

Subject: The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church- Sermon Recap from 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Dear Calvary Chapel Family,

I just love God's word. The passage we studied is not an easy one in some sense as the responsibility for correction is sobering, but much needed. Paul also encourages us with the reminder that we are God's church, set aside to walk in His righteous, sincerity, and truth. We have some solid discipleship materials [[HERE](#)].

Summary: The sermon explored Paul's confrontation of the Corinthian church over sexual sin in its midst, and what their tolerance revealed about the blinding power of sin. Rather than grieving over what was happening, the church had grown proud - accommodating, even celebrating, what God's Word clearly condemns. Paul's charge was not merely about one man's sin; it was about the failure of the entire congregation. We examined what it means to be a church that is truly set apart for God -- one that holds fast to Scripture, practices Biblical love rather than worldly affirmation, and pursues holiness together as a community rather than settling for comfort or cultural relevance.

Takeaways:

- Sin blinds and spreads. The Corinthians did not arrive at tolerance for sin overnight. What begins as looking the other way (in their case due to pride) quietly reshaped their identity, values, and witness - and we are not immune to the same drift today.
- Biblical love calls people out of sin and upward into Christlikeness. Genuine love for one another means caring more about a person's soul and their walk with Christ than about avoiding an uncomfortable conversation. We witnessed Paul's heart of restoration in confronting sin.
- We also saw that a God-seeking church looks different from a culture-accommodating church. We are called, individually and corporately, to let Scripture set the standard for who God is, who we are in Him, and how we are to live -- not to remake Christ in the image of our preferences or our culture's expectations.

As we move forward together, let us be a church having a heart for genuine fellowship, sound doctrine, and love for one another that is rooted in truth. Let us be the kind of community where no one is left at the edge of the circle, and where holiness is pursued not out of fear, but out of love for the One who gave everything for us.

In Christ, Pastor Jim

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

I. Introduction: Living Logs

II. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2: Pride Leading to Sexual Immorality

- Walking in sexual immorality is sin. Celebrating or even looking the other way while a brother or sister in Christ walks in sexual immorality is also sin – sin that Paul addresses head on that the body of Christ will follow his example.

Additional Scripture References: Lev 18:7-8; Deut 22:30, 27:20

III. 1 Corinthians 5:3-5: Judgment is a Christian's Responsibility

- The Christian is to walk in discerning judgment.
- When warranted, correction is offered according to God's word in the spirit of forgiveness, restoration, and growing in spiritual maturity

Additional Scripture References: Mt 7:1; Luke 6:37; Rom 4:10-13; Jn 7:24; 1 Cor 5:12; 1 Thes 5:2; Heb 5:12

IV. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8: Be Holy – Set Apart

- Note the differences between a God-seeking and Culture Accommodating Church
- Let's purpose to foster Biblical community for His glory

Additional Scripture References: Rev 2:18-29, 3:1-6, 7-13, 14-22; Acts 2:42

V. Closing:

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

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1 Corinthians 5:1-8

I. Introduction:

Imagine you're camping on a freezing night, and you build a nice roaring fire.

Now picture one log sitting about six feet away from the fire. *It's a really good log. Dry. Solid. Beautiful grain. Excellent spiritual potential.* And it says, *"I don't need all those other logs. I've got everything I need right here."* *So you leave it there.*

The fire is burning. *The other logs are leaning into each other, sharing heat, catching one another's flame.* And that one log is sitting out there getting colder and colder.

Finally, it says, *"I don't understand why I'm not experiencing the warmth of the fire. Well... you're six feet away! You can watch the fire. You can admire the fire. You can even tell people, 'I really believe in fire.' But you've got to get close to the other logs.*

And here's the funny part: when one of those logs starts rolling away from the fire, the others don't say, *"Well, that's his problem. He needs to take responsibility for his own spiritual temperature."* They reach over, almost insisting on rolling him back in, and say, *"Get back over here!"*

That's biblical community. *We're not supposed to be a pile of individual Christians who happen to be in the same fireplace. We're supposed to lean into one another. Because sometimes your fire can light a fire in me or be a part of purifying me, and sometimes my fire encourages you with peace and even some hope.*

And when one of us gets knocked loose by discouragement, temptation, falling in sin, grief, or hardship, that's when the rest of us say: *"You're not going out there by yourself. Come back. OR a well-timed 'welcome back'".*

That's fellowship. **That's community.** That's the church.

And the beautiful thing is, none of the logs is the fire. **Christ is the fire.** We're simply ordinary pieces of wood who burn brighter, longer, and warmer when we stay close to Him—and close to one another.

Hebrews 10:24 says it this way: **And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.**

You see, a church isn't a collection of people sitting near one another. **It's a people leaning into, sharing, growing, and maturing with one another...**all for and with Christ as our hope and foundation.¹

1. In our passage today, Paul is in the unenviable place of calling to account a real church that looks nothing like this picture. **They are not working together for the glory of the Lord, but have instead adopted another gospel.** As we read last week, this gospel placed them on the throne as kings and, as we will read today, it reveals the slippery slope of living in man's wisdom rather than godliness.

