

11. Learning to Reach Out to the World

In our last topic, we saw that Paul explained to the Corinthians how to deal with open sin and rebellion in the church. He explained that they were to do two things. They were to discipline the guilty person by removing him from the fellowship of the church. Secondly, they were to deal with their own pride that caused them to be puffed up about the open sin in the church. Paul had written the church earlier that they were to discipline a person that was living in open sin by removing that person from the fellowship of the church. The church had apparently misunderstood the instructions of Paul and had stopped having fellowship with people who were not Christians instead. As a result, our topic today will see how Paul corrected that misunderstanding in the church at Corinth.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, we read, “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.” Here, we see that Paul makes a key distinction that is very important for all of us to realize today. He pointed out that we are to remove from the church Christians that continue to live in sinful rebellion. However, we are not to remove ourselves from people of the world that are not Christians that are committing the same sins. In fact, he said it would be necessary for Christians to go out of the world to remove ourselves from people who are not Christians that are committing these sins.

This is where it is important for us to help our children understand the purpose why Christ even leaves us in the world once we become Christians. As Christ prayed the night before He was crucified, He said to the Father in John 17:15, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.” It is not the purpose of God to remove us from the world. However, it is the purpose of the Lord to protect us from the evil one.

Christ explained very clearly in the Sermon on the Mount why He does not take us out of the world when we become Christians. Matthew 5:13 says, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Christ leaves us as Christians in the world so that we can be salt to the world. Salt does many things. We will mention two. Salt creates thirst. We are to live our lives in such a way that we cause the people of the world to develop a thirst to know God. Salt is used to heal wounds. We are to share the message that will bring spiritual healing to those who are dead in their trespasses and sins.

Christ also said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Here, we see that we are also to be lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-16 says, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” These verses tell us how we are to be lights in the world. We have to be in close enough contact with the people of

the world that they can see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. In addition, we see that it is the attitudes that we have in our hearts that will determine the way that we show the light of Christ to the world around us.

Christ modeled for us how we impact the world around us by His own example. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Christ came and lived among the people of the world. As a result, the people of the world saw His glory. Christ also revealed the glory of the Father. Christ was full of grace and truth. In the same way, we are to live among the people of the world to reveal the glory of God to the world by the way that we live to please Christ. The word that is translated “dwelt” means *to have one’s tent among others*. As a result, to live among the people of the world means to regularly spend time with people who are not Christians, so that we can share the message of the Gospel with them. We are to live lives that are full of grace and truth as we spend time with the people who do not yet know Christ.

We are to follow the example of Christ and go to those who are not Christians and build a relationship with them so that we can share with them how to have forgiveness of sin and receive the gift of eternal life. Christ gave many examples of going to people where they were so that He could share with them how to receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life. In John 1, Christ went and found Philip. In John 4, Christ went to the well so that He could meet the Samaritan woman. In John 5, Christ went to the man at the pool of Bethesda. In John 9, Christ went to the man that was born blind. Christ also told us that we are to go to others and not wait for them to come to us. Mark 16:15 says, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’” Some people may come to us but we are commanded to go to all.

The Pharisees often accused Christ of bring a friend of sinners. Matthew 9:10-11 says, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’” In Luke 7:34-35, we read, “‘The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” But wisdom is justified by all her children.” Then, Luke 15:1-2 says, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” We are to follow the example of Christ and spend time with sinners to help them learn about the love of Christ. We are to be a friend to sinners and create opportunities to eat and do other things with those who are not Christians so that we can share with them how to have forgiveness of sin.

In 1 Corinthians 5:11, we read, “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person.” The word that is translated “to keep company with” is only used three times in the New Testament and two are in these verses. The third is 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 where we read, “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.” Here, we see that it does not say that we

are to totally avoid a Christian that is living in willful sin because then we could not admonish the person. However, what we are to avoid is spending time in fellowship with the person and especially to avoid eating meals together.

We see the reason for the difference in the two different ways that we respond in the next two verses. 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 says, “For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person.’” We are not to judge those who are not Christians. If they continue to reject Christ, their judgment will come at the time that they stand before God at the final judgment. As a result, Christians are not to judge those who are outside the church. Instead, we are to leave all such judgment to God.

In contrast, Christians are to judge a person that is a Christian that chooses to live in open sin and rebellion against the Lord by removing that person from the fellowship of the church. However, this is only to be done after first making every attempt to restore the sinning brother or sister. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Only when attempts to restore the person to a right relationship with the Lord fail are we to apply Matthew 18:15-17. Those verses say, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” However, even in removal from the fellowship, our goal should always be to restore the person as we see in 2 Corinthians 2:6-8.

As we study these verses, we see that we are to spend time regularly among people who are not Christians for the purpose of sharing the Gospel with them. At the same time, we are to realize that there will be times when it is also necessary for a church to discipline a Christian that chooses to live in open rebellion against the Lord by avoiding fellowship with that person until there is repentance. It is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand this passage clearly so that they do not make the same mistake as the people at Corinth when they started avoiding those who were not Christians instead of exercising church discipline to a Christian living in open rebellion against the Lord. As we help our children learn to love those who are not Christians so that they go to them and share the Gospel and also help them learn to show love to rebellious Christians by disciplining them in love, we equip our children to share the love of Christ with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to show the love of Christ to all people.