

- Within the past couple of months we studied through **II Thessalonians 3:6-15** concerning how we are to deal with those who are unfaithful. In that study we looked at the subject from the standpoint of why we are to discipline those who have become unfaithful to our Lord. It was more of the theory of the practice within that lesson.
- The lesson was well received and I received good feedback from those who were in attendance. But I had one request to bring a followup lesson that focused more on the "how" of the subject. They request was to study about how the disciplining of the unfaithful affects me and my relationship towards them. I greatly appreciated this request because #1) It shows that at least one person was listening (haha), but more importantly #2) It shows that we have disciples here that really consider how the Bible and its teachings are to impact their lives. So with that in mind, I would like for us to consider My duty towards the unfaithful. 4 things that I must do in regards to my duty towards those who are willfully walking in darkness and not light. **(I John 1:6)**

### **I. I must seek to restore those in sin. (Galatians 6:1)**

- A. I want for us to begin talking about our duty towards the unfaithful, by discussing our responsibilities towards our brethren to avoid having to take action against as willfully unfaithful Christians.
1. We are to be watchful for our brethren, and Paul makes this point in **Galatians 6:1**.
  2. The Inspired Apostle says that if we know of a brother or sister who is engaged in sin then it is our responsibility to give every effort to get them out of that sin.
  3. It might be that they are ignorant of their sinful actions, but it also very well might be the case that they know of their wrong doing.
  4. Regardless, the Apostle Paul charges all Christians with the responsibility to look out for one another and warn another if we are engaged in sinful conduct, and he himself accepted such responsibility **(Gal. 2:11-13)**. The earlier we can address the issue then the better chance we have of not having to get to a point where discipline is needed.
- B. Our admonishes/warnings must be done in the correct manner and with the proper attitude to give our words the best chance of being heard and heeded.
1. Notice that Paul instructs them to give every effort in a spirit of gentleness. **(Gal. 6:1)**
  2. This means that we are not to go on an all out assault against them. We are not to bash their character, degrade them as people, or treat them as dogs.
  3. No, we are to approach the situation with a gentle spirit for a few reasons.
    - 1) We are not perfect people who are better than others.
    - 2) We are fallible, and we can get ourselves into trouble, as well.
    - 3) We wouldn't want others to attack us when we are in need to restoration.
    - 4) We want them to turn away from their sinful conduct and return to their walk in the light.
  4. Many times the make or break point for this type of situation is even before the individual(s) are formally noted as as unfaithful. We must make sure we do everything we can to be a help and not a hinderance to the situation.

### **II. I must recognize that my relationship with the unfaithful person has changed. (I Corinthians 5:11)**

- A. In the situation of the sexually immoral brother in Corinth, Paul says that the faithful are not to associate with the one who is unfaithful.
1. Paul says that he had wrote to them that they were not to associate with any disciple who is engaged in sinful activity, & he puts emphasis on this by saying that they were not even to eat with such a person.
  2. Now, I recognize that much has been made of that admonition to not eat with this type of person, but I think the Apostle Paul is quite clear with his meaning.
  3. As disciples who are in fellowship with one another through the blood of Jesus Christ, we share a special and close bond with one another. We talk often, spend time together, share meals together, etc. as a result of our tight relationships with one another. The fellowship is not the actions, but they are a result of the fellowship that we share.
  4. However, if that fellowship is ended because of sin on either side, then our tight relationship must change. The faithful are not to associate or have that great relationship anymore because those walking in light cannot walk with those walking in darkness, and we must make it abundantly clear that we do not approve/condone of their sinful behavior. They are on different paths leading to different places, and the faithful don't need to be influenced towards sin. Our relationship with that unfaithful person changes.
  5. Let me also add that this is true regardless of the relationship. There must be a change in the relationship whether the unfaithful person is just a friend or whether a family member. That doesn't mean that we have the ability to ignore our responsibilities towards that family member, but there must be noticeable difference in the relationship so that the wayward person truly recognizes the seriousness of his or her actions.

- B. The truth of this matter is that this only occurs when we had the proper relationship with this brother or sister before their unfaithfulness.
1. What if we did not have that tight bond of close friendship? What if we did not talk, spend any time together, or even share a meal together then what can be changed?
  2. If we are trying to make a point that we do not approve of their sinful ways by not having the same relationship, yet nothing really changes... then what are we accomplishing?
  3. If we continue to have close relationship then why would they think that anything is wrong?
  4. In the same way, if we we're not close before or after their sin is made known, then what is missing in their life that might encourage them to come back? Absolutely nothing.
  5. We must make sure that we have relationships with our brethren that mean something to us, & we must be willing to put those away if a brother or sister decides to leave their faith in the Lord. **(Acts 2:44-47)**

### **III. I must lovingly admonish the unfaithful at every chance. (II Thessalonians 3:15)**

- A. I still have a responsibility to take opportunities to encourage the wayward Christian to come back and repent of his or her sins.
1. Paul sets the tone for how we are to deal with the unfaithful Christian. We are not to treat him or her as if they have the plague, but we are to take opportunities to encourage them.
  2. If we meet them on the sidewalk, we are not to cross the street to the other side.
  3. If we get behind them at the grocery store, we shouldn't switch lines.
  4. We ought not be hateful or shunning.
- B. Instead, we ought to take those opportunities to encourage them to consider their actions and what they are causing.
1. We ought to encourage them to think about their souls condition.
  2. We ought to encourage them to come back to the church and make things right.
  3. Again, this should be done in a loving way just as is taught in **Galatians 6:1**. We want nothing more than for them to repent and come back to the church and the Lord.
  4. Going back to our last point, this means that when these opportunities present themselves we cannot act as if nothing is wrong. We must make sure they recognize the seriousness of their sin.
  5. We must take advantage of the opportunities we might have to influence them to repent.

### **IV. I must receive back the unfaithful one who has repented. (II Corinthians 2:4-8)**

- A. If the person recognizes the error of his/her ways and repents, then we must show them the love and receive them back into fellowship with us.
1. Often we hear that this type of action doesn't work, but we have a Biblical example of this type of action being taken and the unfaithful person coming back.
  2. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we have recorded where Paul is now encouraging the brethren to receive back the man who had caused trouble in the church by being caught up in sin from **I Corinthians 5. (vv.4,5)**
  3. Paul commends them for their "punishment" upon him, but it was now time for them to receive him back based upon his sorrow or repentance. **(vv.6,7)**
  4. They were to welcome him back and reaffirm their love for him as a brother. **(v.8)**
  5. God's way works!
- B. Isn't this the point, after all? We want for their souls to be cleansed of its sin!
1. We must always remember the desired result of this type of action.
  2. We are not wanting people to feel hated, shunned, or unloved. No, we want for them to recognize that sin will not be tolerated among God's people.
  3. Most importantly, we desire for them to repent of their sin and come back into a walk in the light. We want to share in the fellowship that we have with Jesus and enjoy all the many blessings that come along with it.
  4. How joyous is it when a sinner is restore back to God! This is the ultimate goal! **(James 5:19,20)**

These types of subjects are never fun or really enjoyable to have, but they are necessary. It is necessary for us to know what is expected of the faithful in regards to their interactions and relationships with those who have strayed from the faith. May God help us to have the courage to do what is necessary to restore the unfaithful back to faithfulness, and may we always remember that we just want salvation for the soul. May God be glorified in our following of his design in such situations, and may a soul be restored back to the faith and many sins avoided.