READ 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

II. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2: Pride Leading to Sexual Immorality

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1. The Greek word for sexual immorality is 'porneia'. **While its roots are found in prostitution, in Paul's day the Hellenistic Jews applied its meaning more broadly to include any-and-all sexual sin.**² We also know it's this broader definition in view as Paul notes the offending man is practicing incest with his father's wife.
2. While we don't know all the circumstances surrounding this incestual relationship, we do know this sin is expressly forbidden in **Leviticus 18:7-8** along with **Deuteronomy 22:30 and 27:20**. **Yet, here this man, a congregant at the Corinthian church, is.**

¹ Adapted from a story provided by ChatGPT with the following prompt, "Offer a word picture for a church deep in biblical community/fellowship", on or about Oct 4, 2026

² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 200.

3. But that is not even the worst of it from Paul's perspective. While we should NOT make light of any sin, including sexual immorality, Paul has zeroed in on the complicity of the church. The world renowned sexual immorality of the Corinthians, with all their pagan religions, had seeped into the church— a sexual immorality so out of bounds, even the Corinthian Gentiles found it incomprehensible. Yet, here the church was condoning, even celebrating it without hesitation.
4. The blinding power of sin was (and is) remarkable. Sexual immorality was not only acceptable, but a source of pride. The Bible was clear about God setting his people and church apart and their duty to live righteously in godliness. I don't think it's much of a stretch to surmise that God was NOT pleased with what Paul was needing to address here.
5. Now Paul does not indicate the explicit reasons why the Corinthians looked the other way regarding this sin. Perhaps it was because of a wrong understanding of love and grace leading them to exercise a tolerance of that which offends God. Perhaps it was the case that they did not want to offend someone that was well connected or a big giver. Perhaps it was because they did not want to hurt others feelings...or maybe they thought if they allowed this man's sin, he and others would look the other way regarding their sins.
6. Whatever the reason, Paul makes clear that the child of God is to be known for holiness and purity....we are to walk in transforming Biblical love and NOT worldly affirming love. The church of Jesus Christ is NOT to compromise the truth of the Gospel. Whatever the reason, the Corinthians had corrupted Jesus into their own image and Paul was calling them back to righteousness.
- ~~7. For those wondering what happened to the mother-in-law that was caught up in this sin, the prevailing thought is that she was not a Christian and, therefore, neither the church or Paul had authority to discipline her.~~

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8. One more thing to note before we go on. **What is old is new again.** Look around at our culture today. **Sexual immorality runs amok...including in far too much of the church.** Satan has broken out his same-old playbook and many in our day are falling prey to adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and a host of other sexual sins birthed in lust, sensuality, and selfish desire. **We are told tolerance is one of the highest virtues even as God's word is treated with disdain and intolerance as being outdated and not in keeping with man's great wisdom.** My point being that Paul's words are as much for us today as for the Corinthians in his.

A. Paul is asking the Christ-follower to love Jesus and follow Him in holiness and righteousness. **He is charging the Christian to care more about peoples souls than for their OR our preferences and emotions.**

B. For those that have or are even now walking in sexual sin, neither Paul nor I am condemning you. **We are God's instrument in asking and inviting you to repent (if you haven't), receive Christ's forgiveness (if you haven't), and to purposefully grow in living godliness (if your not).**

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III. 1 Corinthians 5:3-5: Judgment is a Christian's Responsibility

1. Contrary to the often misused verse of **Matthew 7:1** not to judge, Paul strongly condemns the sin of sexual immorality. **He doesn't need to be physically present to smell the stench of sin warring in and against man's soul.** He doesn't need to weigh man's wisdom to know that sin is sin. **He does need to see sin for what it is** – an existential threat, then judge it in according to God's word and power, and take action to call the sinner out and up into relationship with Jesus. **He needs to do his part to protect God's church while encouraging the sinner's restoration with both Christ and His church.**
2. Some will point to (as noted previously) **Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:37, Romans 4:10-13** as proof texts that Christians are not to judge.

Yet, the clear teaching of the Bible in verses such as **Mt 18** (describing a whole process of judging), **Jn 7:24**, **1 Cor 5:12**, **1 Thes 5:2**, **Heb 5:12**, and numerous other verses tell us we are to judge. Scripture speaks loudly as to how we are to reconcile the obvious difference in these two positions. A Christian is NOT to judge with man's fallen judgment, but with God's righteousness. Said differently, our judgments are to be governed by God's word, humility, truth, and Biblical love.

