

December 30

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 (NIV) ⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

Over the years, I have been blessed to be a part of several weddings. As the couple and I would visit, we would look carefully at what the Lord said about marriage, discussing the role of the husband and the wife. These discussions allowed me to share my faith with the couple. One couple, former students of mine, seemed to be a little uneasy as the momentous day approached. When I asked if anything was wrong, they shared that they wanted Carol and I to come to their reception. However, they would be serving alcohol and did not know if that would offend me. They would understand if we chose not to come. I could tell that they were truly troubled by the situation.

The idea that believers are to separate themselves from the world is not a new concept. As we can see from Paul's words, even the early church felt that they had to do so. Growing up in the church, I developed the same idea. However, if we separate ourselves from those in the world, then we will never be able to expose them to the truth. Paul clearly tells us that we are not to associate with BELIEVERS who are immoral, greedy, idolaters, cheats, etc. Conversely, Paul tells us that we are to associate with those in the world. There is a big difference between fellowshiping with and associating with people. We are to interact with those in the world so we can introduce others to Jesus and His Word. When we look at Jesus' life, we will find that He was surrounded by "people of the world." From the time of His birth to His death, He was surrounded by shepherds, thieves, prostitutes, tax collectors, idolaters, etc. After all, He came to reach the lost; we are to do the same. I told the couple that we would be honored to stay for the reception. We would not stay long, but we would be there. Let us give to the world the greatest gift ever given to us.