

# How Should Christians Interact with Withdrawn From Persons?

(By Paul R Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. Scarcity of resources and materials written by brethren on the subject
  - 1. Brethren are afraid of it:
    - a. Most members are going to continue to have fellowship with withdrawn from persons, privately or publicly
    - b. Many preachers have disciplined persons in their family
    - c. Few churches practice local church discipline anyway.
    - d. Those who preach on it are viewed as old fashioned and obsessed with an archaic hobby
  - 2. I am here to tell you the following;
    - a. What most members do about this has nothing to do with whether or not this is truth
    - b. What most preachers avoid in their preaching has nothing to do with whether or not this is truth
    - c. What you feel about it has nothing to do with whether or not this is truth
  - 3. When we do not practice the truth in this matter
    - a. Preachers who avoid the subject will answer to God; I hold no illusions about their salvation
    - b. Members who ignore the word of God on this should not hold any illusions about their own salvation
    - c. "Just don't tell the preacher" will not be accepted by God in the Judgment
    - d. One facilitates the withdrawn from person remaining in sin
- B. What is written?
  - 1. 1Cor. 5:1-13; 2Thes 3:10-15
  - 2. Why withdraw fellowship and refuse his company?
    - a. Deliver him to Satan to destroy his fleshly behaviors
    - b. Get the corrupting influence out of the church
    - c. To press him to change his life
    - d. To make him ashamed of his sin
  - 3. When you choose to disregard this clear instruction, you defeat God's Divinely wise means of restoring them
  - 4. When you arrange a social gathering for Christians and invite withdrawn from persons, you put fellow Christians at risk of sin; shame on you

## I. WHAT ABOUT FAMILY MEMBERS?

- A. Does 1Cor. 5:11 include family members (parent, child, spouse) who have been disciplined?"
  - 1. JW McGarvey - "have no interchange of hospitality which would imply brotherly recognition" (Commentary on Corinthians, Gospel Light Pub. Co., p 74).
  - 2. Christians cannot participate in activities with the disciplined that would suggest that they are still brethren in fellowship and in good standing.

- B. The assembled church is the body addressed in 1Corinthians 5:
- 1 "among you"
  - 2 "taken away from among you"
  - 4 "when ye are gathered together"
  - 6 "Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"
  - 12 "them that are within"
  - 13 "put away from among yourselves that wicked person"
- C. Paul is speaking to local churches
1. "But my son in the flesh is also my brother in Christ." Yet, that does not alter the fact that the 1Corinthian 5 instructions are for the local church to carry out as an assembled body for the benefit of that local church.
  2. First, families are separate institutions, governed differently than the local church, and endowed with different responsibilities.
    - a. Parents are to love, nurture, and provide for their children.
    - b. Children are to respect and obey their parents.
    - c. Husbands and wives are to dwell together in intimate communication with one another.
  3. The command to withdraw fellowship does not void scripturally mandated duties in the home
  4. Nor does fulfilling our duties at home imply fellowship or brotherly recognition and endorsement. Familial relationships in the home do not imply spiritual fellowship in the body of Christ.
    - a. If a Christian fails to discharge his duties properly at home, he will lose his fellowship with God and the church.
    - b. However, one's relationship in the home is based upon his responsibilities to the home.
    - c. His duties in the home are distinct from his fellowship in the church unless he fails in his duties at home.
  5. Likewise one's duties in the local church are not limited by his duties in the home.
    - a. Can a wife justify forsaking the assembling because her husband demands it?
    - b. Similarly, decisions made in the local church cannot require that Christians violate God's instructions to them for the care of their spouses and children.
- D. Where does one draw the line in the home?
1. Social interaction implies fellowship.
    - a. Do parents take the withdrawn from children on vacation?
    - b. Do they attend their children's school functions?
    - c. Does the wife of a withdrawn from man cohabit with him?
    - d. Does a child take care of an elderly withdrawn from parent?
  2. It becomes clear at this point that local church discipline does not apply to all of one's relationships and responsibilities in the home.
- E. The fact is, the only contact a Christian is permitted with those who are withdrawn from is to teach them - 2Thes. 3:14-15
1. "Have NO company with him." One cannot limit the forbidden contact to eating only. All social contact
- F. The purpose of local church discipline is not met when a family member is shunned in his own home.