3. We are free, indeed required, to judge ourselves and others with a discerning judgment. While judging the heart is reserved for God, we are able to judge actions which are the fruit of the heart. And our goal in judging is NOT to please or lift ourselves up or get our way, but to be in God's will of making disciples as an act of worship, honoring, glorifying, and pleasing Him.
4. We note that Paul's burden is at once for the church AND the individual. For the church to live in godliness and not tolerance of man's sinful ways. For the individual choosing unrighteousness over righteousness to return to their first love, Jesus.
5. Folks, I don't want to sugarcoat correction in the church. It can be hard. Few of us enjoy being the corrector or correctee. We would often prefer to ignore it in the hopes that it goes away. Yet, our passage today, along with other Bible passages makes clear that when correction is warranted according to God's word, correction is to be given, also according to God's word – including with a humble heart offering forgiveness and restoration.

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IV. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8: Be Holy – Set Apart

1. The big message in these verses is to be holy or set apart by and for God – living in righteousness (represented by the unleavened bread), sincerity, and truth.
2. Paul also offers a warning that sin's desire is to amplify and spread itself. In the Corinthians pride and arrogance they were blinded by

the power of sin; they, in some sense, erroneously thought they were right with God as they remade Him into their image.

3. Because of sins desires and power, Paul uses the removal of leaven to convey the biblical mandate to NOT live in the corruptive power of sin individually or as the body of Christ. What's more, unless sin is dealt with firmly and unapologetically, we cheapen the grace of Christ crucified in defeating death.
4. Let's take the last of our time together to develop a partial picture of what it means for us, together as His church, to be set apart by and for God. First, we will start with a brief comparison of four churches we find in **Revelation 2 & 3**:

A. **The Philadelphia Church (*Revelation 3:7-13*)** is set apart.

Faithful with little strength, yet kept the Word and did not deny His name (3:8). This church holds fast what it has, so no one takes its crown (3:11). It is promised an open door no one can shut (3:8) and kept from the hour of trial coming on the whole earth (3:10) - a church living in readiness, not resignation, because it actually believes He is coming soon (3:11).

B. **The Sardis/Laodicea Churches (*Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22*)**

have a reputation for being alive, but one is actually dead (3:1) with the other neither cold nor hot - they are lukewarm, about to be spit out (3:15-16). The Laodicean church says, "I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing" - not knowing it is wretched, poor, blind, and naked (3:17). While they hadn't collapsed overnight; it's drifted, inch by inch, until comfort replaced conviction.

- C. Like Corinth, **Thyatira (found in Revelation 2:18-29)** was commended for real fruit - love, faith, service, and endurance...all *increasing* (2:19). But Christ holds one thing against it: it tolerates "that woman Jezebel," teaching His servants into sexual immorality and idol compromise (2:20); the same rotten-log danger Paul confronts in 1 Corinthians 5: tolerated sin doesn't stay contained; it leavens the whole lump.

Given time to repent, she wouldn't (2:21), and judgment falls on her and all who follow her, unless they repent (2:22). A faithful remnant remains, told simply to hold fast until Jesus comes (2:24-25).

Thyatira isn't dead like Sardis, or weak-but-faithful like Philadelphia. [It's a church with genuine love that let a rotten log keep smoldering](#) - mistaking patience toward sin for grace, when Christ was waiting for discipline, not indefinite tolerance.

5. Corinthian (and Aikenite), we are to live in godliness.

6. Lastly, I thought it helpful to expand our lens across other parts of the bible in creating a [partial] comparison of a God Seeking Church to a Culture-Bound Church. [BTW – if you hear our core values, statement of faith, and Calvary Chapel Distinctives in here, it's because they are.](#) 😊

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God Seeking Church	Culture Accommodating Church
Authority rests in Scripture (2 Tim 3:16-17)	Authority increasing flows from culture
Seeks to be holy as God is holy (1 Pe 1:15-16)	Seeks worldly relevance & acceptance
Tests everything by Scripture (Acts 17:11)	Increasingly tests things by culture's standards
Calls sin what God calls sin (Rom 1:18-32)	Diminishes, reinterprets, or renames sin as not sin
Practices grace without compromising truth (Jn 1:14, 1:17)	Uses grace to avoid accountability for Biblical truth
Guards sound doctrine (Tit 1:9; 2 Ti 4:2-4)	Avoids doctrine that might offend or divide
Asks, "will this honor Christ?"	Asks, "will this help us connect to more people?"
Seeks transformation (Ro 12:2)	Settles for accommodation
Practices Biblical separation from unrighteousness (2 Cor 6:14-18)	A Biblical end (if only in name) justifies unbiblical means.
Changes culture by boldly proclaiming Jesus & the Gospel, & by making disciples (Mt 28:18-20, Col 1:18)	People, preferences, relevance, and cultural expectations can obscure Christ and His word
Prayer & Biblical Community w/God and His will at the center is part of the church DNA (Acts 2:42)	Prayer becomes peripheral, programmatic, or with human needs as the center
Sing with hearts of worship and praise toward God (Eph 5:19)	Worship is often used to create an experience appealing to people's emotions and captivating their attention
Seeks to know God (Phil 3:8-10)	At best seeks to know of God. At worst, seeks to know what will attract, satisfy, and benefit people

7. Folks, in **Acts 2:42**, we have been given the very specific charge to foster a BIBLICAL community for us and the greater community in which we live. **This matters because God did NOT design the Christian life to be alone.** He designed us to know Him, grow together, carry one another's burdens, serve one another, and together, make Christ known.

