

How to respond Biblically to the Sexually Immoral brother in the Church

Adultery is clearly forbidden in Scripture

- Exo 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery. (One of the Ten Commandments)
- Deu 5:18 "'And you shall not commit adultery.
- Pro 6:32 He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.
- Mat 19:9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."
- Mat 5:31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'
Mat 5:32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
- Rom 13:13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarrelling and jealousy.
- 1Co 10:8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.
- 1Co 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

It is God's will for us to abstain from sexual immorality

- **1Th 4:3** For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality;

Immorality is an issue of the heart

- Mat 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.
- Mat 5:28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- Mar 7:20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him.
Mar 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,
Mar 7:22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.
Mar 7:23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Believers are to judge amongst each other

- **1Co 6:1** When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?
1Co 6:2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?

1Co 6:3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

1Co 6:4 So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church?

1Co 6:5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers,

1Co 6:6 but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

1Co 6:7 To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

Removal from church fellowship

This seems to have only happened in the case where the immorality was so bad that a man had sexual relations with his own mother. In such a case the brother was removed from fellowship.

- **1Co 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.
1Co 5:2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.
1Co 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.
1Co 5:4 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,
1Co 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.
- **Tit 3:10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,**
Tit 3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

We are called not even to associate with the sexually immoral.

There however seems to be a particular context here and this may not be forgotten. The context has to do with the most bizarre sexual sin. A man has sex with his own mother and he remains unrepentant. Paul here writes that there ought to be no such licentiousness amongst the believing fraternity and that the unrepentant sinner must be banned from fellowship so that the message is clear: the church will not have anything to do with unrepentant sinners.

- 1Co 5:9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--
1Co 5:10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.
1Co 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.
1Co 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?
1Co 5:13 God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

Church discipline is necessary when the person remains unrepentant.

- 1Co 5:6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

1Co 5:7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

1Co 5:8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The analogy of the leaven is important here. It is not referring to yeast (which was uncommon in the ancient world), but to fermented dough, a little of which would be left from the previous week to be added to a new lump of dough. By analogy, when publicly known sin in the church is not subjected to church discipline, it will spread its destructive consequences throughout the whole fellowship.

Church discipline therefore is necessary in the case of the unrepentant believer. Church discipline is necessary however also in the case of the repentant believer.

The apostle Paul says sexual sin is sin against one's own body (**1 Cor 6:18**), and because sexual sin is a public sin a repentant believer has to publicly also ask the body of believers (by implication the members of a church) forgiveness in a public setting. The aim of church discipline is always for restoration and healing.

- **Jas 5:16** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
- **1Jn 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Therefore I believe that in the case of sexual sin, the repentant believer needs to confess his sin publicly before a members meeting and that the offending party needs to scrutinize himself to a system of accountability by which the Elders lovingly shepherd this person.

The Elders are responsible for administering church discipline.

- **Heb 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

This ought always be done gently and in a spirit of love

- **Gal 6:1** Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
- **Jas 5:20** let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.