1. Paul said purge out the leaven to make a pure lump. How does at-home shunning purify the local church? Can we use one institution to regulate the other?
- G. There are limits.
1. One is limited to eating with only those to whom he has scripturally outlined responsibilities. You don't get to decide what they are
    - a. Parents are responsible to raise their children.
    - b. When the children are raised, that duty ends and there are no more commands to be kept.
    - c. If they eat with the children after they leave home forming their own households, then 1Corinthians 5:11 has been violated.
    - d. The argument that they are your children all of your life is irrelevant. The scriptural obligation ends when they form their own households
  2. A child is required to "requite" aged, infirm parents. The command exists WHEN his parents become aged and infirm. If there is no condition of responsibility to be met, then one has no business socializing with the withdrawn from, even if they are blood kin.
  3. What of one whose conscience will not permit him to eat with a withdrawn from family member for whom he is responsible?
    - a. Serious Bible study is mandated with the view that he come out of his error soon before he is called into account for neglecting his God-given duties to his family.
    - b. What of one who chooses to eat with a family member for whom he has no scripturally mandated family duty? He must repent of the sin of violating 1Corinthians 5:11.
- H. If you practice what is written about this matter you will accomplish:
1. The will of God in this matter
  2. Protect the local congregation
  3. Your own salvation
  4. Possibly the restoration of your withdrawn from family member
- I. If you refuse, you accomplish:
1. Putting the souls of fellow Christians at risk
  2. Preventing your withdrawn from relative from being restored
  3. Ensuring you will spend eternity with them in Perdition

## II. WHAT ABOUT INCIDENTAL ENCOUNTERS?

A. "I recently had experiences with brothers and sisters in Christ inviting withdrawn from Christians to birthday parties, graduation parties and the social dinner after a funeral. I stand virtually alone in not attending or leaving once I realize the circumstances. Would you consider a meal after a funeral in this same category?"

1. The answer to this is in two parts:
    - a. An address to Christians who invited withdrawn from persons to a social gathering where other Christians will be
    - b. An address to Christians who come to such gatherings without knowledge that a disciplined person has been invited
- B. Anytime a disciple's conscience demands that he must forgo an activity, he must follow his conscience.

1. Sometimes a conscience requires more than the word of God demands, and therefore one must heed the conscience or risk sin.
  2. Without doubt, the Christian sins when he invites an unrepentant withdrawn from disciple to a meal where others will be
  3. He violates a command of God no less binding than the command to be baptized.
  4. He needs to grow some courage and inform the disciplined person that they are withdrawn from, and until they repent, faithful Christians cannot enjoy a social meal with them.
  5. It is tragic that so many professed Christians value their relationship with the erring disciple more than their relationship with God, and seldom hesitate to include withdrawn from persons in social meals.
  6. I find it shameful that Christians would intentionally put other Christians in an uncomfortable and awkward position this way.
  7. "I don't want to embarrass or alienate them." That is precisely what the Lord wants you to do under the circumstances; make them ashamed and aware that they are responsible for damaging the relationship when they sinned and refused to repent
  8. And the excuse, "I am eating with him to encourage him to come back," is actually based on the foolish and false sophistry, "Let us do evil that good may come."
- C. However, what of the Christian who comes to a social meal only to discover that an unrepentant, withdrawn from person is present?
1. It must be understood that the very nature of violating the command not to eat with the disciplined requires intent.
  2. One has to purpose to validate the withdrawn from person by intentionally eating with him.
  3. Or, he can resolve to avoid conflict and discomfort with the disciplined person by purposing not to keep the command.
  4. In both cases there is intent to disregard a command of God.
  5. One who attends a funeral luncheon, goes to a restaurant, or goes to a social function and accidentally encounters a disciplined person did not intend or purpose to meet with him to eat with him.
    - a. It was not his intent to validate this person.
    - b. It is an incidental encounter.
  6. One who accidentally encounters a disciplined person is not purposing to validate him, and is not viewed by observers as having done so.
  7. But, should an observer point out that there is a disciplined person present, one should consider at this point that the potential exists that he could be sending an unintentional validation message.
    - a. 1Cor. 10:23-29
- D. When I go to a funeral luncheon, I am there to support and encourage the grieving family.
1. I do not concern myself about an incidental and unintentional encounter with a disciplined person. I eat with the sorrowing family.
  2. However, if someone points out that there is a disciplined person present and they seem genuinely concerned, I do not eat for his sake