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V. Closing: Choosing Life

1. Paul makes clear that people are tolerated, BUT sin is NOT. **An authentic Christ follower let's God tell us who He is, what His will & purposes are, who we are in Him, and how to live our lives accordingly...**and then we purpose to faithfully obey Him.
2. If this is you...It's time to throw out the old leaven and allow Christ's transforming love to do its thing. **He died that you may have eternal life rather than the eternal bondage of sin.** If you are living in sexual immorality OR some other sin, will you respond to Jesus' invitation? [For the unregenerate and the fallen Christian]

[Prayer]

5-Day Devotional

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

Day 1: The Fire We Share

Reading: 1 Cor 12:12-27

Devotional: The Christian life was never designed for isolation. God placed you in a body, not a solo journey. Just as logs stacked together sustain a fire that no single log could maintain alone, believers are meant to share heat, bear weight, and hold one another accountable in love. When one member drifts, the whole fire dims. When one member burns bright, others catch flame. Ask yourself honestly today: are you leaning into the community God has placed around you, or are you sitting at the edge hoping to catch enough warmth from a distance? Draw near. The coals are waiting.

Reflection: Where have you been keeping your distance from genuine Christian community, and what is one step you can take today to lean in closer?

Practical Application: Reach out to one person in your church this week. Not to exchange pleasantries, but to ask a real question about how they are doing spiritually and to share something honest about where you are.

Day 2: The Blinding Power of Sin

Reading: Ro 1:18-32

Devotional: Sin does not announce itself as destruction. It arrives slowly, quietly, and with the appearance of reason. The Corinthian church did not wake up one morning and decide to celebrate sexual immorality. They drifted, inch by inch, until what once would have horrified them became a source of pride. Romans 1 describes this same pattern: suppressed truth, exchanged glory, darkened hearts. The sobering warning is that a person or a church can be deeply wrong while feeling entirely right. The remedy is not self-confidence but constant submission to Scripture as the authority over every preference, feeling, and cultural current.

Reflection: Is there an area of your life where you have gradually grown comfortable with something that God's word calls sin? What has that drift looked like, and when did it begin?

Practical Application: Spend ten minutes today reading a passage of Scripture that challenges you rather than comforts you. Ask God to show you anything in your life that you have been redefining rather than repenting of.

Day 3: Judgment Rooted in Love**Reading: Mt 18:15-20 and Jn 7:24**

Devotional: The word "judgment" has been so misused in our culture that many Christians now flinch from the very thing Scripture commands. But there is a profound difference between judging to condemn and judging to restore. Matthew 18 does not describe a harsh tribunal. It describes a patient, loving pursuit of a wandering brother or sister. The goal is never to win an argument or establish superiority. The goal is to bring someone home. When Paul confronted the Corinthian church, his burden was simultaneously for the holiness of the body and the restoration of the individual. Judgment and love are not opposites in God's economy. Properly ordered, they are inseparable.

Practical Application: Pray specifically today for the courage to speak truth into one relationship where you have been silent. Ask God to give you both the right words and the right spirit before you speak.

Day 4: A Little Leaven**Reading: Gal 5:1-9 and 1 Pet 1:13-16**

Devotional: Paul's warning about leaven is not merely a lesson in church discipline. It is a warning about the nature of sin itself. Sin does not stay contained. It spreads, corrupts, and redefines the space around it until what was once unthinkable becomes unremarkable. The call to holiness in 1 Peter is not a call to perfection achieved by human effort. It is a call to a direction, a posture, a purposeful turning of the whole self toward the God who is holy. A church that settles for accommodation rather than transformation does not stay neutral. It moves. And it moves in only one direction. God's people are called to be set apart, not blended in.

Reflection: In what areas of your life or your church community have you noticed the slow spread of compromise? What would it look like to actively resist that drift rather than simply observe it?

Practical Application: Identify one habit, relationship, or media input in your life that is pulling you toward accommodation rather than transformation. Make one concrete decision today about how you will address it.

Day 5: Choosing Life**Reading: Deut 30:11-20 and Rev 3:7-13**

Devotional: God has always set before His people a choice: life or death, blessing or curse, the narrow way or the wide one. The church at Philadelphia was not the largest, the most resourced, or the most impressive. It had little strength by any measurable standard. But it kept the Word and did not deny His name, and that was enough. God did not ask for a perfect church. He asked for a faithful one. Whatever sin or compromise has taken root in your life, the invitation of the gospel has not expired.

Christ died to break the bondage of sin, not to make peace with it. Today is still a day to throw out the old leaven and choose life.

