

1 CORINTHIANS

5:1-13 | STUDY GUIDE

Incest

1 CORINTHIANS 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." (ESV)

- Sexual mores in ancient Corinth were extremely lax
 - Exception made for adultery
 - Adultery affected social structures and power dynamics
 - "Sexual Immorality = **πορνεία**
 - Extremely common throughout Roman Empire, but Paul makes clear this is not how Christians are to behave
- Legal charges could be brought against an adulterous couple
 - Incest forbidden, but not unheard of
 - For Example: Emperor Claudius married his niece, Agrippina
 - Incest between parent/child illegal
- "Father's wife"
 - Most likely not his mother
 - Once again, emphasis on adultery aspect

1 CORINTHIANS 5:2, "And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you." (ESV)

- In Ancient Rome (Corinth especially), extramarital affairs were expected among men
 - (more in chapter 6)

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- More than likely social pressures have contributed to the response by the church
 - It is implied that the father is of high rank, but the wife may be a political marriage and thus divorce would reduce his status and publicly shame him
 - Likewise, his son would be considered a socially prominent figure the Corinthians would not want to offend
 - It is likely that this man chooses to do nothing because any action would result in loss of dignity for him, something most feared in this society

1 CORINTHIANS 5:3, "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." (ESV)

- Paul is not contradicting himself, for the judgement he passes comes from Christ's own teaching
 - Matthew 5:27-29
 - Additionally, Paul adheres to such teaching himself

1 CORINTHIANS 5:5, "...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." (ESV)

- "deliver this man to Satan"
 - Jewish precedent for eliciting a confession and punishing for the purpose of saving a person's soul
 - Sanh. 6:2: Mishnah commentary on Joshua, chapter
 - "so that his spirit might be saved"



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- Paul is not calling for him to be stoned, but the hope is that severe discipline will cause the man to repent
 - Condoning his behavior was not only allowing him to live in sin, thus distant from God, but it was causing others in the congregation to stumble as well
- Paul consistently teaches that suffering can actually bring us closer to God
 - Colossians 1:24
 - Philippians 3:10
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:5

1 CORINTHIANS 5:11, "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." (ESV)

- Paul is clarifying a previous letter (which we don't have)
 - He's making his instruction more specific; outsiders, or unbelievers, are not to be held to the same standards as brothers and sisters
 - He doesn't want them to isolate from those they should be reaching with the gospel and witnessing to
 - The church is responsible to hold one another accountable
- "God judges those outside. 'Purge the evil person from among you.'" (1 Corinthians 5:13, ESV)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Timothy Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy*, Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, N.T. Wright, *The New Testament in Its World*