bible tells us this is unacceptable.

And that's why Paul basically says, it's as if I'm with you, verse three. I may not be there but act as if I was and Jesus is there by his spirit.

He's basically saying, look, this is so serious, sort it out, sort it out now, don't wait for me to get there. Now, those of you who know Romans will understand a little bit of this thinking.

What do you do with a world that lives devoid of reference to God? You love them. You love them. But as you love them, you also let them follow the path.

[19:10] Romans chapter one says this, verse 24, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves. Verse 26, for this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions and he describes what they look like.

God gave them up. Verse 32, though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. Does that sound familiar to the Corinthian problem? It's a Roman problem. It's a Corinthian problem. It's a Vancouver problem. It's a, we live in a world where sin is encouraged, celebrated, championed.

Put a flag outside your church. Put a flag outside. And the reality is this. God says, hand them over that they may follow their sin but at one point keep praying for them and loving them that they may repent and turn around and come back in.

It's a bit like the prodigal son. Were you ever shocked by the prodigal father who gave the money to the son? Have you ever tried telling the story the way that I would have told the story? Josiah came up to me and said, Dad, I wish you dead.

[20:30] Please give me half your money or whatever it is. The third of the money because he's one of three. He says, the third of your money now I want to go to, I don't know, somewhere like Hawaii and spend it all.

What would I do as a father? I'd have quite simply said, no. End of story. Not a great parable. So what do we get in the parable?

The parable is the father does. Why? Because the son needs to get to that dire place. To see how depraved he is and how wonderful his father is.

Do you see that? That's where we get to here. And then we get this funny little section in the middle. I'm slightly aware of that. I'm going to explain to you what's this got to do with this.

Did you spot the reference? I've been picking up peas. Paul's problem. Not Paul's problem, but the Corinthian problem that Paul highlighted. Secondly, Paul's plan. Pastoral way of correcting them.

[21:31] Redirecting them. Did you spot in the middle of the story this reference to Passover? What's that got to do with anything? Did you work out what the link was? Do you know what the link is?

Passover. Okay. The people of God are in Egypt. They are in slavery. It's all about escaping Egypt and being free as the people of God.

God suddenly sends plagues. The last plague. The Passover. As the spirit passes over. Kills the firstborn son. What do they do? They are to get rid of all the yeast in their household.

They've got no time for yeast and the yeast that is prevalent. It's as if all the evil that is Egyptian. Leave it behind. Take your flatbread and go.

That's what it was. Go. Take your flatbread and go. And so when Paul mentions about the yeast and he remembers what happens with the Passover he's talking about the celebration of Passover.

[22 : 38] He's talking about the festival of Passover and how Christ is our Passover lamb. You'd be mad Christ has given his life for you to go back to the yeast of the Egyptians.

But it's exactly what the people of God talked about, didn't they? Shocker, wasn't it? Paul is saying, 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. Let us therefore celebrate the festival not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

We live in a liberal culture. And so we are to rid ourselves of evil. And the last thing, the big picture, and this is where the Corinthians got it all wrong.

Okay, last bits. God's big picture. Having done all of this, you could very easily and very quickly and do exactly what the Corinthians did. I am now going to live in a box.

[23 : 49] I'm going to live in a box with just other Christians. I'm going to check them before they come in, but they are the most holy and nicest Christians I could find. And we're all going to live in a little kind of community, a little box.

And we're going to love each other. We're going to sing songs together. And Paul is saying, stop it. That's not what you're supposed to do.

He says this at the end, verse 9. He says, look, I wrote in my letter, this is a previous letter, not to associate with sexually immoral people. That's what you've done. You've made a little box.

You've made a little Christian community segregated by everybody else. He says, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of the world or the greedy and the swindlers or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

God, he's basically saying this. He says, look, there's a difference between those in the church and those outside of the church. As you walk out of these doors today, you will rub your shoulders with people who will fit into some of these categories.

[24 : 53] There will be greedy, there will be sexually immoraled people. Your job is what? To love them as Jesus loved them. Love them and encourage them.

Introduce them to Jesus. How amazing would that be? Invite them to youth group on a Friday night. Invite them to church. There's a great speaker coming in. There's a lovely Chinese meal.

Why don't you come and hear Richard Bourgonne? That'd be a great evening. I'll introduce you to some of my friends. That's what Paul is encouraging them to do.

But when it comes down to inside the church, when it comes down to the fellowship of the Christians, he says, we will sin. Yes. We will fall short.

Yes. All have sinned and fallen short of the gospel of God. And as I look around, we are sinners in need of a saviour. But when that line gets crossed, when we go from being people who sin, cross the line, repent, run back to Christ, and confess our sins, and be in community with our Christian friends and family, when we cross that line and instead of running back and repenting, what do we do?

[26 : 07] We celebrate our sin. And we invite others to pop across the line and to join us in that sin. Whatever it is, greed, sexual immorality, any of the things that were mentioned here.

So the challenge at the end of our passage is this verse 12. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? It's not those inside the church whom you are to judge, question mark.

God judges those outside. Purge the evil persons from among you. Purge, cut out, hold your holiness, and go back to the flower.

How does this help me? It leaves us with options. Options. Church matters. Yes. Is this just an error and matter? Probably, to be honest with you, if there are those in our community who are sinning and celebrating and encouraging you to join them, definitely.

Why don't you love them enough to tell them? Correct them. And then, if they won't listen, then invite a minister. Matthew spells it out as to how we should discipline.

[27 : 19] Discipline is part of discipleship, those in our community. How important it is for us to love people. Love outsiders.

Introduce them to Jesus. And in time, he'll transform them. Love those inside the church. But hold them accountable when they sin and rebel.

That we would even consider kicking them out if they do not repent. And if they celebrate and lead others astray. The Bible is there.

All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We don't like the correcting, do we, church? We don't like correcting, teaching, rebuking. We don't like rebuking, being told off. Who does?

[28 : 17] But that's what we're told the Bible does for us. Let's love one another enough that we would be willing, as Paul was willing, to hold people accountable in the church and love people enough outside the church that although they may sin, we would say, do you know what?

We're all sinners. Come and join us at church. We're a bunch of sinners, all saved by grace. It's just that we know of a man who lived the perfect life and has come to die for us, to bring us back into a friendship.

Come and join us. This place is not a place of pride, but it's a place of being humble, a fellow sinner in need of a savior.

So let's ask for God's help to do this bold, challenging work that is littered with grace in an age where we are surrounded by so much that the Corinthians were facing as well.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask for your help. It is hard, this idea of living in the world but not of the world and living in a church where we love our brothers and sisters and yet sometimes we are called to correct them, to rebuke them, to teach them, to train them.

[29 : 41] And Heavenly Father, we ask by your spirit to be at work in us, guard our hearts from this pride, that we would celebrate nothing but your holiness, your purity and all things good.

We need your help to do this. In Christ's name. Amen.