Practical Application: Write down in your own words what it means to you to be set apart for God. Then write one specific, measurable commitment you are making this week to live in that reality rather than simply affirm it.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord will give us the wisdom and hearts to further the development of a Biblical community for our church and those in our community more broadly.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

The following are the central truths from this sermon to keep in front of the group throughout your discussion:

1. Sin has a blinding power. The Corinthian church did not stumble into tolerating sexual immorality overnight. They drifted there through a slow exchange of God's wisdom for man's wisdom, until what should have grieved them became a source of pride. Sin does not announce its full agenda. It desensitizes gradually.
2. Tolerance of sin is not love. The Corinthians may have believed they were exercising grace and love by looking the other way. Paul makes clear they were doing neither. True Biblical love cares more about a person's soul and their standing before God than about avoiding discomfort or conflict.
3. Christians are called to judge -- rightly. Judgment is not forbidden for the follower of Christ. What is forbidden is hypocritical, self-serving, or self-righteous judgment. Christians are called to judge actions according to God's word, with humility, truth, and Biblical love, for the purpose of restoration -- not condemnation.
4. Sin spreads. Paul's leaven illustration is not decorative. Tolerated sin does not stay contained. It leavens the whole lump. What a church permits in its midst, it eventually endorses by its silence.
5. The goal of church discipline is restoration, not punishment. Paul's burden is simultaneously for the purity of the church and the restoration of the individual. Removing the rotten log from the fire is not abandonment -- it is an act aimed at producing the repentance that comfort had failed to produce.
6. The church is called to be set apart. Holiness is not optional for the people of God. It is the mark of a church that actually believes what it says it believes about Jesus.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

Work through these questions at a pace that fits your group. You do not need to cover every question. Let the Spirit lead.

On Sin's Blinding Power

1. The sermon described the Corinthians as having "remade Jesus into their own image." What does that look like in practical terms -- in a church, and in an individual life?
2. Can you think of an area in your own life or in the broader culture where something that should grieve us has gradually become normalized or even celebrated? How did that drift happen?
3. The sermon noted several possible reasons the Corinthian church looked the other way -- misapplied grace, not wanting to offend a significant donor, fear of hurting feelings, or a quiet agreement to ignore each other's sins. Which of those feels most familiar to you, either personally or in church contexts you have been part of?

On Biblical Judgment

1. Matthew 7:1 is often used to argue that Christians should never judge. How does the broader teaching of Scripture help us understand what Jesus actually meant? What is the difference between the judgment God forbids and the judgment He requires?
2. The sermon said our judgments are to be "governed by God's word, humility, truth, and Biblical love." What does that look like when someone you care about is living in unrepentant sin? What makes it hard? What makes it necessary?
3. Have you ever been on the receiving end of correction that was done well -- correction that felt like love even if it was hard to hear? What made it feel that way? Have you experienced correction done poorly? What was the difference?

On the Health of the Church

1. The sermon compared three churches from Revelation 2 and 3 -- Philadelphia, Sardis/Laodicea, and Thyatira. Which of those three descriptions feels most honest about the condition of the broader American church today? Which feels most honest about your own spiritual condition?

2. Look at the comparison chart between a God-Seeking Church and a Culture-Accommodating Church from the sermon. Which column do you find yourself most naturally drawn toward, and why? Which row in that chart is most convicting for you personally?
3. The sermon described the difference between "people who attend the same building and people who are actually burning together." What is one honest barrier in your own life that keeps you from burning together with this group or this church?

On Personal Application

1. The sermon extended an invitation not only to those outside of Christ but to those who are Christians and have drifted into sin. Is there an area of your life where you know God is calling you to throw out the old leaven -- to stop tolerating something He has already spoken clearly about?
2. Paul says we are to care more about people's souls than about our own or their preferences and emotions. Who in your life needs you to love them that courageously right now? What is one step you could take this week?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

Examine yourself before examining others. Before this week is over, spend time in honest prayer asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your life where you have been tolerating sin -- in yourself or in those around you -- under the cover of grace or comfort. Write down what He shows you. Bring it to Him in repentance.

Pull in close. Identify one person in this group or in your church with whom you are not yet close enough to know if they are struggling. Take one step toward them this week -- a text, a phone call, a cup of coffee. The fire is built by logs leaning in, not by keeping a comfortable distance.

Practice Biblical love, not worldly affirmation. If there is someone in your life living in unrepentant sin, pray specifically this week about whether God is calling you to speak truth to them. Ask Him for the right words, the right spirit, and the right timing. Ask a trusted brother or sister to pray with you and hold you accountable to follow through.

Measure your church life against Acts 2:42. The sermon pointed to Acts 2:42 as the specific charge for Biblical community. Read that verse this week and honestly assess: how much of your church involvement is attendance, and how much of it is genuine devotion to the Word, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer?

Know what you believe and why. The sermon noted that a God-Seeking Church tests everything by Scripture rather than by cultural standards. Pick one area of current cultural debate and spend time this week studying what Scripture actually says about it - not what is comfortable, not what is popular, but what is true.

Closing Prayer Points:

1. That God would give each person in the group the courage to deal honestly with sin in their own life before addressing it in others.
2. That this church would be a Philadelphia church -- faithful with whatever strength it has, holding fast to the Word, not denying His name.
3. That those in the group or in the broader congregation who are living in sexual sin or any other unrepentant sin would encounter the grace and conviction of Christ this week and respond to His invitation.

Discussion Questions

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

1. The sermon describes the Corinthian church as having adapted Jesus into their own image rather than conforming themselves to His — in what ways might we, individually or as a congregation, be guilty of doing the same thing today?
2. Paul distinguishes between worldly affirming love and transforming Biblical love — what does that distinction look like in practice when someone you care about is living in open sin, and where do you find the courage to act on it?
3. The campfire illustration suggests that isolation causes a log to smolder and die, while proximity to others causes it to burn hotter — where in your own spiritual life have you experienced the danger of pulling away from genuine Christian community?
4. The sermon notes that the Corinthian church may have tolerated sin to avoid offending a well-connected giver, to spare feelings, or to secure others' silence about their own sins — which of these motivations do you think is most common in the church today, and why is it so difficult to name?
5. Paul teaches that Christians are called to judge actions according to God's word, with humility and Biblical love, rather than with man's judgment — what guardrails help ensure that church discipline is an act of love and restoration rather than self-righteousness or control?
6. The church at Thyatira was commended for genuine love, faith, service, and growing endurance, yet Christ still held its tolerance of sin against it — what does this teach us about the relationship between fruitfulness and faithfulness, and can a church have one without the other?
7. The sermon presents a contrast between a God-seeking church and a culture-accommodating church — honestly examining your own heart, which column do your default instincts tend to pull you toward, and what would it cost you to move further toward the God-seeking side?
8. Paul uses the image of leaven spreading through the whole lump to warn that tolerated sin does not stay contained — can you think of a time, personally or corporately, when allowing a small compromise eventually produced consequences far larger than you anticipated?

9. The sermon draws a parallel between the Corinthian situation and the church at Thyatira, where Jezebel was given time to repent and would not — what does it reveal about God's character that He gives time for repentance before judgment, and what does it reveal about sin's nature that the offer is so often refused?
10. The closing call is to let God define who He is, what His purposes are, who we are in Him, and how we are to live — what is one specific area of your life where you have been letting culture, emotion, or personal preference answer those questions instead of Scripture?

Dinner Conversation Starters
1 Corinthians 5:1-8
The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

1. “Logs in the Fire” — Why We Need Each Other. The sermon compared the church to logs burning together in a fire.

Question: How has God used other believers to encourage your faith? How can our family help keep one another “warm” spiritually this week?

2. Calling Sin What God Calls Sin. Paul warned the Corinthian church not to ignore or celebrate sin.

Question: Why is it sometimes hard to admit when something is wrong? How can we lovingly speak truth without becoming proud or harsh?

3. Grace and Truth Together. The sermon reminded us that Christians should show grace without compromising God’s truth.

Question: What does it look like to love someone well while still obeying what God says?

4. A Church Set Apart for God. Paul called the church to be holy, like unleavened bread without the old leaven of sin.

Question: What are some ways our family can live differently from the world in a way that honors Jesus?

5. Choosing Life Through Repentance. The closing invitation was to throw out the “old leaven” and receive Christ’s transforming love.

Question: Is there anything in our attitudes, habits, or priorities that we need to surrender to Jesus? How can we pray for one another tonight?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Choose God's Way Even When Others Don't.** Paul taught that God's people should not pretend sin is okay. Even young children can learn that God's way is good and loving. A friend at school or church is being mean, lying, or saying bad words, and everyone laughs.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What should you do if your friends are doing something you know is wrong?
 - b. How can you be kind without joining in?
 - c. Who is a trusted grown-up you can talk to when something feels wrong?
2. **Tell the Truth Instead of Hiding Wrong Choices.** Sin can blind us and make us want to hide or excuse our actions. God wants us to come into the light and receive forgiveness. You broke something, said something unkind, or disobeyed screen-time rules and feel tempted to hide it.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why is it sometimes hard to tell the truth when we have done wrong?
 - b. What does Jesus do when we confess our sin and ask for forgiveness?
 - c. How can our family help each other tell the truth?
3. **Use Screens in a Way That Pleases Jesus.** Holiness means belonging to God in every part of life, including what we watch and play. A video, game, or show has scary, mean, rude, or inappropriate things in it.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What kinds of things should we stop watching or playing?
- b. If something on a screen makes you feel confused or uncomfortable, what should you do?
- c. How can we make our home a place where Jesus is honored?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Don't Follow the Group Into Wrong Choices.** The Corinthian church was proud when it should have been grieved. Sometimes groups make wrong things seem normal. Friends are making fun of someone, sharing gossip, cheating in a game, or pressuring you to break rules.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why can it be hard to stand up for what is right in a group?
 - b. What is the difference between being loving and just “going along”?
 - c. What could you say if your friends are doing something wrong?
2. **Practice Loving Correction.** The sermon taught that Christians are called to speak truth with humility and biblical love. A friend is doing something harmful, like lying to parents, bullying, using bad language, or watching things they shouldn’t.

Discussion Questions:

- a. When should you gently speak to a friend, and when should you ask an adult for help?
 - b. How can correction be loving instead of mean?
 - c. How would you want someone to talk to you if you were making a bad choice?
3. **Guard Your Digital Life.** A little leaven affects the whole lump. Small compromises online can shape our hearts over time. A group chat includes rude jokes, gossip, inappropriate memes, or videos you know your parents would not approve of.

Discussion Questions:

- a. How can group chats make sin feel normal?
 - b. What should you do if someone sends something inappropriate or unkind?
 - c. Are there any apps, games, channels, or chats we need to talk about as a family?
4. **Remember That Grace Leads Us Back to Jesus.** Paul’s goal was restoration, not shame. God corrects us because He loves us. You made a bad choice online or with friends and feel embarrassed to tell your parents.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why does Satan want us to hide sin?
- b. How does Jesus respond when we repent?
- c. What can our family do to make confession safe, honest, and hopeful?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **Don’t Let Culture Define Right and Wrong.** The sermon contrasted a God-seeking church with a culture-accommodating church. Christians test everything by Scripture, not popularity. Friends, influencers, shows, or social media say that

“everyone gets to decide their own truth,” especially about identity, relationships, sexuality, or morality.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Where do most people your age get their ideas about right and wrong?
- b. What does it mean to let Scripture have authority over our feelings, opinions, and culture?
- c. Are there areas where following Jesus may make you seem different from your peers?

2. **Set Boundaries in Relationships.** God calls His people to holiness and purity, including in romantic and emotional relationships. Dating pressure, flirting, secrecy, sexual jokes, physical boundaries, or pressure to send or receive inappropriate images.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What boundaries help protect purity in relationships?
- b. Why is secrecy often dangerous in dating or online communication?
- c. What should you do if someone pressures you to do something that dishonors God or makes you uncomfortable?

3. **Take Digital Temptation Seriously.** Sin spreads when it is tolerated. What we allow into our minds can shape our desires and decisions. Pornography, sexual content, suggestive videos, explicit music, private messaging, disappearing messages, or hidden accounts.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why is it dangerous to think, “It’s just online, so it doesn’t matter”?
- b. What digital habits make temptation stronger?
- c. What accountability or safeguards would help you walk in freedom instead of secrecy?

4. **Be a Faithful Friend, Not Just an Accepting Friend.** Biblical love does not affirm what harms someone’s soul. It points people toward Jesus with humility and care. A friend is making destructive choices but says, “If you really love me, you’ll support me no matter what.”

Discussion Questions:

- a. What is the difference between loving someone and approving everything they do?
- b. How can you speak truth without sounding self-righteous?
- c. When is it wise to involve a parent, pastor, youth leader, or trusted adult?

5. **Repent Quickly and Come Into the Light.** Paul's correction was meant to lead to restoration. Jesus offers forgiveness and transformation, not bondage and shame. You have been hiding something—messages, websites, a relationship, a habit, or a pattern of lying.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why does hidden sin usually grow stronger over time?
- b. What makes confession scary? What makes it freeing?
- c. How can our family respond to confession with both truth and grace?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

1 Corinthians 5:1-8

The Blinding Power of Sin & The Set-Apart Church

1. Don't Let the Group Normalize Sin

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:1-2
- Romans 12:2
- Proverbs 13:20

Application: Gen Z faces constant pressure to accept whatever the group accepts. But Christians are called to let God's Word define good and evil, not the crowd. Love does not mean pretending sin is harmless.

Scenario:

Your friend group laughs at sexual jokes, mocks biblical convictions, celebrates sinful choices, or pressures you to "stop being judgmental" when you won't join in.

Discussion Question:

Where do you feel the most pressure to treat sin as normal—school, friend groups, social media, entertainment, or dating relationships?

2. Practice Biblical Love, Not Cultural Affirmation

Bible References:

- John 1:14
- Ephesians 4:15
- Galatians 6:1

Application: Biblical love is full of both grace and truth. It does not shame people, but it also does not affirm choices that separate people from God. Loving someone means caring about their soul, not just their feelings.

Scenario: A friend says, "If you really love me, you'll support everything I do." They expect you to affirm a relationship, identity, lifestyle, or decision that conflicts with Scripture.

Discussion Question: How can you speak truth to a friend without sounding harsh, proud, or uncaring?

3. Take Hidden Sin Seriously

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
- James 1:14-1
- Psalm 32:3-5

Application: Paul compares sin to leaven because it spreads. Hidden sin rarely stays small. Whether it is lust, lying, bitterness, addiction, gossip, or compromise, what remains unconfessed often grows stronger.

Scenario: You are hiding private messages, pornography, a secret relationship, vaping, substance use, cheating, or an online habit you would not want your parents, pastor, or mature Christian friends to know about.

Discussion Question: Why does secrecy make sin more powerful, and what would it look like to bring that area into the light?

4. Guard Your Digital Life

Bible References:

- Psalm 101:3
- Matthew 5:28-30
- Philippians 4:8

Application: Holiness includes what you watch, scroll, like, share, and save. Your digital habits are forming your desires, thoughts, and view of people. Following Jesus means refusing to be disciplined by algorithms.

Scenario: Your feed is filled with sexual content, rage-bait, gossip, vanity, comparison, crude humor, or influencers who make sin look attractive and obedience look foolish.

Discussion Question: If someone looked at your screen time, search history, saved posts, and DMs, what would they say is shaping your heart?

5. Leave Group Chats That Pull You Toward Sin

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 15:33
- Ephesians 5:3-12
- Proverbs 4:14-15

Application: Not every group deserves your presence. If a group chat consistently promotes gossip, cruelty, lust, racism, bullying, explicit memes, or rebellion, staying silent can become a form of participation.

Scenario: A group chat starts sharing inappropriate images, making fun of someone, spreading rumors, or pressuring people into sinful behavior. Everyone else treats it like no big deal.

Discussion Question: When should you speak up, mute, leave, block, report, or ask a trusted adult for help?

6. Set Boundaries in Dating and Romantic Relationships

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8
- 2 Timothy 2:22
- Hebrews 13:4

Application: God's will is your sanctification, including sexual purity. Boundaries are not about shame; they are about honoring God, protecting your heart, and treating others as people made in His image.

Scenario: Someone you are dating pressures you to go further physically, send explicit pictures, keep the relationship secret, or ignore your convictions because "everyone does it."

Discussion Question: What boundaries would help you honor Christ in dating, texting, physical affection, and emotional intimacy?

7. Don't Confuse Tolerance With Grace

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:2
- Jude 4
- Titus 2:11-14

Application: Grace does not mean God ignores sin. Grace forgives, cleanses, trains, and transforms. A culture of "anything goes" is not grace; it is spiritual danger.

Scenario: Someone says, "God loves me, so He doesn't care how I live." Or, "Jesus forgives, so sin is not a big deal."

Discussion Question: How does true grace both forgive sin and teach us to say no to sin?

8. Judge With Humility and Scripture, Not Pride

Bible References:

- John 7:24
- Matthew 7:1-5
- 1 Corinthians 5:12-13

Application: Christians are not called to be judgmental in a self-righteous way, but we are called to discern right from wrong according to God's Word. Before correcting others, we should examine ourselves.

Scenario: You see a Christian friend openly living in sin. You are tempted either to ignore it completely or to call them out harshly online.

Discussion Question: What is the difference between judging someone pridefully and lovingly confronting sin according to Scripture?

9. Choose God's Approval Over Online Approval

Bible References:

- Galatians 1:10
- Colossians 3:23
- Matthew 6:1

Application: Social media trains people to perform for attention, likes, comments, and validation. But followers of Jesus live before God first. Your identity is not built by public approval but by belonging to Christ.

Scenario: You feel pressure to post certain pictures, exaggerate your life, join trends, hide your faith, or present yourself in a way that gets attention but does not honor God.

Discussion Question: Where are you most tempted to care more about being liked than being faithful to Jesus?

10. Be Part of a Holy Community, Not Just a Christian Crowd

Bible References:

- Acts 2:42
- Hebrews 10:24-25;
- Peter 1:15-16

Application: The Christian life is not meant to be lived alone. God uses biblical community to strengthen, correct, encourage, and protect us. A church or youth group should help you burn hotter for Christ, not cool down spiritually.

Scenario: You attend church or youth group, but your closest influences are people who pull you away from Jesus. You have acquaintances, but few people who really know your spiritual struggles.

Discussion Question: Who in your life helps you follow Jesus more faithfully, and who has permission to lovingly challenge you?

11. Repent Quickly Instead of Managing Your Image

Bible References:

- 1 John 1:8-9
- Proverbs 28:13
- Acts 3:19

Application: Gen Z often feels pressure to curate an image and hide weakness. But Christianity is not image management. Jesus invites sinners to repent, receive forgiveness, and walk in freedom.

Scenario: You have been pretending everything is fine spiritually while privately struggling with sin, doubt, addiction, bitterness, or compromise.

Discussion Question: What makes confession hard for you, and who is a trustworthy Christian you could talk to honestly?

12. Remember: Holiness Is About Belonging to Jesus

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 1 Peter 2:9
- 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Application: Holiness is not just a list of things Christians avoid. It means you belong to God. Your body, relationships, sexuality, words, entertainment, and online presence are all meant to honor Christ.

Scenario: You are tempted to separate your “church self” from your school self, dating self, online self, or private self.

Discussion Question: What area of your life most needs to come under the lordship of Jesus right now?